

Classic Poetry Series

Emily Pauline Johnson
- poems -

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Emily Pauline Johnson(10 March 1861 – 7 March 1913)

Emily Pauline Johnson (also known in Mohawk as Tekahionwake –pronounced: dageh-eeon-wageh, literally: 'double-life'), commonly known as E. Pauline Johnson or just Pauline Johnson, was a Canadian writer and performer popular in the late 19th century. Johnson was notable for her poems and performances that celebrated her First Nations heritage; her father was a Mohawk chief of mixed ancestry, and her mother an English immigrant. One such poem is the frequently anthologized "The Song My Paddle Sings".

Her poetry was published in Canada, the United States and Great Britain. Johnson was one of a generation of widely read writers who began to define a Canadian literature. While her literary reputation declined after her death, since the later 20th century, there has been renewed interest in her life and ne Johnson was born at Chiefswood, the family home built by her father in 1856 on the Six Nations Indian Reserve outside Brantford, Ontario. She was the youngest of four children of Emily Susanna Howells Johnson (1824–1898), a native of England, and George Henry Martin Johnson (1816–1884), a Mohawk chief whose mother was half European. Howells had immigrated to the United States in 1832 as a young child with her father, stepmother and siblings. Howells met Johnson while living with her older sister on the reserve, where her brother-in-law was an Anglican missionary.

Although Emily and George Johnson's marriage had been opposed by both their families, and they were concerned that their mixed-race family would not be socially accepted, they were acknowledged as a leading Canadian family (Gray 2002, p. 61). The Johnsons enjoyed a high standard of living, and their family and home were well known. Chiefswood was visited by such intellectual and political guests as the inventor Alexander Graham Bell, painter Homer Watson, noted anthropologist Horatio Hale, and Lady and Lord Dufferin, Governor General of Canada.

Emily and George Johnson encouraged their four children to respect and learn about both the Mohawk and the English aspects of their heritage. Because the children were born to a Native father, by British law they were legally considered Mohawk and wards of the British Crown. Because their mother was not Mohawk, they were excluded from aspects of the tribe's matrilineal culture. Their paternal grandfather John Smoke Johnson, who had been elected a Pine Tree Chief, was an authority in the lives of his grandchildren. He told them many stories in the

Mohawk language, which they comprehended but did not speak ne Johnson said that she inherited her talent for elocution from her grandfather. Late in life, she expressed regret for not learning more of his Mohawk heritage.

A sickly child, Johnson did not attend Brantford's Mohawk Institute. It was established in 1834 as one of Canada's first residential schools for Native children. Her education was mostly at home and informal, derived from her mother, a series of non-Native governesses, a few years at the small school on the reserve, and self-directed reading in the family's expansive library. She became familiar with literary works by Byron, Tennyson, Keats, Browning, and Milton. She enjoyed reading tales about Native peoples, such as Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha* and John Richardson's *Wacousta*. At age 14, Johnson went to Brantford Central Collegiate with her brother Allen, and she graduated in 1877. A schoolmate was Sara Jeannette Duncan, who developed her own journalistic and literary career.

Literary and Stage Career

During the 1880s, Pauline Johnson wrote and performed in amateur theatre productions. She enjoyed the Canadian outdoors, where she traveled by canoe. In 1883 she published her first full-length poem, "My Little Jean," in the *New York Gems of Poetry*. She began to increase the pace of her writing and publishing afterward.

Shortly after her father's death in 1884, the family rented out Chiefswood. Pauline Johnson moved with her widowed mother and sister to a modest home in Brantford. She worked to support them all, and found that her stage performances allowed her to make a living. Johnson supported her mother until her death in 1898.

In 1885 Charles G.D. Roberts published Johnson's "A Cry from an Indian Wife" in *The Week*, Goldwin Smith's Toronto magazine. She based it on the battle of Cut Knife Creek during the Riel Rebellion. Roberts and Johnson became lifelong friends. Johnson promoted her identity as a Mohawk, but spent little time with people of the culture as an adult. In 1885, Johnson traveled to Buffalo, New York to attend a ceremony honoring the Iroquois leader Sagoyewatha, also known as Red Jacket. She wrote a poem expressing admiration for him and a plea for reconciliation between British and Native peoples (Gray 2002, p. 90).

In 1886 Johnson was commissioned to write a poem to mark the unveiling in Brantford of a statue honoring Joseph Brant, the important Mohawk leader during and after the American Revolutionary War. Her "Ode to Brant" was read at an 13

October ceremony before "the largest crowd the little city had ever seen." It called for brotherhood between Native and white Canadians under British imperial authority (Gray 2002, p. 90). The poem sparked a long article in the *Toronto Globe*, and increased interest in Johnson's poetry and heritage. The Brantford businessman William F. Cockshutt read the poem at the ceremony, as Johnson was reportedly too shy. During the 1880s, Johnson built her reputation as a Canadian writer, regularly publishing in periodicals such as *Globe*, *The Week*, and *Saturday Night*. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, she published nearly every month, mostly in *Saturday* on was one of a group of Canadian authors contributing to a distinct national literature. The inclusion of two of her poems in W.D. Lighthall's anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889), signaled her recognition and Theodore Watts-Dunton noted her for praise in his review of the book; he quoted her entire poem "In the Shadows" and called her "the most interesting poetess now living." In her early works, Johnson wrote mostly about Canadian life, landscapes, and love in a post-Romantic mode, reflective of literary interests shared with her mother rather than her Mohawk heritage.

The Young Men's Liberal Association invited Johnson to a Canadian Authors Evening, held 16 January 1892 at the Toronto Art School Gallery. The only woman at the event, she read to an overflow crowd, along with luminaries such as Lighthall, William Wilfred Campbell, and Duncan Campbell Scott. "The poise and grace of this beautiful young woman standing before them captivated the audience even before she began to recite — not read, as the others had done" — her "Cry from an Indian Wife." She was the only author to be called back for an encore. "She had scored a personal triumph and saved the evening from turning into a disaster."

The success of this performance began the poet's 15-year stage career, as she was signed up by Frank Yeigh, who had organized the Liberal event. He gave her the headline for her first show on 19 February 1892, where she debuted a new poem written for the event, "The Song My Paddle Sings." Johnson was perceived as quite young (although she was then 31), a beauty, and an exotic Native performer. After her first recital season, she decided to emphasize the Native aspects by assembling and wearing a feminine Native costume. She wore it during the first part of the show, when reciting her dramatic "Indian" lyrics. At intermission she changed into fashionable English dress; in the second half, she appeared as a Victorian lady to recite her "English" verse.

Johnson's decision to develop her stage persona, and the popularity it inspired, showed that the audiences she encountered in Canada, England, and the United States recognized and were entertained by Native peoples in performance. The

1890s were also the period of popularity of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show and ethnological aboriginal exhibits. She and her siblings inherited an artifact collection from their father, which included significant items such as wampum belts and spiritual masks. She used some items in her stage performances, but sold most later to museums, such as the Ontario Provincial Museum, or to collectors, such as the prominent American George Gustav Heye.

Scholars have had difficulty identifying Johnson's complete works, as much was published in periodicals. Her first volume of poetry, *The White Wampum*, was published in London, England in 1895. It was followed by *Canadian Born* in 1903. The contents of these volumes, together with additional poems, were published as the collection *Flint and Feather* in 1912. Reprinted many times, this book has been one of the best-selling titles of Canadian poetry. Since the 1917 edition, *Flint and Feather* has been misleadingly subtitled "The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson."

Later Life

Siwash Rock in Stanley Park, which story is told in *Legends of Vancouver*. Johnson's burial site is nearby. Photo by Andrew Raun. After retiring from the stage in August 1909, Johnson moved to Vancouver, British Columbia and continued writing. Her pieces included a series of articles for the *Daily Province*, based on stories related by her friend Chief Joe Capilano of the Squamish people of North Vancouver. In 1911, to help support Johnson, who was ill and poor, a group of friends organized the publication of these stories under the title *Legends of Vancouver*. They remain classics of that city's literature. One of the stories was a Squamish legend of shape shifting: how a man was transformed into Siwash Rock "as an indestructible monument to Clean Fatherhood." In another, Johnson told the history of Deadman's Island, a small islet off Stanley Park. In a poem in the collection, she named one of her favourite areas "Lost Lagoon", as the inlet seemed to disappear when the water emptied at low tide. The body of water has since been transformed into a permanent, fresh-water lake at Stanley Park, but it is still called "Lost Lagoon".

The posthumous *Shagwanappi* (1913) and *The Moccasin Maker* (1913) are collections of selected stories first published in periodicals. Johnson wrote on a variety of sentimental, didactic, and biographical topics. Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson provided a provisional chronological list of Johnson's writings in their book *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (2000).

Johnson died of breast cancer in Vancouver, British Columbia on 7 March 1913.

Her funeral (the largest until then in Vancouver history) was held on what would have been her 52nd birthday. Her ashes were buried near Siwash Rock in Stanley Park. In 1922 a cairn was erected at the burial site, with an inscription reading in part, "in memory of one who's life and writings were an uplift and a blessing to our nation".

Criticism and Legacy

Despite the acclaim she received from contemporaries, Johnson's reputation significantly declined in the decades after her death. It was not until 1961, with commemoration of the centenary of her birth, that Johnson began to be recognized as an important Canadian cultural figure. A number of biographers and literary critics have downplayed her literary contributions, as they contend that her performances contributed most to her literary reputation during her lifetime. W. J. Keith wrote: "Pauline Johnson's life was more interesting than her writing ... with ambitions as a poet, she produced little or nothing of value in the eyes of critics who emphasize style rather than content."

The author Margaret Atwood admitted that she did not study literature by Native authors when preparing *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), her seminal work. At its publication, she had said she could not find Native works. She mused, "Why did I overlook Pauline Johnson? Perhaps because, being half-white, she somehow didn't rate as the real thing, even among Natives; although she is undergoing reclamation today." Atwood's comments indicated that Johnson's multicultural identity contributed to her neglect by critics.

As Atwood noted, since the late 20th century, Johnson's writings and performance career have been reevaluated by literary, feminist, and postcolonial critics. They have appreciated her importance as a New Woman and a figure of resistance to dominant ideas about race, gender, Native Rights, and Canada. The growth in literature written by First Nations people during the 1980s and 1990s has prompted writers and scholars to investigate Native oral and written literary history, to which Johnson made a significant contribution. In 1922, the city of Vancouver erected a monument in Pauline Johnson's honour at her well-loved Stanley Park. In 1961, on the centennial of her birth, Johnson was celebrated with a commemorative stamp bearing her image, "rendering her the first woman (other than the Queen), the first author, and the first aboriginal Canadian to be thus honored."

Four Canadian schools have been named in Johnson's honour: elementary schools in West Vancouver, British Columbia; Scarborough, Ontario; Hamilton,

Ontario; and Burlington, Ontario; and a high school in Brantford, swood, Johnson's childhood home constructed in 1856 in Brantford, has been listed as a National Historic Site because of both her father's and her own historical importance. Preserved as a house museum, it is the oldest Native mansion surviving from pre-Confederation times. An Ontario Historical Plaque was erected in front of the Chiefswood house museum by the province to commemorate E. Pauline Johnson's role in the region's heritage.

On 11 March 2008, City Opera Vancouver announced its commission of Pauline, a chamber opera to star the dramatic mezzo Judith Forst. The composer is Christos Hatzis, with libretto by Margaret Atwood. The work is planned for premiere in early 2011. The first opera to be written about Pauline Johnson, it is set in Vancouver in March 1913, in the last week of her life.

The Canadian actor Donald Sutherland narrated the following quote from her poem "Autumn's Orchestra", at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. In 2010, composer Jeff Enns was commissioned to create a song based on Johnson's poem "At Sunset". His work was sung and recorded by the Canadian Chamber Choir under the artistic direction of Julia Davids.

Family History

Chiefswood, the birthplace of Pauline Johnson and a National Historic Site of Canada. The Mohawk ancestors of Johnson's father, Chief George Henry Martin Johnson, had historically lived in what became the state of New York, the Mohawk traditional homeland in the present-day United States. In 1758, her great-grandfather Tekahionwake was born in New York. When he was baptized, he took the name Jacob Johnson, taking his surname from Sir William Johnson, the influential British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, who acted as his godfather. The Johnson surname was subsequently passed down in the family.

After the American Revolutionary War started, Loyalists in the Mohawk Valley came under intense pressure. The Mohawk and three other Iroquois tribes were allies of the British rather than the rebel colonists. Jacob Johnson and his family moved to Canada. After the war they settled permanently in Ontario on land given by the Crown in partial compensation for Iroquois losses of territory in New York.

His son John Smoke Johnson had a talent for oratory, spoke English as well as Mohawk, and demonstrated his patriotism to the Crown during the War of 1812. As a result, John Smoke Johnson was made a Pine Tree Chief at the request of the British government. Although John Smoke Johnson's title could not be

inherited, his wife Helen Martin was descended from the Wolf Clan and a founding family of the Six Nations. Through her lineage and influence (as the Mohawk were matrilineal), their son George Johnson was named chief. Chief George Johnson inherited his father's gift for languages and began his career as a church translator on the Six Nations reserve. Assisting the Anglican missionary, Johnson met his sister-in-law Emily Howells. They fell in love and married. In 1853, the couple's interracial marriage displeased both the Johnson and Howells families. (Several prominent Canadian families were descended from 18th and 19th-century marriages between British fur traders, who had capital and social standing, and daughters of First Nations chiefs, which had been considered economic and social alliances.) The birth of their first child reconciled the Johnson family to the marriage. In 1856 Johnson built Chiefswood, a wood mansion where the family lived for years.

In his roles as government interpreter and hereditary Chief, George Johnson developed a reputation as a talented mediator between Native and European was well respected in Ontario. He also made enemies because of his efforts to stop illegal trading of reserve timber. Physically attacked by Native and non-Native men involved in this traffic, Johnson suffered from health problems afterward. He died of a fever in 1884.

