

Classic Poetry Series

John Daniel Logan
- poems -

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John Daniel Logan(2 May 1869 - 24 January 1929)

John Daniel Logan was a Canadian poet and academic. He is noted for teaching the first university-level course on Canadian literature.

Logan was born in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, the oldest son of Elizabeth Gordon (Rankin) and Charles Logan. He was educated at Pictou Academy and Dalhousie University, from which he received a B.A. in Philosophy in 1893, and an M.A. in 1894. He then went to Harvard University, where he received a Ph.D. in 1896.

Marjorie McMurchy, *Canadian Courier*: "The writer says in his Preface that his work is no better and no worse than what might readily be accomplished by any man of education and literary instincts. Thus it will be seen that Dr. Logan does not claim to be a poet. But what he writes is so essentially national, so strong in spirit, and deals so closely with what is good material for poetry that *Songs of the Makers of Canada* is the most authentic little book of Canadian poetry that we have this year."

After graduating he served as the principal of Hampton Academy in New Hampshire, and then as a professor of English and Philosophy in the State University of South Dakota.

From 1908 to 1910 he was the music critic of the *Sunday World* of Toronto. He also worked for the *Toronto Daily News*.

In 1915 he delivered a series of lectures on Canadian literature at Acadia University. which were labelled by the *Acadia Bulletin* as "the first course of lectures on distinctively Canadian Literature which has ever been given in a Canadian University.". After service in the Army during World War I, Logan returned to Acadia as "Special Lecturer on Canadian Literature" to conduct the first university course on the subject in 1919-1920 – a course hailed by the *Toronto Globe* as "an innovation of national importance.".

Brock: Valiant Leader

VALIANT leader of the little band
That, fearless, forward rushed to victory,
Tho far outnumbered by the enemy,
And, daring death, saved our Canadian land,—
What honours can we pay the noble name
Of one who held as naught th' invaders' art
Of war,—whose glory hath become a part
For evermore of our Canadian fame?

Lo, on the looming crown of that ascent
Where thy life ceased, a loyal host hath reared
To thee—whose patriot heart was pure, nor feared,—

A high commemorative monument!
Still is thy memory green who fell to save,
Still, Brock, art thou the bravest of our brave!

John Daniel Logan

Cartier: Dauntless Discoverer

HAIL, Master Mariner of Sainte Malo!
Whose name hath been a star for centuries,
Why ventured thou thrice o'er tempestuous seas,
In ships antique and frail? Didst thou then know
The greater issue of thy bold emprise
And trust an unseen providential hand
To guide thee westward to an opulent land
Wherein a mighty nation would arise?

O bold Sea-Rover, instrument of God,
Whose occult purposes were wrought through thee,
A grateful people hail thy name, and laud
Thy dauntless spirit of discovery!
Thy glory sure, rest, Rover, rest, while blow
The winds in requiem round Sainte Malo!

John Daniel Logan

Champlain: First Canadian

WISE Colonist who in this storied place,
With wisdom prescient of thy pregnant deed,
Cast forth the sparsate grains of fruitful seed,
Whence sprang a virile and a patriot race:
Thy aims were not to found a merchantry
Enthralled by vulgar gain; but thy just mind,
Inspired with love of thy benighted kind,
Raised here the throne of Christian empery.

Intrepid, constant, nobly pure and strong
First citizen of Canada's domain,
Behold this ancient city is thy fane
And thy compatriots raise thy name in song.
Look downward from thy lofty resting-place
And mark the regnancy of thy just ways.

John Daniel Logan

Drummond: Indomitable Soldier

FROM SAFFRON dawn that lit the morning sky
Until the moon passed, blanching at the sight
Of fearful slaughter crying for respite,
Thy faithful forces heard thy battle cry
Above the stubborn, fierce, tumultuous sway
Of weltering lines. Then thy undaunted heart
Sustained thy heroes in their awful part
And glorified the sanguinary fray.

To us yon battleground is as a fane,
A holy place, a sacrificial spot
To thee and thy Canadian host who wrought
Immortal warrior deeds at Lundy's Lane;
And thine own glory, Drummond, gleameth far,
Undimmed and constant as the purest star.

John Daniel Logan

Laval: Noble Educator

LAVAL, High Priest of Knowledge, who first scanned
The years to come, and saw the pow'rs that lay
Within the docile hearts thy truth should sway,-
Whose work is puissant still upon this land,-
Thou wast the Spirit's patient paragon
In those far, pristine, mercenary days
When thou alone wast master of the ways
That lead into the vale of Avalon.

Lo, now a people learned in all the arts
Greet thee to-day across the distant vale
Of Truth, where dwells obscure the Holy Grail.
And tho they commerce oft upon the marts
Of specious gain, they look beyond the mist
To thee, their first great Educationist.

John Daniel Logan

The Over-Song Of Niagara

WHY stand ye, nurslings of Earth, before my gates,
Mouthing aloud my glory and my thrall?
Are ye alone the playthings of the fates,
And only ye o'ershadowed with a pall?
Turn from this spectacle of strength unbound—
This fearful force that spends itself in folly!
Turn ye and hark above the organ-sound
My Over-song of Melancholy!

'I rush and roar
Along my shore,—
I go sweeping, thundering on;
Yet my days, O man,
Are but as a span,
And soon shall my strength be gone!
My times are measured
In whose hand I am treasured,
(Think not of thy little day!)
Though I rush and roar
Along my shore,
I am passing away—
Passing away!