Emily Howells was born in England to a well-established British family who immigrated to the United States in 1832. Her father Henry Howells was a Quaker and intended to join the American abolitionist movement. Emily's mother Mary Best Howells had died when the girl was five, before the family left England. Her father married again before they immigrated. In the US, he moved his family to several American cities, where he founded schools to gain an income, before settling in Eaglewood, New Jersey. After his second wife died (women had a high mortality in childbirth), Howells married a third time, and fathered a total of 24 children. Although he opposed slavery and encouraged his children to "pray for the blacks and to pity the poor Indians. Nevertheless, his compassion did not preclude the view that his own race was superior to others".

At the age of 21, Emily Howells moved to the Six Nations reserve in Ontario, Canada to join her older sister, who had moved there with her Anglican missionary husband. Emily helped her care for her growing family. After falling in love with George Johnson, Howells gained a better understanding of the Native peoples and some perspective on her father's beliefs.

A Cry From An Indian Wife

My forest brave, my Red-skin love, farewell;
We may not meet to-morrow; who can tell
What mighty ills befall our little band,
Or what you'll suffer from the white man's hand?
Here is your knife! I thought 'twas sheathed for aye.
No roaming bison calls for it to-day;
No hide of prairie cattle will it maim;
The plains are bare, it seeks a nobler game:
'Twill drink the life-blood of a soldier host.
Go; rise and strike, no matter what the cost.
Yet stay. Revolt not at the Union Jack,
Nor raise Thy hand against this stripling pack
Of white-faced warriors, marching West to quell
Our fallen tribe that rises to rebel.
They all are young and beautiful and good;
Curse to the war that drinks their harmless blood.
Curse to the fate that brought them from the East
To be our chiefs--to make our nation least
That breathes the air of this vast continent.
Still their new rule and council is well meant.
They but forget we Indians owned the land
From ocean unto ocean; that they stand
Upon a soil that centuries ago
Was our sole kingdom and our right alone.
They never think how they would feel to-day,
If some great nation came from far away,
Wresting their country from their hapless braves,
Giving what they gave us--but wars and graves.
Then go and strike for liberty and life,
And bring back honour to your Indian wife.
Your wife? Ah, what of that, who cares for me?
Who pities my poor love and agony?
What white-robed priest prays for your safety here,
As prayer is said for every volunteer
That swells the ranks that Canada sends out?
Who prays for vict'ry for the Indian scout?
Who prays for our poor nation lying low?
None--therefore take your tomahawk and go.
My heart may break and burn into its core,

But I am strong to bid you go to war.
Yet stay, my heart is not the only one
That grieves the loss of husband and of son;
Think of the mothers o'er the inland seas;
Think of the pale-faced maiden on her knees;
One pleads her God to guard some sweet-faced child
That marches on toward the North-West wild.
The other prays to shield her love from harm,
To strengthen his young, proud uplifted arm.
Ah, how her white face quivers thus to think,
Your tomahawk his life's best blood will drink.
She never thinks of my wild aching breast,
Nor prays for your dark face and eagle crest
Endangered by a thousand rifle balls,
My heart the target if my warrior falls.
O! coward self I hesitate no more;
Go forth, and win the glories of the war.
Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men's hands,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands,
Though starved, crushed, plundered, lies our nation low...
Perhaps the white man's God has willed it so

Emily Pauline Johnson

A Prodigal

My heart forgot its God for love of you,
And you forgot me, other loves to learn;
Now through a wilderness of thorn and rue
Back to my God I turn.

And just because my God forgets the past,
And in forgetting does not ask to know
Why I once left His arms for yours, at last
Back to my God I go.

Emily Pauline Johnson

A Toast

There's wine in the cup, Vancouver,
And there's warmth in my heart for you,
While I drink to your health, your youth, and your wealth,
And the things that you yet will do.
In a vintage rare and olden,
With a flavour fine and keen,
Fill the glass to the edge, while I stand up to pledge
My faith to my western queen.

Then here's a Ho! Vancouver, in wine of the bonniest hue,
With a hand on my hip and the cup at my lip,
And a love in my life for you.
For you are a jolly good fellow, with a great, big heart, I know;
So I drink this toast
To the "Queen of the Coast."
Vancouver, here's a Ho!

And here's to the days that are coming,
And here's to the days that are gone,
And here's to your gold and your spirit bold,
And your luck that has held its own;
And here's to your hands so sturdy,
And here's to your hearts so true,
And here's to the speed of the day decreed
That brings me again to you.

Then here's a Ho! Vancouver, in wine of the bonniest hue,
With a hand on my hip and the cup at my lip,
And a love in my life for you.
For you are a jolly good fellow, with a great, big heart, I know;
So I drink this toast
To the "Queen of the Coast."
Vancouver, here's a Ho!

Emily Pauline Johnson

An Etching

A meadow brown; across the yonder edge
A zigzag fence is ambling; here a wedge
Of underbush has cleft its course in twain,
Till where beyond it staggers up again;
The long, grey rails stretch in a broken line
Their ragged length of rough, split forest pine,
And in their zigzag tottering have reeled
In drunken efforts to enclose the field,
Which carries on its breast, September born,
A patch of rustling, yellow, Indian corn.
Beyond its shrivelled tassels, perched upon
The topmost rail, sits Joe, the settler's son,
A little semi-savage boy of nine.
Now dozing in the warmth of Nature's wine,
His face the sun has tampered with, and wrought,
By heated kisses, mischief, and has brought
Some vagrant freckles, while from here and there
A few wild locks of vagabond brown hair
Escape the old straw hat the sun looks through,
And blinks to meet his Irish eyes of blue.
Barefooted, innocent of coat or vest,
His grey checked shirt unbuttoned at his chest,
Both hardy hands within their usual nest--
His breeches pockets--so, he waits to rest
His little fingers, somewhat tired and worn,
That all day long were husking Indian corn.
His drowsy lids snap at some trivial sound,
With lazy yawns he slips towards the ground,
Then with an idle whistle lifts his load
And shambles home along the country road
That stretches on, fringed out with stumps and weeds,
And finally unto the backwoods leads,
Where forests wait with giant trunk and bough
The axe of pioneer, the settler's plough.

Emily Pauline Johnson

And He Said, Fight On

Time and its ally, Dark Disarmament,
Have compassed me about,
Have massed their armies, and on battle bent
My forces put to rout;
But though I fight alone, and fall, and die,
Talk terms of Peace? Not I.
(Tennyson)

They war upon my fortress, and their guns
Are shattering its walls;
My army plays the cowards' part, and runs,
Pierced by a thousand balls;
They call for my surrender. I reply,
'Give quarter now? Not I.'

They've shot my flag to ribbons, but in rents
It floats above the height;
Their ensign shall not crown my battlements
While I can stand and fight.
I fling defiance at them as I cry,
'Capitulate? Not I.'

Emily Pauline Johnson

As Red Men Die

Captive! Is there a hell to him like this?
A taunt more galling than the Huron's hiss?
He--proud and scornful, he--who laughed at law,
He--scion of the deadly Iroquois,
He--the bloodthirsty, he--the Mohawk chief,
He--who despises pain and sneers at grief,
Here in the hated Huron's vicious clutch,
That even captive he disdains to touch!

Captive! But never conquered; Mohawk brave
Stoops not to be to any man a slave;
Least, to the puny tribe his soul abhors,
The tribe whose wigwams sprinkle Simcoe's shores.
With scowling brow he stands and courage high,
Watching with haughty and defiant eye
His captors, as they council o'er his fate,
Or strive his boldness to intimidate.
Then fling they unto him the choice;

"Wilt thou walk o'er the bed of fire that waits thee now--
Walk with uncovered feet upon the coals,
Until thou reach the ghostly Land of Souls,
And, with thy Mohawk death-song please our ear?
Or wilt thou with the women rest thee here?"
His eyes flash like an eagle's, and his hands
Clench at the insult. Like a god he stands.
"Prepare the fire!" he scornfully demands.

He knoweth not that this same jeering band
Will bite the dust--will lick the Mohawk's hand;
Will kneel and cower at the Mohawk's feet;
Will shrink when Mohawk war drums wildly beat.

His death will be avenged with hideous hate
By Iroquois, swift to annihilate
His vile detested captors, that now flaunt
Their war clubs in his face with sneer and taunt,
Not thinking, soon that reeking, red, and raw,
Their scalps will deck the belts of Iroquois.

The path of coals outstretches, white with heat,
A forest fir's length--ready for his feet.
Unflinching as a rock he steps along
The burning mass, and sings his wild war song;
Sings, as he sang when once he used to roam
Throughout the forests of his southern home,
Where, down the Genesee, the water roars,
Where gentle Mohawk purls between its shores,
Songs, that of exploit and of prowess tell;
Songs of the Iroquois invincible.

Up the long trail of fire he boasting goes,
Dancing a war dance to defy his foes.
His flesh is scorched, his muscles burn and shrink.
But still he dances to death's awful brink.

The eagle plume that crests his haughty head
Will never droop until his heart be dead.
Slower and slower yet his footstep swings,
Wilder and wilder still his death-song rings,
Fiercer and fiercer thro' the forest bounds
His voice that leaps to Happier Hunting Grounds.
One savage yell--

Then loyal to his race,
He bends to death--but never to disgrace.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Aspens

A sweet high treble threads its silvery song,
Voice of the restless aspen, fine and thin
It trills its pure soprano, light and long-
Like the vibretto of a mandolin.

Emily Pauline Johnson

At Crow's Nest Pass

At Crow's Nest Pass the mountains rend
Themselves apart, the rivers wend
A lawless course about their feet,
And breaking into torrents beat
In useless fury where they blend
At Crow's Nest Pass.

The nesting eagle, wise, discreet,
Wings up the gorge's lone retreat
And makes some barren crag her friend
At Crow's Nest Pass.

Uncertain clouds, half-high, suspend
Their shifting vapours, and contend
With rocks that suffer not defeat;
And snows, and suns, and mad winds meet
To battle where the cliffs defend
At Crow's Nest Pass.

Emily Pauline Johnson

At Half-Mast

You didn't know Billy, did you? Well, Bill was one of the boys,
The greatest fellow you ever seen to racket an' raise a noise,--
An' sing! say, you never heard singing 'nless you heard Billy sing.
I used to say to him, "Billy, that voice that you've got there'd bring
A mighty sight more bank-notes to tuck away in your vest,
If only you'd go on the concert stage instead of a-ranchin' West."
An' Billy he'd jist go laughin', and say as I didn't know
A robin's whistle in springtime from a barnyard rooster's crow.
But Billy could sing, an' I sometimes think that voice lives anyhow,--
That perhaps Bill helps with the music in the place he's gone to now.

The last time that I seen him was the day he rode away;
He was goin' acrost the plain to catch the train for the East next day.
'Twas the only time I ever seen poor Bill that he didn't laugh
Or sing, an' kick up a rumpus an' racket around, and chaff,
For he'd got a letter from his folks that said for to hurry home,
For his mother was dyin' away down East an' she wanted Bill to come.
Say, but the feller took it hard, but he saddled up right away,
An' started across the plains to take the train for the East, next day.
Sometimes I lie awake a-nights jist a-thinkin' of the rest,
For that was the great big blizzard day, when the wind come down from west,
An' the snow piled up like mountains an' we couldn't put foot outside,
But jist set into the shack an' talked of Bill on his lonely ride.
We talked of the laugh he threw us as he went at the break o' day,
An' we talked of the poor old woman dyin' a thousand mile away.

Well, Dan O'Connell an' I went out to search at the end of the week,
Fer all of us fellers thought a lot,--a lot that we darsn't speak.
We'd been up the trail about forty mile, an' was talkin' of turnin' back,
But Dan, well, he wouldn't give in, so we kep' right on to the railroad track.
As soon as we sighted them telegraph wires says Dan, "Say, bless my soul!
Ain't that there Bill's red handkerchief tied half way up that pole?"
Yes, sir, there she was, with her ends a-flippin' an' flyin' in the wind,
An' underneath was the envelope of Bill's letter tightly pinned.
"Why, he must a-boarded the train right here," says Dan, but I kinder knew
That underneath them snowdrifts we would find a thing or two;
Fer he'd writ on that there paper, "Been lost fer hours,--all hope is past.
You'll find me, boys, where my handkerchief is flyin' at half-mast."

At Husking Time

At husking time the tassel fades
To brown above the yellow blades,
Whose rustling sheath enswathes the corn
That bursts its chrysalis in scorn
Longer to lie in prison shades.

Among the merry lads and maids
The creaking ox-cart slowly wades
Twixt stalks and stubble, sacked and torn
At husking time.

The prying pilot crow persuades
The flock to join in thieving raids;
The sly racoon with craft inborn
His portion steals; from plenty's horn
His pouch the saucy chipmunk lades
At husking time.

Emily Pauline Johnson

At Sunset

To-night the west o'er-brims with warmest dyes;
Its chalice overflows
With pools of purple colouring the skies,
Aflood with gold and rose;
And some hot soul seems throbbing close to mine,
As sinks the sun within that world of wine.

I seem to hear a bar of music float
And swoon into the west;
My ear can scarcely catch the whispered note,
But something in my breast
Blends with that strain, till both accord in one,
As cloud and colour blend at set of sun.

And twilight comes with grey and restful eyes,
As ashes follow flame.
But O! I heard a voice from those rich skies
Call tenderly my name;
It was as if some priestly fingers stole
In benedictions o'er my lonely soul.

I know not why, but all my being longed
And leapt at that sweet call;
My heart outreached its arms, all passion thronged
And beat against Fate's wall,
Crying in utter homesickness to be
Near to a heart that loves and leans to me.

AT SUNSET

To-night the west o'er-brims with warmest dyes;
Its chalice overflows
With pools of purple colouring the skies,
Aflood with gold and rose;
And some hot soul seems throbbing close to mine,
As sinks the sun within that world of wine.

I seem to hear a bar of music float
And swoon into the west;

My ear can scarcely catch the whispered note,
But something in my breast
Blends with that strain, till both accord in one,
As cloud and colour blend at set of sun.

And twilight comes with grey and restful eyes,
As ashes follow flame.

But O! I heard a voice from those rich skies
Call tenderly my name;
It was as if some priestly fingers stole
In benedictions o'er my lonely soul.

I know not why, but all my being longed
And leapt at that sweet call;
My heart outreached its arms, all passion thronged
And beat against Fate's wall,
Crying in utter homesickness to be
Near to a heart that loves and leans to me.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Autumn's Orchestra

(INSCRIBED TO ONE BEYOND SEAS)

Know by the thread of music woven through
This fragile web of cadences I spin,
That I have only caught these songs since you
Voiced them upon your haunting violin.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Beyond The Blue

I

Speak of you, sir? You bet he did. Ben Fields was far too sound
To go back on a fellow just because he weren't around.
Why, sir, he thought a lot of you, and only three months back
Says he, "The Squire will some time come a-snuffing out our track
And give us the surprise." And so I got to thinking then
That any day you might drop down on Rove, and me, and Ben.
And now you've come for nothing, for the lad has left us two,
And six long weeks ago, sir, he went up beyond the blue.

Who's Rove? Oh, he's the collie, and the only thing on earth
That I will ever love again. Why, Squire, that dog is worth
More than you ever handled, and that's quite a piece, I know.
Ah, there the beggar is!--come here, you scalawag! and show
Your broken leg all bandaged up. Yes, sir, it's pretty sore;
I did it,--curse me,--and I think I feel the pain far more
Than him, for somehow I just feel as if I'd been untrue
To what my brother said before he went beyond the blue.

You see, the day before he died he says to me, "Say, Ned,
Be sure you take good care of poor old Rover when I'm dead,
And maybe he will cheer your lonesome hours up a bit,
And when he takes to you just see that you're deserving it."
Well, Squire, it wasn't any use. I tried, but couldn't get
The friendship of that collie, for I needed it, you bet.
I might as well have tried to get the moon to help me through,
For Rover's heart had gone with Ben, 'way up beyond the blue.

He never seemed to take to me nor follow me about,
For all I coaxed and petted, for my heart was starving out
For want of some companionship,--I thought, if only he
Would lick my hand or come and put his head aside my knee,
Perhaps his touch would scatter something of the gloom away.
But all alone I had to live until there came a day
When, tired of the battle, as you'd have tired too,
I wished to heaven I'd gone with Ben, 'way up beyond the blue.

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One morning I took out Ben's gun, and thought I'd hunt all day,
And started through the clearing for the bush that forward lay,
When something made me look around--I scarce believed my mind--
But, sure enough, the dog was following right close behind.
A feeling first of joy, and than a sharper, greater one
Of anger came, at knowing 'twas not me, but Ben's old gun,
That Rove was after,--well, sir, I just don't mind telling you,
But I forgot that moment Ben was up beyond the blue.

Perhaps it was but jealousy--perhaps it was despair,
But I just struck him with the gun and broke the bone right there;
And then--my very throat seemed choked, for he began to whine
With pain--God knows how tenderly I took that dog of mine
Up in my arms, and tore my old red necktie into bands
To bind the broken leg, while there he lay and licked my hands;
And though I cursed my soul, it was the brightest day I knew,
Or even cared to live, since Ben went up beyond the blue.

I tell you, Squire, I nursed him just as gently as could be,
And now I'm all the world to him, and he's the world to me.
Look, sir, at that big, noble soul, right in his faithful eyes,
The square, forgiving honesty that deep down in them lies.
Eh, Squire? What's that you say? He's got no soul? I tell you, then,
He's grander and he's better than the mass of what's called men;
And I guess he stands a better chance than many of us do
Of seeing Ben some day again, 'way up beyond the blue.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Brandon

Born on the breast of the prairie, she smiles to her sire--the sun,
Robed in the wealth of her wheat-lands, gift of her mothering soil,
Affluence knocks at her gateways, opulence waits to be won.
Nuggets of gold are her acres, yielding and yellow with spoil,
Dream of the hungry millions, dawn of the food-filled age,
Over the starving tale of want her fingers have turned the page;
Nations will nurse at her storehouse, and God gives her grain for wage.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Brier: Good Friday

Because, dear Christ, your tender, wounded arm
Bends back the brier that edges life's long way,
That no hurt comes to heart, to soul no harm,
I do not feel the thorns so much to-day.
Because I never knew your care to tire,
Your hand to weary guiding me aright,
Because you walk before and crush the brier,
It does not pierce my feet so much to-night.
Because so often you have hearkened to
My selfish prayers, I ask but one thing now,
That these harsh hands of mine add not unto
The crown of thorns upon your bleeding brow.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Calgary Of The Plains

Not of the seething cities with their swarming human hives,
Their fetid airs, their reeking streets, their dwarfed and poisoned lives,
Not of the buried yesterdays, but of the days to be,
The glory and the gateway of the yellow West is she.

The Northern Lights dance down her plains with soft and silvery feet,
The sunrise gilds her prairies when the dawn and daylight meet;
Along her level lands the fitful southern breezes sweep,
And beyond her western windows the sublime old mountains sleep.

The Redman haunts her portals, and the Paleface treads her streets,
The Indian's stealthy footstep with the course of commerce meets,
And hunters whisper vaguely of the half forgotten tales
Of phantom herds of bison lurking on her midnight trails.

Not hers the lore of olden lands, their laurels and their bays;
But what are these, compared to one of all her perfect days?
For naught can buy the jewel that upon her forehead lies--
The cloudless sapphire Heaven of her territorial skies.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Canada

(ACROSTIC)

Crown of her, young Vancouver; crest of her, old Quebec;
Atlantic and far Pacific sweeping her, keel to deck.
North of her, ice and arctics; southward a rival's stealth;
Aloft, her Empire's pennant; below, her nation's wealth.
Daughter of men and markets, bearing within her hold,
Appraised at highest value, cargoes of grain and gold.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Canadian Born

We first saw light in Canada, the land beloved of God;
We are the pulse of Canada, its marrow and its blood:
And we, the men of Canada, can face the world and brag
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

Few of us have the blood of kings, few are of courtly birth,
But few are vagabonds or rogues of doubtful name and worth;
And all have one credential that entitles us to brag--
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

We've yet to make our money, we've yet to make our fame,
But we have gold and glory in our clean colonial name;
And every man's a millionaire if only he can brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.

No title and no coronet is half so proudly worn
As that which we inherited as men Canadian born.
We count no man so noble as the one who makes the brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.

The Dutch may have their Holland, the Spaniard have his Spain,
The Yankee to the south of us must south of us remain;
For not a man dare lift a hand against the men who brag
That they were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Christmastide

I may not go to-night to Bethlehem,
Nor follow star-directed ways, nor tread
The paths wherein the shepherds walked, that led
To Christ, and peace, and God's good will to men.

I may not hear the Herald Angel's song
Peal through the Oriental skies, nor see
The wonder of that Heavenly company
Announce the King the world had waited long.

The manger throne I may not kneel before,
Or see how man to God is reconciled,
Through pure St. Mary's purer, holier child;
The human Christ these eyes may not adore.

I may not carry frankincense and myrrh
With adoration to the Holy One;
Nor gold have I to give the Perfect Son,
To be with those wise kings a worshipper.

Not mine the joy that Heaven sent to them,
For ages since Time swung and locked his gates,
But I may kneel without--the star still waits
To guide me on to holy Bethlehem.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Close By

So near at hand (our eyes o'erlooked its nearness
In search of distant things)
A dear dream lay--perchance to grow in dearness
Had we but felt its wings
Astir. The air our very breathing fanned
It was so near at hand.

Once, many days ago, we almost held it,
The love we so desired;
But our shut eyes saw not, and fate dispelled it
Before our pulses fired
To flame, and errant fortune bade us stand
Hand almost touching hand.

I sometimes think had we two been discerning,
The by-path hid away
From others' eyes had then revealed its turning
To us, nor led astray
Our footsteps, guiding us into love's land
That lay so near at hand.

So near at hand, dear heart, could we have known it!
Throughout those dreamy hours,
Had either loved, or loving had we shown it,
Response had sure been ours;
We did not know that heart could heart command,
And love so near at hand!

What then availed the red wine's subtle glisten?
We passed it blindly by,
And now what profit that we wait and listen
Each for the other's heart beat? Ah! the cry
Of love o'erlooked still lingers, you and I
Sought heaven afar, we did not understand
'Twas--once so near at hand.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Dawendine

There's a spirit on the river, there's a ghost upon the shore,
They are chanting, they are singing through the starlight evermore,
As they steal amid the silence,
And the shadows of the shore.

You can hear them when the Northern candles light the Northern sky,
Those pale, uncertain candle flames, that shiver, dart and die,
Those dead men's icy finger tips,
Athwart the Northern sky.

You can hear the ringing war-cry of a long-forgotten brave
Echo through the midnight forest, echo o'er the midnight wave,
And the Northern lanterns tremble
At the war-cry of that brave.

And you hear a voice responding, but in soft and tender song;
It is Dawendine's spirit singing, singing all night long;
And the whisper of the night wind
Bears afar her Spirit song.

And the wailing pine trees murmur with their voice attuned to hers,
Murmur when they 'rouse from slumber as the night wind through them stirs;
And you listen to their legend,
And their voices blend with hers.

There was feud and there was bloodshed near the river by the hill;
And Dawendine listened, while her very heart stood still:
Would her kinsman or her lover
Be the victim by the hill?

Who would be the great unconquered? who come boasting how he dealt
Death? and show his rival's scallock fresh and bleeding at his belt.
Who would say, "O Dawendine!
Look upon the death I dealt?"

And she listens, listens, listens--till a war-cry rends the night,
Cry of her victorious lover, monarch he of all the height;
And his triumph wakes the horrors,
Kills the silence of the night.

Heart of her! it throbs so madly, then lies freezing in her breast,
For the icy hand of death has chilled the brother she loved best;
And her lover dealt the death-blow;
And her heart dies in her breast.

And she hears her mother saying, "Take thy belt of wampum white;
Go unto yon evil savage while he glories on the height;
Sing and sue for peace between us:
At his feet lay wampum white.

"Lest thy kinsmen all may perish, all thy brothers and thy sire
Fall before his mighty hatred as the forest falls to fire;
Take thy wampum pale and peaceful,
Save thy brothers, save thy sire."

And the girl arises softly, softly slips toward the shore;
Loves she well the murdered brother, loves his hated foeman more,
Loves, and longs to give the wampum;
And she meets him on the shore.

"Peace," she sings, "O mighty victor, Peace! I bring thee wampum white.
Sheathe thy knife whose blade has tasted my young kinsman's blood to-night
Ere it drink to slake its thirsting,
I have brought thee wampum white."

Answers he, "O Dawendine! I will let thy kinsmen be,
I accept thy belt of wampum; but my hate demands for me
That they give their fairest treasure,
Ere I let thy kinsmen be.

"Dawendine, for thy singing, for thy suing, war shall cease;
For thy name, which speaks of dawning, Thou shalt be the dawn of peace;
For thine eyes whose purple shadows tell of dawn,
My hate shall cease.

"Dawendine, Child of Dawning, hateful are thy kin to me;
Red my fingers with their heart blood, but my heart is red for thee:
Dawendine, Child of Dawning,
Wilt thou fail or follow me?"

And her kinsmen still are waiting her returning from the night,

Waiting, waiting for her coming with her belt of wampum white;
But forgetting all, she follows,
Where he leads through day or night.

There's a spirit on the river, there's a ghost upon the shore,
And they sing of love and loving through the starlight evermore,
As they steal amid the silence,
And the shadows of the shore.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Day Dawn

All yesterday the thought of you was resting in my soul,
And when sleep wandered o'er the world that very thought she stole
To fill my dreams with splendour such as stars could not eclipse,
And in the morn I wakened with your name upon my lips.

Awakened, my beloved, to the morning of your eyes,
Your splendid eyes, so full of clouds, wherein a shadow tries
To overcome the flame that melts into the world of grey,
As coming suns dissolve the dark that veils the edge of day.

Cool drifts the air at dawn of day, cool lies the sleeping dew,
But all my heart is burning, for it woke from dreams of you;
And O! these longing eyes of mine look out and only see
A dying night, a waking day, and calm on all but me.

So gently creeps the morning through the heavy air,
The dawn grey-garbed and velvet-shod is wandering everywhere
To wake the slumber-laden hours that leave their dreamless rest,
With outspread, laggard wings to court the pillows of the west.

Up from the earth a moisture steals with odours fresh and soft,
A smell of moss and grasses warm with dew, and far aloft
The stars are growing colourless, while drooping in the west,
A late, wan moon is paling in a sky of amethyst.

The passing of the shadows, as they waft their pinions near,
Has stirred a tender wind within the night-hushed atmosphere,
That in its homeless wanderings sobs in an undertone
An echo to my heart that sobbing calls for you alone.

The night is gone, beloved, and another day set free,
Another day of hunger for the one I may not see.
What care I for the perfect dawn? the blue and empty skies?
The night is always mine without the morning of your eyes.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Easter

Lent gathers up her cloak of sombre shading
In her reluctant hands.
Her beauty heightens, fairest in its fading,
As pensively she stands
Awaiting Easter's benediction falling,
Like silver stars at night,
Before she can obey the summons calling
Her to her upward flight,
Awaiting Easter's wings that she must borrow
Ere she can hope to fly--
Those glorious wings that we shall see to-morrow
Against the far, blue sky.
Has not the purple of her vesture's lining
Brought calm and rest to all?
Has her dark robe had naught of golden shining
Been naught but pleasure's pall?
Who knows? Perhaps when to the world returning
In youth's light joyousness,
We'll wear some rarer jewels we found burning
In Lent's black-bordered dress.
So hand in hand with fitful March she lingers
To beg the crowning grace
Of lifting with her pure and holy fingers
The veil from April's face.
Sweet, rosy April--laughing, sighing, waiting
Until the gateway swings,
And she and Lent can kiss between the grating
Of Easter's tissue wings.
Too brief the bliss--the parting comes with sorrow.
Good-bye dear Lent, good-bye!
We'll watch your fading wings outlined to-morrow
Against the far blue sky.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Erie Waters

A dash of yellow sand,
Wind-scattered and sun-tanned;
Some waves that curl and cream along the margin of the strand;
And, creeping close to these
Long shores that lounge at ease,
Old Erie rocks and ripples to a fresh sou'-western breeze.