'The sun and the moon
They too shall soon
Sink back into eternal Night:
All earth and the sea
Shall cease to be,
And the stars shall melt in their flight!
Their times are measured
In whose hand they are treasured,
(Think not of thy little day!)
The celestial throng
Chant my Over-song,—
'Passing away,—
Passing away!'

Then stand not, nurslings of Earth, before my gates,
Mouthing aloud my glory and my thrall:
Not ye alone are playthings of the fates,

Nor only ye o'ershadowed with a pall!
But hark to my song
As I sweep along,
 Thundering my organ-tone—
'O vain is all Life,
O vain is all Strife,
 And fruitless the Years that have flown!
As the Worst; so the Best—
All haste to their rest
 In the void of the Primal Unknown.'

John Daniel Logan

Timor Mortis

'For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother
And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here.'

King Henry V—Act IV, sc. 3 (King's speech prior to the battle of Agincourt).

I WEND my ways with one dire dread
Now daily in my heart:
The fear of death obsesses me—
The fear that I may pass
Too soon for my desiring eyes to see

The English camps, and for my feet to tread
The English green-sward grass;
That I, who've heard my God's, my King's, my Country's claims
And, though belated, have at length begun
A larger life of holier aims
Than was my wont, may suddenly depart
This shattered world to utter oblivion,
Ere I, in Christian chivalry,
With brave, devoted comrades dauntlessly have stood face to the foe
On Flanders' fatal fields and struck a single blow
For man's dear brotherhood and world-wide liberty,
Or ere, upon the blood-steeped slopes
Of France, I've met—mine eyes afront, my soul quite undismayed—
The Hunnish cannons' fearful fusilade
Or done my share to still the Hunnish hopes,
And thus to leave secure, ev'n if by my poor martyrdom,
A happier heritage to generations yet to come.
Dear God, oh, privilege me the fullest bloom
Of vital-strength, that I may pay the price
For my too selfish, easeful days; spare me to live
That I, if it should be Thy will, may sacrifice
The meagre all I now can give,
And, falling, lie obscurely laid within a nameless tomb.
Perchance, round where mine unknown grave may be,
Unshaded by Canadian maples, unsung by winds from my Acadian sea,

I shall in spirit-state revisit foreign slope or plain
On which I fell, and there aloft descry
The Flag of England still flaunting victory to the sky,
'Neath where the hellish holocaust once swept amain,
And I shall know I died not in dishonour nor in vain,
But that I may, at home, in peace, untried, yield up my breath—
This is my direst dread, my fear, of thee, O Death!

John Daniel Logan

Wind O' The Sea

O WANDERING minstrel, wild Wind o' the Sea,
That knowest the innermost being of me
Who love thy rude sport with the measureless brine,
And whose spirit is wayward and vagrant as thine,–

O wandering minstrel, sad Wind o' the Sea,
That learnest world-secrets by swift errantry,
Blow hither to me o'er the wide Eastern main
And tell me what meaneth the poignant refrain
Of surges that moan like sad souls in their sleep,
And those shuddering shadows that darken the deep.
Blow, wild Wind o' the Sea!
Blow, sad Wind o' the Sea!
And speed with thy lay to thy lorn devotee.

Then the Sea-wind sang forth: 'I blow from afar
The ocean's accompaniment to the war
Of the beast and the god that dwell in thy soul,
Forever at strife for the gain of the whole
Of thy manhood's estate, of thy love and desire,
So thou sink to the one; to the other aspire.
And the deep, dark, shuddering shadows,' he shrilled,
'Are the planes of thy life which Destiny willed–
The devilish depths of thy sensual hours
When the beast in thy soul thralls thy senses and pow'rs–
The shadowy heights of thy consecrate days
When the god in thy soul is lord of thy ways.'

Thus ruthlessly sang the wild Wind o' the Sea
That learnest soul-secrets by swift errantry.
Ah, wild Wind o' the Sea!
Ah, sad Wind o' the Sea!
That revealest the innermost being of me.

John Daniel Logan

Winifred Waters

WINIFRED WATERS, when I look on you now,–
With the sweet peace of God on your beautiful brow
As you lie lily-white in your lone lethal bed,–
I will conjure your spirit, sit here at your head,
And talk to you, dear, whom I lost, and recall
Our vows when I swooned to the ineffable thrall
Of your eyes that once rivalled the jewels of Night,
Of your kisses that dropped more delicious and light
Than the rose-leaves that perfume the drowsy June air,
Of the glorious gold in your hyacinth hair,
And the treasures of love that we pledged for the days
When our souls should discover Earth's winsomest ways.

O Winifred Waters, mellifluous name
That enamored my soul as rare music, I came
To the wells of Love's wine, and I drank there elate,
Then I joyed daily forth, till an untoward fate
Snapped the cords that enchained us, heart unto heart.
So I passed to the world. You, cloistered apart
In the lonely-celled nunnery of unchanging grief,
Awaited Time's advent with his mortal relief,
Till you drooped like a sun-famished lily, and died.
But I am come, dear, at length, and here by your side
I commune with your spirit while I look on you now,
With the sweet peace of God on your beautiful brow.
Lo, I kiss your cold hands; I warm them with tears
And possess you again after long widowed years.

O Winifred Waters, I re-pledge you above
Your casket, and find there the Treasury of Love.

John Daniel Logan