A sky of blue and grey;
Some stormy clouds that play
At scurrying up with ragged edge, then laughing blow away,
Just leaving in their trail
Some snatches of a gale;
To whistling summer winds we lift a single daring sail.

O! wind so sweet and swift,
O! danger-freighted gift
Bestowed on Erie with her waves that foam and fall and lift,
We laugh in your wild face,
And break into a race
With flying clouds and tossing gulls that weave and interlace.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Fasting

'Tis morning now, yet silently I stand,
Uplift the curtain with a weary hand,
Look out while darkness overspreads the way,
 And long for day.

Calm peace is frightened with my mood to-night,
Nor visits my dull chamber with her light,
To guide my senses into her sweet rest
 And leave me blest.

Long hours since the city rocked and sung
Itself to slumber: only the stars swung
Aloft their torches in the midnight skies
 With watchful eyes.

No sound awakes; I, even, breathe no sigh,
Nor hear a single footstep passing by;
Yet I am not alone, for now I feel
 A presence steal

Within my chamber walls; I turn to see
The sweetest guest that courts humanity;
With subtle, slow enchantment draws she near,
 And Sleep is here.

What care I for the olive branch of Peace?
Kind Sleep will bring a thrice-distilled release,
Nepenthes, that alone her mystic hand
 Can understand.

And so she bends, this welcome sorceress,
To crown my fasting with her light caress.
Ah, sure my pain will vanish at the bliss
 Of her warm kiss.

But still my duty lies in self-denial;
I must refuse sweet Sleep, although the trial
Will reawaken all my depth of pain.
 So once again

I lift the curtain with a weary hand,
With more than sorrow, silently I stand,
Look out while darkness overspreads the way,
And long for day.

"Go, Sleep," I say, "before the darkness die,
To one who needs you even more than I,
For I can bear my part alone, but he
Has need of thee.

"His poor tired eyes in vain have sought relief,
His heart more tired still, with all its grief;
His pain is deep, while mine is vague and dim,
Go thou to him.

"When thou hast fanned him with thy drowsy wings,
And laid thy lips upon the pulsing strings
That in his soul with fret and fever burn,
To me return."

She goes. The air within the quiet street
Reverberates to the passing of her feet;
I watch her take her passage through the gloom
To your dear home.

Beloved, would you knew how sweet to me
Is this denial, and how fervently
I pray that Sleep may lift you to her breast,
And give you rest--

A privilege that she alone can claim.
Would that my heart could comfort you the same,
But in the censer Sleep is swinging high,
All sorrows die.

She comes not back, yet all my miseries
Wane at the thought of your calm sleeping eyes--
Wane, as I hear the early matin bell
The dawn foretell.

And so, dear heart, still silently I stand,

Uplift the curtain with a weary hand,
The long, long night has bitter been and lone,
 But now 'tis gone.

Dawn lights her candles in the East once more,
And darkness flees her chariot before;
The Lenten morning breaks with holy ray,
 And it is day!

Emily Pauline Johnson

Finale

The cedar trees have sung their vesper hymn,
And now the music sleeps--
Its benediction falling where the dim
Dusk of the forest creeps.
Mute grows the great concerto--and the light
Of day is darkening, Good-night, Good-night.
But through the night time I shall hear within
The murmur of these trees,
The calling of your distant violin
Sobbing across the seas,
And waking wind, and star-reflected light
Shall voice my answering. Good-night, Good-night.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Fire-Flowers

And only where the forest fires have sped,
Scorching relentlessly the cool north lands,
A sweet wild flower lifts its purple head,
And, like some gentle spirit sorrow-fed,
It hides the scars with almost human hands.

And only to the heart that knows of grief,
Of desolating fire, of human pain,
There comes some purifying sweet belief,
Some fellow-feeling beautiful, if brief.
And life revives, and blossoms once again

Emily Pauline Johnson

Give Us Barabbas

There was a man-a Jew of kingly blood,
But of the people-poor and lowly born,
Accused of blasphemy of God, He stood
Before the Roman Pilate, while in scorn
The multitude demanded it was fit
That one should suffer for the people, while
Another be released, absolved, acquit,
To live his life out virtuous or vile.

'Whom will ye have-Barabbas or this Jew?'
Pilate made answer to the mob, 'The choice
Is yours; I wash my hands of this, and you,
Do as you will.' With one vast ribald voice
The populace arose and, shrieking, cried,
'Give us Barabbas, we condone his deeds!'
And He of Nazareth was crucified-
Misjudged, condemned, dishonoured for their needs.

And down these nineteen centuries anew
Comes the hoarse-throated, brutalized refrain,
'Give us Barabbas, crucify the Jew!'
Once more a man must bear a nation's stain,-
And that in France, the chivalrous, whose lore
Made her the flower of knightly age gone by.
Now she lies hideous with a leprous sore
No skill can cure-no pardon purify.

And an indignant world, transfixed with hate
Of such disease, cries, as in Herod's time,
Pointing its finger at her festering state,
'Room for the leper, and her leprous crime!'
And France, writhing from years of torment, cries
Out in her anguish, 'Let this Jew endure,
Damned and disgraced, vicarious sacrifice.
The honour of my army is secure.'

And, vampire-like, that army sucks the blood
From out a martyr's veins, and strips his crown
Of honour from him, and his herohood

Flings in the dust, and cuts his manhood down.
Hide from your God, O! ye that did this act!
With lesser crimes the halls of Hell are paved.
Your army's honour may be still intact,
Unstained, unsoiled, unspotted,-but unsaved.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Golden--Of The Selkirks

A trail upwinds from Golden;
It leads to a land God only knows,
To the land of eternal frozen snows,
That trail unknown and olden.

And they tell a tale that is strange and wild--
Of a lovely and lonely mountain child
That went up the trail from Golden.

A child in the sweet of her womanhood,
Beautiful, tender, grave and good
As the saints in time long olden.

And the days count not, nor the weeks avail;
For the child that went up the mountain trail
Came never again to Golden.

And the watchers wept in the midnight gloom,
Where the canyons yawn and the Selkirks loom,
For the love that they knew of olden.

And April dawned, with its suns aflame,
And the eagles wheeled and the vultures came
And poised o'er the town of Golden.

God of the white eternal peaks,
Guard the dead while the vulture seeks!--
God of the days so olden.

For only God in His greatness knows
Where the mountain holly above her grows,
On the trail that leads from Golden.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Good-Bye

Sounds of the seas grow fainter,
Sounds of the sands have sped;
The sweep of gales,
The far white sails,
Are silent, spent and dead.

Sounds of the days of summer
Murmur and die away,
And distance hides
The long, low tides,
As night shuts out the day.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Guard Of The Eastern Gate

Halifax sits on her hills by the sea
In the might of her pride,--
Invincible, terrible, beautiful, she
With a sword at her side.

To right and to left of her, battlements rear
And fortresses frown;
While she sits on her throne without favour or fear
With her cannon as crown.

Coast guard and sentinel, watch of the weal
Of a nation she keeps;
But her hand is encased in a gauntlet of steel,
And her thunder but sleeps.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Hare-Bell

Elfin bell in azure dress,
Chiming all day long,
Ringing through the wilderness
Dulcet notes of song.
Daintiest of forest flowers
Weaving like a spell--
Music through the Autumn hours,
Little Elfin bell.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Harvest Time

Pillowed and hushed on the silent plain,
Wrapped in her mantle of golden grain,

Wearied of pleasuring weeks away,
Summer is lying asleep to-day,--

Where winds come sweet from the wild-rose briers
And the smoke of the far-off prairie fires;

Yellow her hair as the goldenrod,
And brown her cheeks as the prairie sod;

Purple her eyes as the mists that dream
At the edge of some laggard sun-drowned stream;

But over their depths the lashes sweep,
For Summer is lying to-day asleep.

The north wind kisses her rosy mouth,
His rival frowns in the far-off south,

And comes caressing her sunburnt cheek,
And Summer awakes for one short week,--

Awakes and gathers her wealth of grain,
Then sleeps and dreams for a year again.

Emily Pauline Johnson

In Grey Days

Measures of oil for others,
Oil and red wine,
Lips laugh and drink, but never
Are the lips mine.

Worlds at the feet of others,
Power gods have known,
Hearts for the favoured round me
Mine beats, alone.

Fame offering to others
Chaplets of bays,
I with no crown of laurels,
Only grey days.

Sweet human love for others,
Deep as the sea,
God-sent unto my neighbour--
But not to me.

Sometime I'll wrest from others
More than all this,
I shall demand from Heaven
Far sweeter bliss.

What profit then to others,
Laughter and wine?
I'll have what most they covet--
Death, will be mine.

Emily Pauline Johnson

In The Shadows

I am sailing to the leeward,
Where the current runs to seaward
Soft and slow,
Where the sleeping river grasses
Brush my paddle as it passes
To and fro.

On the shore the heat is shaking
All the golden sands awaking
In the cove;
And the quaint sand-piper, winging
O'er the shallows, ceases singing
When I move.

On the water's idle pillow
Sleeps the overhanging willow,
Green and cool;
Where the rushes lift their burnished
Oval heads from out the tarnished
Emerald pool.

Where the very silence slumbers,
Water lilies grow in numbers,
Pure and pale;
All the morning they have rested,
Amber crowned, and pearly crested,
Fair and frail.

Here, impossible romances,
Indefinable sweet fancies,
Cluster round;
But they do not mar the sweetness
Of this still September fleetness
With a sound.

I can scarce discern the meeting
Of the shore and stream retreating,
So remote;
For the laggard river, dozing,

Only wakes from its reposing
Where I float.

Where the river mists are rising,
All the foliage baptizing
With their spray;
There the sun gleams far and faintly,
With a shadow soft and saintly,
In its ray.

And the perfume of some burning
Far-off brushwood, ever turning
To exhale
All its smoky fragrance dying,
In the arms of evening lying,
Where I sail.

My canoe is growing lazy,
In the atmosphere so hazy,
While I dream;
Half in slumber I am guiding,
Eastward indistinctly gliding
Down the stream.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Joe

A meadow brown; across the yonder edge
A zigzag fence is ambling; here a wedge
Of underbush has cleft its course in twain,
Till where beyond it staggers up again;
The long, grey rails stretch in a broken line
Their ragged length of rough, split forest pine,
And in their zigzag tottering have reeled
In drunken efforts to enclose the field,
Which carries on its breast, September born,
A patch of rustling, yellow, Indian corn.
Beyond its shrivelled tassels, perched upon
The topmost rail, sits Joe, the settler's son,
A little semi-savage boy of nine.
Now dozing in the warmth of Nature's wine,
His face the sun has tampered with, and wrought,
By heated kisses, mischief, and has brought
Some vagrant freckles, while from here and there
A few wild locks of vagabond brown hair
Escape the old straw hat the sun looks through,
And blinks to meet his Irish eyes of blue.
Barefooted, innocent of coat or vest,
His grey checked shirt unbuttoned at his chest,
Both hardy hands within their usual nest—
His breeches pockets — so, he waits to rest
His little fingers, somewhat tired and worn,
That all day long were husking Indian corn.
His drowsy lids snap at some trivial sound,
With lazy yawns he slips towards the ground,
Then with an idle whistle lifts his load
And shambles home along the country road
That stretches on fringed out with stumps and weeds,
And finally unto the backwoods leads,
Where forests wait with giant trunk and bough
The axe of pioneer, the settler's plough.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Lady Icicle

Little Lady Icicle is dreaming in the north-land
And gleaming in the north-land, her pillow all a-glow;
For the frost has come and found her
With an ermine robe around her
Where little Lady Icicle lies dreaming in the snow.

Little Lady Icicle is waking in the north-land,
And shaking in the north-land her pillow to and fro;
And the hurricane a-skirling
Sends the feathers all a-whirling
Where little Lady Icicle is waking in the snow.

Little Lady Icicle is laughing in the north-land,
And quaffing in the north-land her wines that overflow;
All the lakes and rivers crusting
That her finger-tips are dusting,
Where little Lady Icicle is laughing in the snow.

Little Lady Icicle is singing in the north-land,
And bringing from the north-land a music wild and low;
And the fairies watch and listen
Where her silver slippers glisten,
As little Lady Icicle goes singing through the snow.

Little Lady Icicle is coming from the north-land,
Benumbing all the north-land where'er her feet may go;
With a fringe of frost before her
And a crystal garment o'er her,
Little Lady Icicle is coming with the snow.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Lady Lorgnette

I

Lady Lorgnette, of the lifted lash,
The curling lip and the dainty nose,
The shell-like ear where the jewels flash,
The arching brow and the languid pose,
The rare old lace and the subtle scents,
The slender foot and the fingers frail,--
I may act till the world grows wild and tense,
But never a flush on your features pale.
The footlights glimmer between us two,--
You in the box and I on the boards,--
I am only an actor, Madame, to you,
A mimic king 'mid his mimic lords,
For you are the belle of the smartest set,
Lady Lorgnette.

II

Little Babette, with your eyes of jet,
Your midnight hair and your piquant chin,
Your lips whose odours of violet
Drive men to madness and saints to sin,--
I see you over the footlights' glare
Down in the pit 'mid the common mob,--
Your throat is burning, and brown, and bare,
You lean, and listen, and pulse, and throb;
The viols are dreaming between us two,
And my gilded crown is no make-believe,
I am more than an actor, dear, to you,
For you called me your king but yester eve,
And your heart is my golden coronet,
Little Babette.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Low Tide At St. Andrews

(NEW BRUNSWICK)

The long red flats stretch open to the sky,
Breathing their moisture on the August air.
The seaweeds cling with flesh-like fingers where
The rocks give shelter that the sands deny;
And wrapped in all her summer harmonies
St. Andrews sleeps beside her sleeping seas.

The far-off shores swim blue and indistinct,
Like half-lost memories of some old dream.
The listless waves that catch each sunny gleam
Are idling up the waterways land-linked,
And, yellowing along the harbour's breast,
The light is leaping shoreward from the west.

And naked-footed children, tripping down,
Light with young laughter, daily come at eve
To gather dulse and sea clams and then heave
Their loads, returning laden to the town,
Leaving a strange grey silence when they go,--
The silence of the sands when tides are low.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Lullaby Of The Iroquois

Little brown baby-bird, lapped in your nest,
 Wrapped in your nest,
 Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle-board rocks you to rest;
 Its hands are your nest;
 Its bands are your nest;
It swings from the down-bending branch of the oak;
You watch the camp flame, and the curling grey smoke;
But, oh, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best,--
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.

Little brown baby-bird swinging to sleep,
 Winging to sleep,
 Singing to sleep,
Your wonder-black eyes that so wide open keep,
 Shielding their sleep,
 Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night-owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep,--
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Marshlands

A thin wet sky, that yellows at the rim,
And meets with sun-lost lip the marsh's brim.

The pools low lying, dank with moss and mould,
Glint through their mildews like large cups of gold.

Among the wild rice in the still lagoon,
In monotone the lizard shrills his tune.

The wild goose, homing, seeks a sheltering,
Where rushes grow, and oozing lichens cling.

Late cranes with heavy wing, and lazy flight,
Sail up the silence with the nearing night.

And like a spirit, swathed in some soft veil,
Steals twilight and its shadows o'er the swale.

Hushed lie the sedges, and the vapours creep,
Thick, grey and humid, while the marshes sleep.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Moonset

Idles the night wind through the dreaming firs,
That waking murmur low,
As some lost melody returning stirs
The love of long ago;
And through the far, cool distance, zephyr fanned.
The moon is sinking into shadow-land.

The troubled night-bird, calling plaintively,
Wanders on restless wing;
The cedars, chanting vespers to the sea,
Await its answering,
That comes in wash of waves along the strand,
The while the moon slips into shadow-land.

O! soft responsive voices of the night
I join your minstrelsy,
And call across the fading silver light
As something calls to me;
I may not all your meaning understand,
But I have touched your soul in shadow-land.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Mosses

The lost wind wandering, forever grieves
 Low overhead,
Above grey mosses whispering of leaves
 Fallen and dead.
And through the lonely night sweeps their refrain
Like Chopin's prelude, sobbing 'neath the rain.

Emily Pauline Johnson

My English Letter

When each white moon, her lantern idly swinging,
Comes out to join the star night-watching band,
Across the grey-green sea, a ship is bringing
For me a letter, from the Motherland.

Naught would I care to live in quaint old Britain,
These wilder shores are dearer far to me,
Yet when I read the words that hand has written,
The parent sod more precious seems to be.

Within that folded note I catch the savour
Of climes that make the Motherland so fair,
Although I never knew the blessed favour
That surely lies in breathing English air.

Imagination's brush before me fleeing,
Paints English pictures, though my longing eyes
Have never known the blessedness of seeing
The blue that lines the arch of English skies.

And yet my letter brings the scenes I covet,
Framed in the salt sea winds, aye more in dreams
I almost see the face that bent above it,
I almost touch that hand, so near it seems.

Near, for the very grey-green sea that dashes
'Round these Canadian coasts, rolls out once more
To Eastward, and the same Atlantic splashes
Her wild white spray on England's distant shore.

Near, for the same young moon so idly swinging
Her threadlike crescent bends the selfsame smile
On that old land from whence a ship is bringing
My message from the transatlantic Isle.

Thus loves my heart that far old country better,
Because of those dear words that always come,
With love enfolded in each English letter
That drifts into my sun-kissed Western home.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Nocturne

Night of Mid-June, in heavy vapours dying,
Like priestly hands thy holy touch is lying
Upon the world's wide brow;
God-like and grand all nature is commanding
The "peace that passes human understanding";
I, also, feel it now.

What matters it to-night, if one life treasure
I covet, is not mine! Am I to measure
The gifts of Heaven's decree
By my desires? O! life for ever longing
For some far gift, where many gifts are thronging,
God wills, it may not be.

Am I to learn that longing, lifted higher,
Perhaps will catch the gleam of sacred fire
That shows my cross is gold?
That underneath this cross--however lowly,
A jewel rests, white, beautiful and holy,
Whose worth can not be told.

Like to a scene I watched one day in wonder:--
A city, great and powerful, lay under
A sky of grey and gold;
The sun outbreaking in his farewell hour,
Was scattering afar a yellow shower
Of light, that aureoled

With brief hot touch, so marvellous and shining,
A hundred steeples on the sky out-lining,
Like network threads of fire;
Above them all, with halo far outspreading,
I saw a golden cross in glory heading
A consecrated spire:

I only saw its gleaming form uplifting,
Against the clouds of grey to seaward drifting,
And yet I surely know
Beneath the seen, a great unseen is resting,

For while the cross that pinnacle is cresting,
An Altar lies below.

.

Night of Mid-June, so slumberous and tender,
Night of Mid-June, transcendent in thy splendour
Thy silent wings enfold
And hush my longing, as at thy desire
All colour fades from round that far-off spire,
Except its cross of gold.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Ojistoh

I am Ojistoh, I am she, the wife
Of him whose name breathes bravery and life
And courage to the tribe that calls him chief.
I am Ojistoh, his white star, and he
Is land, and lake, and sky--and soul to me.

Ah! but they hated him, those Huron braves,
Him who had flung their warriors into graves,
Him who had crushed them underneath his heel
Whose arm was iron, and whose heart was steel
To all--save me, Ojistoh, chosen wife
Of my great Mohawk, white star of his life.

Ah! but they hated him, and counselled long
With subtle witchcraft how to work him wrong;
How to avenge their dead, and strike him where
His pride was highest, and his fame most fair.
Their hearts grew weak as women at his name:
They dared no war-path since my Mohawk came
With ashen bow, and flinten arrow-head
To pierce their craven bodies; but their dead
Must be avenged. Avenged? They dared not walk
In day and meet his deadly tomahawk;
They dared not face his fearless scalping knife;
So--Niyoh!*--then they thought of me, his wife.

O! evil, evil face of them they sent
With evil Huron speech: "Would I consent
To take of wealth? be queen of all their tribe?
Have wampum ermine?" Back I flung the bribe
Into their teeth, and said, "While I have life
Know this--Ojistoh is the Mohawk's wife."

Wah! how we struggled! But their arms were strong.
They flung me on their pony's back, with thong
Round ankle, wrist, and shoulder. Then upleapt
The one I hated most: his eye he swept
Over my misery, and sneering said,
"Thus, fair Ojistoh, we avenge our dead."

And we two rode, rode as a sea wind-chased,
I, bound with buckskin to his hated waist,
He, sneering, laughing, jeering, while he lashed
The horse to foam, as on and on we dashed.
Plunging through creek and river, bush and trail,
On, on we galloped like a northern gale.
At last, his distant Huron fires aflame
We saw, and nearer, nearer still we came.

I, bound behind him in the captive's place,
Scarcely could see the outline of his face.
I smiled, and laid my cheek against his back:
"Loose thou my hands," I said. "This pace let slack.
Forget we now that thou and I are foes.
I like thee well, and wish to clasp thee close;
I like the courage of thine eye and brow;
I like thee better than my Mohawk now."

He cut the cords; we ceased our maddened haste
I wound my arms about his tawny waist;
My hand crept up the buckskin of his belt;
His knife hilt in my burning palm I felt;
One hand caressed his cheek, the other drew
The weapon softly--"I love you, love you,"
I whispered, "love you as my life."
And--buried in his back his scalping knife.

Ha! how I rode, rode as a sea wind-chased,
Mad with sudden freedom, mad with haste,
Back to my Mohawk and my home. I lashed
That horse to foam, as on and on I dashed.
Plunging thro' creek and river, bush and trail,
On, on I galloped like a northern gale.
And then my distant Mohawk's fires aflame
I saw, as nearer, nearer still I came,
My hands all wet, stained with a life's red dye,
But pure my soul, pure as those stars on high--
"My Mohawk's pure white star, Ojistoh, still am I."

Emily Pauline Johnson

Overlooked

Sleep, with her tender balm, her touch so kind,
 Has passed me by;
Afar I see her vesture, velvet-lined,
 Float silently;
O! Sleep, my tired eyes had need of thee!
Is thy sweet kiss not meant to-night for me?

Peace, with the blessings that I longed for so,
 Has passed me by;
Where'er she folds her holy wings I know
 All tempests die;
O! Peace, my tired soul had need of thee!
Is thy sweet kiss denied alone to me?

Love, with her heated touches, passion-stirred,
 Has passed me by.
I called, "O stay thy flight," but all unheard
 My lonely cry:
O! Love, my tired heart had need of thee!
Is thy sweet kiss withheld alone from me?

Sleep, sister-twin of Peace, my waking eyes
 So weary grow!
O! Love, thou wanderer from Paradise,
 Dost thou not know
How oft my lonely heart has cried to thee?
But Thou, and Sleep, and Peace, come not to me.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Penseroso

Soulless is all humanity to me
To-night. My keenest longing is to be
Alone, alone with God's grey earth that seems
Pulse of my pulse and consort of my dreams.

To-night my soul desires no fellowship,
Or fellow-being; crave I but to slip
Thro' space on space, till flesh no more can bind,
And I may quit for aye my fellow kind.

Let me but feel athwart my cheek the lash
Of whipping wind, but hear the torrent dash
Adown the mountain steep, 'twere more my choice
Than touch of human hand, than human voice.

Let me but wander on the shore night-stilled,
Drinking its darkness till my soul is filled;
The breathing of the salt sea on my hair,
My outstretched hands but grasping empty air.

Let me but feel the pulse of Nature's soul
Athrob on mine, let seas and thunders roll
O'er night and me; sands whirl; winds, waters beat;
For God's grey earth has no cheap counterfeit.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Prairie Greyhounds (C.P.R. "No. 1," Westbound)

I swing to the sunset land--
The world of prairie, the world of plain,
The world of promise and hope and gain,
The world of gold, and the world of grain,
And the world of the willing hand.

I carry the brave and bold--
The one who works for the nation's bread,
The one whose past is a thing that's dead,
The one who battles and beats ahead,
And the one who goes for gold.

I swing to the "Land to Be,"
I am the power that laid its floors,
I am the guide to its western stores,
I am the key to its golden doors,
That open alone to me.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Rainfall

From out the west, where darkling storm-clouds float,
The 'waking wind pipes soft its rising note.

From out the west, o'erhung with fringes grey,
The wind preludes with sighs its roundelay,

Then blowing, singing, piping, laughing loud,
It scurries on before the grey storm-cloud;

Across the hollow and along the hill
It whips and whirls among the maples, till

With boughs upbent, and green of leaves blown wide,
The silver shines upon their underside.

A gusty freshening of humid air,
With showers laden, and with fragrance rare;

And now a little sprinkle, with a dash
Of great cool drops that fall with sudden splash;

Then over field and hollow, grass and grain,
The loud, crisp whiteness of the nearing rain.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Re-Voyage

What of the days when we two dreamed together?
Days marvellously fair,
As lightsome as a skyward floating feather
Sailing on summer air--
Summer, summer, that came drifting through
Fate's hand to me, to you.

What of the days, my dear? I sometimes wonder
If you too wish this sky
Could be the blue we sailed so softly under,
In that sun-kissed July;
Sailed in the warm and yellow afternoon,
With hearts in touch and tune.

Have you no longing to re-live the dreaming,
Adrift in my canoe?
To watch my paddle blade all wet and gleaming
Cleaving the waters through?
To lie wind-blown and wave-caressed, until
Your restless pulse grows still?

Do you not long to listen to the purling
Of foam athwart the keel?
To hear the nearing rapids softly swirling
Among their stones, to feel
The boat's unsteady tremor as it braves
The wild and snarling waves?

What need of question, what of your replying?
Oh! well I know that you
Would toss the world away to be but lying
Again in my canoe,
In listless indolence entranced and lost,
Wave-rocked, and passion tossed.

Ah me! my paddle failed me in the steering
Across love's shoreless seas;
All reckless, I had ne'er a thought of fearing
Such dreary days as these,

When through the self-same rapids we dash by,
My lone canoe and I.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Shadow River

MUSKOKA

A stream of tender gladness,
Of filmy sun, and opal tinted skies;
Of warm midsummer air that lightly lies
In mystic rings,
Where softly swings
The music of a thousand wings
That almost tones to sadness.

Midway 'twixt earth and heaven,
A bubble in the pearly air, I seem
To float upon the sapphire floor, a dream
Of clouds of snow,
Above, below,
Drift with my drifting, dim and slow,
As twilight drifts to even.

The little fern-leaf, bending
Upon the brink, its green reflection greets,
And kisses soft the shadow that it meets
With touch so fine,
The border line
The keenest vision can't define;
So perfect is the blending.

The far, fir trees that cover
The brownish hills with needles green and gold,
The arching elms o'erhead, vinegrown and old,
Repictured are
Beneath me far,
Where not a ripple moves to mar
Shades underneath, or over.

Mine is the undertone;
The beauty, strength, and power of the land
Will never stir or bend at my command;
But all the shade
Is marred or made,

If I but dip my paddle blade;
And it is mine alone.

O! pathless world of seeming!
O! pathless life of mine whose deep ideal
Is more my own than ever was the real.
For others Fame
And Love's red flame,
And yellow gold: I only claim
The shadows and the dreaming.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Silhouette

The sky-line melts from russet into blue,
Unbroken the horizon, saving where
A wreath of smoke curls up the far, thin air,
And points the distant lodges of the Sioux.

Etched where the lands and cloudlands touch and die
A solitary Indian tepee stands,
The only habitation of these lands,
That roll their magnitude from sky to sky.

The tent poles lift and loom in thin relief,
The upward floating smoke ascends between,
And near the open doorway, gaunt and lean,
And shadow-like, there stands an Indian Chief.

With eyes that lost their lustre long ago,
With visage fixed and stern as fate's decree,
He looks towards the empty west, to see
The never-coming herd of buffalo.

Only the bones that bleach upon the plains,
Only the fleshless skeletons that lie
In ghastly nakedness and silence, cry
Out mutely that naught else to him remains

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Archers

I

Stripped to the waist, his copper-coloured skin
Red from the smouldering heat of hate within,
Lean as a wolf in winter, fierce of mood--
As all wild things that hunt for foes, or food--
War paint adorning breast and thigh and face,
Armed with the ancient weapons of his race,
A slender ashen bow, deer sinew strung,
And flint-tipped arrow each with poisoned tongue,--
Thus does the Red man stalk to death his foe,
And sighting him strings silently his bow,
Takes his unerring aim, and straight and true
The arrow cuts in flight the forest through,
A flint which never made for mark and missed,
And finds the heart of his antagonist.
Thus has he warred and won since time began,
Thus does the Indian bring to earth his man.

II

Ungarmented, save for a web that lies
In fleecy folds across his impish eyes,
A tiny archer takes his way intent
On mischief, which is his especial bent.
Across his shoulder lies a quiver, filled
With arrows dipped in honey, thrice distilled
From all the roses brides have ever worn
Since that first wedding out of Eden born.
Beneath a cherub face and dimpled smile
This youthful hunter hides a heart of guile;
His arrows aimed at random fly in quest
Of lodging-place within some blameless breast.
But those he wounds die happily, and so
Blame not young Cupid with his dart and bow:
Thus has he warred and won since time began,
Transporting into Heaven both maid and man.

The Art Of Alma-Tadema

There is no song his colours cannot sing,
For all his art breathes melody, and tunes
The fine, keen beauty that his brushes bring
To murmuring marbles and to golden Junes.

The music of those marbles you can hear
In every crevice, where the deep green stains
Have sunken when the grey days of the year
Spilled leisurely their warm, incessant rains

That, lingering, forget to leave the ledge,
But drenched into the seams, amid the hush
Of ages, leaving but the silent pledge
To waken to the wonder of his brush.

And at the Master's touch the marbles leap
To life, the creamy onyx and the skins
Of copper-coloured leopards, and the deep,
Cool basins where the whispering water wins

Reflections from the gold and glowing sun,
And tints from warm, sweet human flesh, for fair
And subtly lithe and beautiful, leans one--
A goddess with a wealth of tawny hair.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Ballad Of Yaada (A Legend Of The Pacific Coast)

There are fires on Lulu Island, and the sky is opalescent
With the pearl and purple tinting from the smouldering of peat.
And the Dream Hills lift their summits in a sweeping, hazy crescent,
With the Capilano canyon at their feet.

There are fires on Lulu Island, and the smoke, uplifting, lingers
In a faded scarf of fragrance as it creeps across the day,
And the Inlet and the Narrows blur beneath its silent fingers,
And the canyon is enfolded in its grey.

But the sun its face is veiling like a cloistered nun at vespers;
As towards the alter candles of the night a censer swings,
And the echo of tradition wakes from slumbering and whispers,
Where the Capilano river sobs and sings.

It was Yaada, lovely Yaada, who first taught the stream its sighing,
For 'twas silent till her coming, and 'twas voiceless as the shore;
But throughout the great forever it will sing the song undying
That the lips of lovers sing for evermore.

He was chief of all the Squamish, and he ruled the coastal waters--
And he warred upon her people in the distant Charlotte Isles;
She, a winsome basket weaver, daintiest of Haida daughters,
Made him captive to her singing and her smiles.

Till his hands forgot to havoc and his weapons lost their lusting,
Till his stormy eyes allured her from the land of Totem Poles,
Till she followed where he called her, followed with a woman's trusting,
To the canyon where the Capilano rolls.

And the women of the Haidas plied in vain their magic power,
Wailed for many moons her absence, wailed for many moons their prayer,

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Birds' Lullaby

I

Sing to us, cedars; the twilight is creeping
With shadowy garments, the wilderness through;
All day we have carolled, and now would be sleeping,
So echo the anthems we warbled to you;
While we swing, swing,
And your branches sing,
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

II

Sing to us, cedars; the night-wind is sighing,
Is wooing, is pleading, to hear you reply;
And here in your arms we are restfully lying,
And longing to dream to your soft lullaby;
While we swing, swing,
And your branches sing,
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

III

Sing to us, cedars; your voice is so lowly,
Your breathing so fragrant, your branches so strong;
Our little nest-cradles are swaying so slowly,
While zephyrs are breathing their slumberous song.
And we swing, swing,
While your branches sing,
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Camper

Night 'neath the northern skies, lone, black, and grim:
Naught but the starlight lies 'twixt heaven, and him.

Of man no need has he, of God, no prayer;
He and his Deity are brothers there.

Above his bivouac the firs fling down
Through branches gaunt and black, their needles brown.

Afar some mountain streams, rockbound and fleet,
Sing themselves through his dreams in cadence sweet,

The pine trees whispering, the heron's cry,
The plover's passing wing, his lullaby.

And blinking overhead the white stars keep
Watch o'er his hemlock bed--his sinless sleep.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Cattle Country

Up the dusk-enfolded prairie,
Foot-falls, soft and sly,
Velvet cushioned, wild and wary,
Then--the coyote's cry.

Rush of hoofs, and roar and rattle,
Beasts of blood and breed,
Twenty thousand frightened cattle,
Then--the wild stampede.

Pliant lasso circling wider
In the frenzied flight--
Loping horse and cursing rider,
Plunging through the night.

Rim of dawn the darkness losing
Trail of blackened soil;
Perfume of the sage brush oozing
On the air like oil.

Foothills to the Rockies lifting
Brown, and blue, and green,
Warm Alberta sunlight drifting
Over leagues between.

That's the country of the ranges,
Plain and prairie land,
And the God who never changes
Holds it in His hand.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Cattle Thief

They were coming across the prairie, they were
galloping hard and fast;
For the eyes of those desperate riders had sighted
their man at last--
Sighted him off to Eastward, where the Cree
encampment lay,
Where the cotton woods fringed the river, miles and
miles away.
Mistake him? Never! Mistake him? the famous
Eagle Chief!
That terror to all the settlers, that desperate Cattle
Thief--
That monstrous, fearless Indian, who lorded it over
the plain,
Who thieved and raided, and scouted, who rode like
a hurricane!
But they've tracked him across the prairie; they've
followed him hard and fast;
For those desperate English settlers have sighted
their man at last.

Up they wheeled to the tepees, all their British
blood aflame,
Bent on bullets and bloodshed, bent on bringing
down their game;
But they searched in vain for the Cattle Thief: that
lion had left his lair,
And they cursed like a troop of demons--for the
women alone were there.
"The sneaking Indian coward," they hissed; "he
hides while yet he can;
He'll come in the night for cattle, but he's scared
to face a man."
"Never!" and up from the cotton woods rang the
voice of Eagle Chief;
And right out into the open stepped, unarmed, the
Cattle Thief.
Was that the game they had coveted? Scarce fifty
years had rolled

Over that fleshless, hungry frame, starved to the
bone and old;
Over that wrinkled, tawny skin, unfed by the
warmth of blood.
Over those hungry, hollow eyes that glared for the
sight of food.

He turned, like a hunted lion: "I know not fear,"
said he;
And the words outleapt from his shrunken lips in
the language of the Cree.
"I'll fight you, white-skins, one by one, till I
kill you all," he said;
But the threat was scarcely uttered, ere a dozen
balls of lead
Whizzed through the air about him like a shower
of metal rain,
And the gaunt old Indian Cattle Thief dropped
dead on the open plain.
And that band of cursing settlers gave one
triumphant yell,
And rushed like a pack of demons on the body that
writhed and fell.
"Cut the fiend up into inches, throw his carcass
on the plain;
Let the wolves eat the cursed Indian, he'd have
treated us the same."
A dozen hands responded, a dozen knives gleamed
high,
But the first stroke was arrested by a woman's
strange, wild cry.
And out into the open, with a courage past
belief,
She dashed, and spread her blanket o'er the corpse
of the Cattle Thief;
And the words outleapt from her shrunken lips in
the language of the Cree,
"If you mean to touch that body, you must cut
your way through me."
And that band of cursing settlers dropped
backward one by one,
For they knew that an Indian woman roused, was

a woman to let alone.
And then she raved in a frenzy that they scarcely
understood,
Raved of the wrongs she had suffered since her
earliest babyhood:
"Stand back, stand back, you white-skins, touch
that dead man to your shame;
You have stolen my father's spirit, but his body I
only claim.
You have killed him, but you shall not dare to
touch him now he's dead.
You have cursed, and called him a Cattle Thief,
though you robbed him first of bread--
Robbed him and robbed my people--look there, at
that shrunken face,
Starved with a hollow hunger, we owe to you and
your race.
What have you left to us of land, what have you
left of game,
What have you brought but evil, and curses since
you came?
How have you paid us for our game? how paid us
for our land?
By a book, to save our souls from the sins you
brought in your other hand.
Go back with your new religion, we never have
understood
Your robbing an Indian's body, and mocking his
soul with food.
Go back with your new religion, and find--if find
you can--
The honest man you have ever made from out a
starving man.
You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is not
our meat;
When you pay for the land you live in, we'll pay
for the meat we eat.
Give back our land and our country, give back our
herds of game;
Give back the furs and the forests that were ours
before you came;
Give back the peace and the plenty. Then come

with your new belief,
And blame, if you dare, the hunger that drove him to
be a thief."

Emily Pauline Johnson

The City And The Sea

I

To none the city bends a servile knee;
Purse-proud and scornful, on her heights she stands,
And at her feet the great white moaning sea
Shoulders incessantly the grey-gold sands,--
One the Almighty's child since time began,
And one the might of Mammon, born of clods;
For all the city is the work of man,
But all the sea is God's.

II

And she--between the ocean and the town--
Lies cursed of one and by the other blest:
Her staring eyes, her long drenched hair, her gown,
Sea-laved and soiled and dank above her breast.
She, image of her God since life began,
She, but the child of Mammon, born of clods,
Her broken body spoiled and spurned of man,
But her sweet soul is God's.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Corn Husker

Hard by the Indian lodges, where the bush
Breaks in a clearing, through ill-fashioned fields,
She comes to labour, when the first still hush
Of autumn follows large and recent yields.

Age in her fingers, hunger in her face,
Her shoulders stooped with weight of work and years,
But rich in tawny colouring of her race,
She comes a-field to strip the purple ears.

And all her thoughts are with the days gone by,
Ere might's injustice banished from their lands
Her people, that to-day unheeded lie,
Like the dead husks that rustle through her hands.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Firs

There is a lonely minor chord that sings
Faintly and far along the forest ways,
When the firs finger faintly on the strings
Of that rare violin the night wind plays,
Just as it whispered once to you and me
Beneath the English pines beyond the sea.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Flight Of The Crows

The autumn afternoon is dying o'er
The quiet western valley where I lie
Beneath the maples on the river shore,
Where tinted leaves, blue waters and fair sky
Environ all; and far above some birds are flying by

To seek their evening haven in the breast
And calm embrace of silence, while they sing
Te Deums to the night, invoking rest
For busy chirping voice and tired wing--
And in the hush of sleeping trees their sleeping cradles swing.

In forest arms the night will soonest creep,
Where sombre pines a lullaby intone,
Where Nature's children curl themselves to sleep,
And all is still at last, save where alone
A band of black, belated crows arrive from lands unknown.

Strange sojourn has been theirs since waking day,
Strange sights and cities in their wanderings blend
With fields of yellow maize, and leagues away
With rivers where their sweeping waters wend
Past velvet banks to rocky shores, in canyons bold to end.

O'er what vast lakes that stretch superbly dead,
Till lashed to life by storm-clouds, have they flown?
In what wild lands, in laggard flight have led
Their aerial career unseen, unknown,
'Till now with twilight come their cries in lonely monotone?

The flapping of their pinions in the air
Dies in the hush of distance, while they light
Within the fir tops, weirdly black and bare,
That stand with giant strength and peerless height,
To shelter fairy, bird and beast throughout the closing night.

Strange black and princely pirates of the skies,
Would that your wind-tossed travels I could know!
Would that my soul could see, and, seeing, rise

To unrestricted life where ebb and flow
Of Nature's pulse would constitute a wider life below!

Could I but live just here in Freedom's arms,
A kingly life without a sovereign's care!
Vain dreams! Day hides with closing wings her charms,
And all is cradled in repose, save where
Yon band of black, belated crows still frets the evening air.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Giant Oak

And then the sound of marching armies 'woke
Amid the branches of the soldier oak,
And tempests ceased their warring cry, and dumb
The lashing storms that muttered, overcome,
Choked by the heralding of battle smoke,
When these gnarled branches beat their martial drum.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Happy Hunting Grounds

Into the rose gold westland, its yellow prairies roll,
World of the bison's freedom, home of the Indian's soul.
Roll out, O seas! in sunlight bathed,
Your plains wind-tossed, and grass enswathed.

Farther than vision ranges, farther than eagles fly,
Stretches the land of beauty, arches the perfect sky,
Hemm'd through the purple mists afar
By peaks that gleam like star on star.

Fringing the prairie billows, fretting horizon's line,
Darkly green are slumb'ring wildernesses of pine,
Sleeping until the zephyrs throng
To kiss their silence into song.

Whispers freighted with odour swinging into the air,
Russet needles as censers swing to an altar, where
The angels' songs are less divine
Than duo sung twixt breeze and pine.

Laughing into the forest, dimples a mountain stream,
Pure as the airs above it, soft as a summer dream,
O! Lethean spring thou'rt only found
Within this ideal hunting ground.

Surely the great Hereafter cannot be more than this,
Surely we'll see that country after Time's farewell kiss.
Who would his lovely faith condole?
Who envies not the Red-skin's soul,

Sailing into the cloud land, sailing into the sun,
Into the crimson portals ajar when life is done?
O! dear dead race, my spirit too
Would fain sail westward unto you.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Homing Bee

You are belted with gold, little brother of mine,
Yellow gold, like the sun
That spills in the west, as a chalice of wine
When feasting is done.

You are gossamer-winged, little brother of mine,
Tissue winged, like the mist
That broods where the marshes melt into a line
Of vapour sun-kissed.

You are laden with sweets, little brother of mine,
Flower sweets, like the touch
Of hands we have longed for, of arms that entwine,
Of lips that love much.

You are better than I, little brother of mine,
Than I, human-souled,
For you bring from the blossoms and red summer shine,
For others, your gold.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Idlers

The sun's red pulses beat,
Full prodigal of heat,
Full lavish of its lustre unrepressed;
But we have drifted far
From where his kisses are,
And in this landward-lying shade we let our paddles rest.

The river, deep and still,
The maple-mantled hill,
The little yellow beach whereon we lie,
The puffs of heated breeze,
All sweetly whisper--These
Are days that only come in a Canadian July.

So, silently we two
Lounge in our still canoe,
Nor fate, nor fortune matters to us now:
So long as we alone
May call this dream our own,
The breeze may die, the sail may droop, we care not when or how.

Against the thwart, near by,
Inactively you lie,
And all too near my arm your temple bends.
Your indolently crude,
Abandoned attitude,
Is one of ease and art, in which a perfect languor blends.

Your costume, loose and light,
Leaves unconcealed your might
Of muscle, half suspected, half defined;
And falling well aside,
Your vesture opens wide,
Above your splendid sunburnt throat that pulses unconfined.

With easy unreserve,
Across the gunwale's curve,
Your arm superb is lying, brown and bare;
Your hand just touches mine

With import firm and fine,
(I kiss the very wind that blows about your tumbled hair).

Ah! Dear, I am unwise
In echoing your eyes
Whene'er they leave their far-off gaze, and turn
To melt and blur my sight;
For every other light
Is servile to your cloud-grey eyes, wherein cloud shadows burn.

But once the silence breaks,
But once your ardour wakes
To words that humanize this lotus-land;
So perfect and complete
Those burning words and sweet,
So perfect is the single kiss your lips lay on my hand.

The paddles lie disused,
The fitful breeze abused,
Has dropped to slumber, with no after-blow;
And hearts will pay the cost,
For you and I have lost
More than the homeward blowing wind that died an hour ago.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Indian Corn Planter

He needs must leave the trapping and the chase,
For mating game his arrows ne'er despoil,
And from the hunter's heaven turn his face,
To wring some promise from the dormant soil.

He needs must leave the lodge that wintered him,
The enervating fires, the blanket bed--
The women's dulcet voices, for the grim
Realities of labouring for bread.

So goes he forth beneath the planter's moon
With sack of seed that pledges large increase,
His simple pagan faith knows night and noon,
Heat, cold, seedtime and harvest shall not cease.

And yielding to his needs, this honest sod,
Brown as the hand that tills it, moist with rain,
Teeming with ripe fulfilment, true as God,
With fostering richness, mothers every grain.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The King's Consort

I

Love, was it yesternoon, or years ago,
You took in yours my hands,
And placed me close beside you on the throne
Of Oriental lands?

The truant hour came back at dawn to-day,
Across the hemispheres,
And bade my sleeping soul retrace its way
These many hundred years.

And all my wild young life returned, and ceased
The years that lie between,
When you were King of Egypt, and The East,
And I was Egypt's queen.

II

I feel again the lengths of silken gossamer enfold
My body and my limbs in robes of emerald and gold.
I feel the heavy sunshine, and the weight of languid heat
That crowned the day you laid the royal jewels at my feet.

You wound my throat with jacinths, green and glist'ning serpent-wise,
My hot, dark throat that pulsed beneath the ardour of your eyes;
And centuries have failed to cool the memory of your hands
That bound about my arms those massive, pliant golden bands.

You wreathed around my wrists long ropes of coral and of jade,
And beaten gold that clung like coils of kisses love-inlaid;
About my naked ankles tawny topaz chains you wound,
With clasps of carven onyx, ruby-rimmed and golden bound.

But not for me the Royal Pearls to bind about my hair,

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Legend Of Qu'Appelle Valley

I am the one who loved her as my life,
Had watched her grow to sweet young womanhood;
Won the dear privilege to call her wife,
And found the world, because of her, was good.
I am the one who heard the spirit voice,
Of which the paleface settlers love to tell;
From whose strange story they have made their choice
Of naming this fair valley the "Qu'Appelle."

She had said fondly in my eager ear--
"When Indian summer smiles with dusky lip,
Come to the lakes, I will be first to hear
The welcome music of thy paddle dip.
I will be first to lay in thine my hand,
To whisper words of greeting on the shore;
And when thou would'st return to thine own land,
I'll go with thee, thy wife for evermore."

Not yet a leaf had fallen, not a tone
Of frost upon the plain ere I set forth,
Impatient to possess her as my own--
This queen of all the women of the North.
I rested not at even or at dawn,
But journeyed all the dark and daylight through--
Until I reached the Lakes, and, hurrying on,
I launched upon their bosom my canoe.

Of sleep or hunger then I took no heed,
But hastened o'er their leagues of waterways;
But my hot heart outstripped my paddle's speed
And waited not for distance or for days,
But flew before me swifter than the blade
Of magic paddle ever cleaved the Lake,
Eager to lay its love before the maid,
And watch the lovelight in her eyes awake.

So the long days went slowly drifting past;
It seemed that half my life must intervene
Before the morrow, when I said at last--

"One more day's journey and I win my queen!"
I rested then, and, drifting, dreamed the more
Of all the happiness I was to claim,--
When suddenly from out the shadowed shore,
I heard a voice speak tenderly my name.

"Who calls?" I answered; no reply; and long
I stilled my paddle blade and listened. Then
Above the night wind's melancholy song
I heard distinctly that strange voice again--
A woman's voice, that through the twilight came
Like to a soul unborn--a song unsung.

I leaned and listened--yes, she spoke my name,
And then I answered in the quaint French tongue,
"Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?" No answer, and the night
Seemed stiller for the sound, till round me fell
The far-off echoes from the far-off height--
"Qu'Appelle?" my voice came back, "Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?"
This--and no more; I called aloud until
I shuddered as the gloom of night increased,
And, like a pallid spectre wan and chill,
The moon arose in silence in the east.

I dare not linger on the moment when
My boat I beached beside her tepee door;
I heard the wail of women and of men,--
I saw the death-fires lighted on the shore.
No language tells the torture or the pain,
The bitterness that flooded all my life,--
When I was led to look on her again,
That queen of women pledged to be my wife.
To look upon the beauty of her face,
The still closed eyes, the lips that knew no breath;
To look, to learn,--to realize my place
Had been usurped by my one rival--Death.
A storm of wrecking sorrow beat and broke
About my heart, and life shut out its light
Till through my anguish some one gently spoke,
And said, "Twice did she call for thee last night."

I started up--and bending o'er my dead,

Asked when did her sweet lips in silence close.
"She called thy name--then passed away," they said,
"Just on the hour whereat the moon arose."

Among the lonely Lakes I go no more,
For she who made their beauty is not there;
The paleface rears his tepee on the shore
And says the vale is fairest of the fair.
Full many years have vanished since, but still
The voyageurs beside the campfire tell
How, when the moonrise tips the distant hill,
They hear strange voices through the silence swell.
The paleface loves the haunted lakes they say,
And journeys far to watch their beauty spread
Before his vision; but to me the day,
The night, the hour, the seasons are all dead.
I listen heartsick, while the hunters tell
Why white men named the valley The Qu'Appelle.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Lifting Of The Mist

All the long day the vapours played
At blindfold in the city streets,
Their elfin fingers caught and stayed
The sunbeams, as they wound their sheets
Into a filmy barricade
'Twixt earth and where the sunlight beats.

A vagrant band of mischiefs these,
With wings of grey and cobweb gown;
They live along the edge of seas,
And creeping out on foot of down,
They chase and frolic, frisk and tease
At blind-man's buff with all the town.

And when at eventide the sun
Breaks with a glory through their grey,
The vapour-fairies, one by one,
Outspread their wings and float away
In clouds of colouring, that run
Wine-like along the rim of day.

Athwart the beauty and the breast
Of purpling airs they twirl and twist,
Then float away to some far rest,
Leaving the skies all colour-kiss't--
A glorious and a golden West
That greets the Lifting of the Mist.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Lost Lagoon

It is dusk on the Lost Lagoon,
And we two dreaming the dusk away,
Beneath the drift of a twilight grey,
Beneath the drowse of an ending day,
And the curve of a golden moon.

It is dark in the Lost Lagoon,
And gone are the depths of haunting blue,
The grouping gulls, and the old canoe,
The singing firs, and the dusk and--you,
And gone is the golden moon.

O! lure of the Lost Lagoon,--
I dream to-night that my paddle blurs
The purple shade where the seaweed stirs,
I hear the call of the singing firs
In the hush of the golden moon.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Man In Chrysanthemum Land

There's a brave little berry-brown man
At the opposite side of the earth;
Of the White, and the Black, and the Tan,
He's the smallest in compass and girth.
O! he's little, and lively, and Tan,
And he's showing the world what he's worth.
For his nation is born, and its birth
Is for hardihood, courage, and sand,
So you take off your cap
To the brave little Jap
Who fights for Chrysanthemum Land.

Near the house that the little man keeps,
There's a Bug-a-boo building its lair;
It prowls, and it growls, and it sleeps
At the foot of his tiny back stair.
But the little brown man never sleeps,
For the Brownie will battle the Bear--
He has soldiers and ships to command;
So take off you cap
To the brave little Jap
Who fights for Chrysanthemum Land.

Uncle Sam stands a-watching near by,
With his finger aside of his nose--
John Bull with a wink in his eye,
Looks round to see how the wind blows--
O! jolly old John, with his eye
Ever set on the East and its woes.
More than hoeing their own little rows
These wary old wags understand,
But they take off their caps
To the brave little Japs
Who fight for Chrysanthemum Land.

Now he's given us Geishas, and themes
For operas, stories, and plays,
His silks and his chinas are dreams,
And we copy his quaint little ways;

O! we look on his land in our dreams,
But his value we failed to appraise,
For he'll gather his laurels and bays--
His Cruisers and Columns are manned,
And we take off our caps
To the brave little Japs
Who fight for Chrysanthemum Land.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Maple

I

It is the blood-hued maple straight and strong,
Voicing abroad its patriotic song.

II

Its daring colours bravely flinging forth
The ensign of the Nation of the North.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Mariner

"Wreck and stray and castaway."--SWINBURNE.

Once more adrift.
O'er dappling sea and broad lagoon,
O'er frowning cliff and yellow dune,
The long, warm lights of afternoon
Like jewel dustings sift.

Once more awake.
I dreamed an hour of port and quay,
Of anchorage not meant for me;
The sea, the sea, the hungry sea
Came rolling up the break.

Once more afloat.
The billows on my moorings press't,
They drove me from my moment's rest,
And now a portless sea I breast,
And shelterless my boat.

Once more away.
The harbour lights are growing dim,
The shore is but a purple rim,
The sea outstretches grey and grim.
Away, away, away!

Once more at sea,
The old, old sea I used to sail,
The battling tide, the blowing gale,
The waves with ceaseless under-wail
The life that used to be.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Overture

October's orchestra plays softly on
The northern forest with its thousand strings,
And Autumn, the conductor wields anon
The Golden-rod-- The baton that he swings.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Pilot Of The Plains

``False,' they said, ``thy Pale-face lover, from the land of waking morn ;
Rise and wed thy Redskin wooer, nobler warrior ne'er was born ;
Cease thy watching, cease thy dreaming,
Show the white thine Indian scorn.'
Thus they taunted her, declaring, ``He remembers naught of thee :
Likely some white maid he woeth, far beyond the inland sea.'
But she answered ever kindly,
``He will come again to me,'
Till the dusk of Indian summer crept athwart the western skies ;
But a deeper dusk was burning in her dark and dreaming eyes,
As she scanned the rolling prairie,
Where the foothills fall, and rise.
Till the autumn came and vanished, till the season of the rains,
Till the western world lay fettered in midwinter's crystal chains,
Still she listened for his coming,
Still she watched the distant plains.
Then a night with nor'land tempest, nor'land snows a-swirling fast,
Out upon the pathless prairie came the Pale-face through the blast,
Calling, calling, ``Yakonwita,
I am coming, love, at last.'
Hovered night above, about him, dark its wings and cold and dread ;
Never unto trail or tepee were his straying footsteps led ;
Till benumbed, he sank, and pillowed
On the drifting snows his head,
Saying, ``O! my Yakonwita call me, call me, be my guide
To the lodge beyond the prairie-for I vowed ere winter died
I would come again, beloved ;
I would claim my Indian bride.'
``Yakonwita, Yakonwita! ' Oh, the dreariness that strains
Through the voice that calling, quivers, till a whisper but remains,
``Yakonwita, Yakonwita,
I am lost upon the plains.'
But the Silent Spirit hushed him, lulled him as he cried anew,
``Save me, save me! O! beloved, I am Pale but I am true.
Yakonwita, Yakonwita
I am dying, love, for you.'
Leagues afar, across the prairie, she had risen from her bed,
Roused her kinsmen from their slumber : ``He has come to-night,' she said.
``I can hear him calling, calling ;

But his voice is as the dead.

``Listen!' and they sate all silent, while the tempest louder grew,

And a spirit-voice called faintly, ``I am dying, love, for you.'

Then they wailed, ``O! Yakonwita.

He was Pale, but he was true.'

Wrapped she then her ermine round her, stepped without the tepee door,

Saying, ``I must follow, follow, though he call for evermore,

Yakonwita, Yakonwita ;'

And they never saw her more.

Late at night, say Indian hunters, when the starlight clouds or wanes,

Far away they see a maiden, misty as the autumn rains,

Guiding with her lamp of moonlight

Hunters lost upon the plains.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Quill Worker

Plains, plains, and the prairie land which the sunlight floods and fills,
To the north the open country, southward the Cyprus Hills;
Never a bit of woodland, never a rill that flows,
Only a stretch of cactus beds, and the wild, sweet prairie rose;
Never a habitation, save where in the far south-west
A solitary tepee lifts its solitary crest,
Where Neykia in the doorway, crouched in the red sunshine,
Broiders her buckskin mantle with the quills of the porcupine.

Neykia, the Sioux chief's daughter, she with the foot that flies,
She with the hair of midnight and the wondrous midnight eyes,
She with the deft brown fingers, she with the soft, slow smile,
She with the voice of velvet and the thoughts that dream the while,--
"Whence come the vague to-morrows? Where do the yesters fly?
What is beyond the border of the prairie and the sky?
Does the maid in the Land of Morning sit in the red sunshine,
Broidering her buckskin mantle with the quills of the porcupine?"

So Neykia, in the westland, wonders and works away,
Far from the fret and folly of the "Land of Waking Day."
And many the pale-faced trader who stops at the tepee door
For a smile from the sweet, shy worker, and a sigh when the hour is o'er.
For they know of a young red hunter who oftentimes has stayed
To rest and smoke with her father, tho' his eyes were on the maid;
And the moons will not be many ere she in the red sunshine
Will broider his buckskin mantle with the quills of the porcupine.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Riders Of The Plains

Who is it lacks the knowledge? Who are the curs that dare
To whine and sneer that they do not fear the whelps in the Lion's lair?
But we of the North will answer, while life in the North remains,
Let the curs beware lest the whelps they dare are the Riders of the Plains;
For these are the kind whose muscle makes the power of the Lion's jaw,
And they keep the peace of our people and the honour of British law.

A woman has painted a picture,--'tis a neat little bit of art
The critics aver, and it roused up for her the love of the big British heart.
'Tis a sketch of an English bulldog that tigers would scarce attack,
And round and about and beneath him is painted the Union Jack.
With its blaze of colour, and courage, its daring in every fold,
And underneath is the title, "What we have we'll hold."
'Tis a picture plain as a mirror, but the reflex it contains
Is the counterpart of the life and heart of the Riders of the Plains;
For like to that flag and that motto, and the power of that bulldog's jaw,
They keep the peace of our people and the honour of British law.

These are the fearless fighters, whose life in the open lies,
Who never fail on the prairie trail 'neath the Territorial skies,
Who have laughed in the face of the bullets and the edge of the rebels' steel,
Who have set their ban on the lawless man with his crime beneath their heel;
These are the men who battle the blizzards, the suns, the rains,
These are the famed that the North has named the "Riders of the Plains,"
And theirs is the might and the meaning and the strength of the bulldog's jaw,
While they keep the peace of the people and the honour of British law.

These are the men of action, who need not the world's renown,
For their valour is known to England's throne as a gem in the British crown;
These are the men who face the front, whose courage the world may scan,
The men who are feared by the felon, but are loved by the honest man;
These are the marrow, the pith, the cream, the best that the blood contains,
Who have cast their days in the valiant ways of the Riders of the Plains;
And theirs is the kind whose muscle makes the power of old England's jaw,
And they keep the peace of her people and the honour of British law.

Then down with the cur that questions,--let him slink to his craven den,--
For he daren't deny our hot reply as to "who are our mounted men."
He shall honour them east and westward, he shall honour them south and north,

He shall bare his head to that coat of red wherever that red rides forth.
'Tis well that he knows the fibre that the great North-West contains,
The North-West pride in her men that ride on the Territorial plains,--
For of such as these are the muscles and the teeth in the Lion's jaw,
And they keep the peace of our people and the honour of British law.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Sleeping Giant (Thunder Bay, Lake Superior)

When did you sink to your dreamless sleep
Out there in your thunder bed?
Where the tempests sweep,
And the waters leap,
And the storms rage overhead.

Were you lying there on your couch alone
Ere Egypt and Rome were born?
Ere the Age of Stone,
Or the world had known
The Man with the Crown of Thorn.

The winds screech down from the open west,
And the thunders beat and break
On the amethyst
Of your rugged breast,--
But you never arise or wake.

You have locked your past, and you keep the key
In your heart 'neath the westing sun,
Where the mighty sea
And its shores will be
Storm-swept till the world is done.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Song My Paddle Sings

West wind, blow from your prairie nest,
Blow from the mountains, blow from the west
The sail is idle, the sailor too ;
O! wind of the west, we wait for you.
Blow, blow!
I have wooed you so,
But never a favour you bestow.
You rock your cradle the hills between,
But scorn to notice my white lateen.
I stow the sail, unship the mast :
I wooed you long but my wooing's past ;
My paddle will lull you into rest.
O! drowsy wind of the drowsy west,
Sleep, sleep,
By your mountain steep,
Or down where the prairie grasses sweep!
Now fold in slumber your laggard wings,
For soft is the song my paddle sings.
August is laughing across the sky,
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
Drift, drift,
Where the hills uplift
On either side of the current swift.
The river rolls in its rocky bed ;
My paddle is plying its way ahead ;
Dip, dip,
While the water flip
In foam as over their breast we slip.
And oh, the river runs swifter now ;
The eddies circle about my bow.
Swirl, swirl!
How the ripples curl
In many a dangerous pool awirl!
And forward far the rapids roar,
Fretting their margin for evermore.
Dash, dash,
With a mighty crash,
They seethe, and boil, and bound, and splash.
Be strong, O paddle! be brave, canoe!

The reckless waves you must plunge into.
Reel, reel.
On your trembling keel,
But never a fear my craft will feel.
We've raced the rapid, we're far ahead!
The river slips through its silent bed.
Sway, sway,
As the bubbles spray
And fall in tinkling tunes away.
And up on the hills against the sky,
A fir tree rocking its lullaby,
Swings, swings,
Its emerald wings,
Swelling the song that my paddle sings.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Songster

Music, music with throb and swing,
Of a plaintive note, and long;
'Tis a note no human throat could sing,
No harp with its dulcet golden string,--
Nor lute, nor lyre with liquid ring,
Is sweet as the robin's song.

He sings for love of the season
When the days grow warm and long,
For the beautiful God-sent reason
That his breast was born for song.

Calling, calling so fresh and clear,
Through the song-sweet days of May;
Warbling there, and whistling here,
He swells his voice on the drinking ear,
On the great, wide, pulsing atmosphere
Till his music drowns the day.

He sings for love of the season
When the days grow warm and long,
For the beautiful God-sent reason
That his breast was born for song.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Trail To Lillooet

Sob of fall, and song of forest, come you here on haunting quest,
Calling through the seas and silence, from God's country of the west.
Where the mountain pass is narrow, and the torrent white and strong,
Down its rocky-throated canyon, sings its golden-throated song.

You are singing there together through the God-begotten nights,
And the leaning stars are listening above the distant heights
That lift like points of opal in the crescent coronet
About whose golden setting sweeps the trail to Lillooet.

Trail that winds and trail that wanders, like a cobweb hanging high,
Just a hazy thread outlining mid-way of the stream and sky,
Where the Fraser River canyon yawns its pathway to the sea,
But half the world has shouldered up between its song and me.

Here, the placid English August, and the sea-encircled miles,
There--God's copper-coloured sunshine beating through the lonely aisles
Where the waterfalls and forest voice for ever their duet,
And call across the canyon on the trail to Lillooet.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Train Dogs

Out of the night and the north;
Savage of breed and of bone,
Shaggy and swift comes the yelping band,
Freighters of fur from the voiceless land
That sleeps in the Arctic zone.

Laden with skins from the north,
Beaver and bear and raccoon,
Marten and mink from the polar belts,
Otter and ermine and sable pelts--
The spoils of the hunter's moon.

Out of the night and the north,
Sinewy, fearless and fleet,
Urging the pack through the pathless snow,
The Indian driver, calling low,
Follows with moccasined feet.

Ships of the night and the north,
Freighters on prairies and plains,
Carrying cargoes from field and flood
They scent the trail through their wild red blood,
The wolfish blood in their veins.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Vagabonds

What saw you in your flight to-day,
Crows, awinging your homeward way?

Went you far in carrion quest,
Crows, that worry the sunless west?

Thieves and villains, you shameless things!
Black your record as black your wings.

Tell me, birds of the inky hue,
Plunderous rogues--to-day have you

Seen with mischievous, prying eyes
Lands where earlier suns arise?

Saw you a lazy beck between
Trees that shadow its breast in green,

Teased by obstinate stones that lie
Crossing the current tauntingly?

Fields abloom on the farther side
With purpling clover lying wide--

Saw you there as you circled by,
Vale-environed a cottage lie,

Girt about with emerald bands,
Nestling down in its meadow lands?

Saw you this on your thieving raids?
Speak--you rascally renegades!

Thieved you also away from me
Olden scenes that I long to see?

If, O! crows, you have flown since morn
Over the place where I was born,

Forget will I, how black you were
Since dawn, in feather and character;

Absolve will I, your vagrant band
Ere you enter your slumberland.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Vine

The wild grape mantling the trail and tree,
Festoons in graceful veils its drapery,
Its tendrils cling, as clings the memory stirred
By some evasive haunting tune, twice heard.

Emily Pauline Johnson

The Wolf

Like a grey shadow lurking in the light,
He ventures forth along the edge of night;
With silent foot he scouts the coulie's rim
And scents the carrion awaiting him.
His savage eyeballs lurid with a flare
Seen but in unfed beasts which leave their lair
To wrangle with their fellows for a meal
Of bones ill-covered. Sets he forth to steal,
To search and snarl and forage hungrily;
A worthless prairie vagabond is he.
Luckless the settler's heifer which astray
Falls to his fangs and violence a prey;
Useless her blatant calling when his teeth
Are fast upon her quivering flank--beneath
His fell voracity she falls and dies
With inarticulate and piteous cries,
Unheard, unheeded in the barren waste,
To be devoured with savage greed and haste.
Up the horizon once again he prowls
And far across its desolation howls;
Sneaking and satisfied his lair he gains
And leaves her bones to bleach upon the plains.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Thistle-Down

Beyond a ridge of pine with russet tips
The west lifts to the sun her longing lips,

Her blushes stain with gold and garnet dye
The shore, the river and the wide far sky;

Like floods of wine the waters filter through
The reeds that brush our indolent canoe.

I beach the bow where sands in shadows lie;
You hold my hand a space, then speak good-bye.

Upwinds your pathway through the yellow plumes
Of goldenrod, profuse in August blooms,

And o'er its tossing sprays you toss a kiss;
A moment more, and I see only this--

The idle paddle you so lately held,
The empty bow your pliant wrist propelled,

Some thistles purpling into violet,
Their blossoms with a thousand thorns afret,

And like a cobweb, shadowy and grey,
Far floats their down--far drifts my dream away.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Through Time And Bitter Distance

Unknown to you, I walk the cheerless shore.
The cutting blast, the hurl of biting brine
May freeze, and still, and bind the waves at war,
Ere you will ever know, O! Heart of mine,
That I have sought, reflected in the blue
Of these sea depths, some shadow of your eyes;
Have hoped the laughing waves would sing of you,
But this is all my starving sight descries-

I

Far out at sea a sail
Bends to the freshening breeze,
Yields to the rising gale
That sweeps the seas;

II

Yields, as a bird wind-tossed,
To saltish waves that fling
Their spray, whose rime and frost
Like crystals cling

III

To canvas, mast and spar,
Till, gleaming like a gem,
She sinks beyond the far
Horizon's hem.

IV

Lost to my longing sight,
And nothing left to me
Save an oncoming night,-
An empty sea.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Under Canvas

IN MUSKOKA

Lichens of green and grey on every side;
And green and grey the rocks beneath our feet;
Above our heads the canvas stretching wide;
And over all, enchantment rare and sweet.

Fair Rosseau slumbers in an atmosphere
That kisses her to passionless soft dreams.
O! joy of living we have found thee here,
And life lacks nothing, so complete it seems.

The velvet air, stirred by some elfin wings,
Comes swinging up the waters and then stills
Its voice so low that floating by it sings
Like distant harps among the distant hills.

Across the lake the rugged islands lie,
Fir-crowned and grim; and further in the view
Some shadows seeming swung 'twixt cloud and sky,
Are countless shores, a symphony of blue.

Some northern sorceress, when day is done,
Hovers where cliffs uplift their gaunt grey steeps,
Bewitching to vermilion Rosseau's sun,
That in a liquid mass of rubies sleeps.

The scent of burning leaves, the camp-fire's blaze,
The great logs cracking in the brilliant flame,
The groups grotesque, on which the firelight plays,
Are pictures which Muskoka twilights frame.

And Night, star-crested, wanders up the mere
With opiates for idleness to quaff,
And while she ministers, far off I hear
The owl's uncanny cry, the wild loon's laugh.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Wave-Won

To-night I hunger so,
Beloved one, to know
If you recall and crave again the dream
That haunted our canoe,
And wove its witchcraft through
Our hearts as 'neath the northern night we sailed the northern stream.

Ah! dear, if only we
As yesternight could be
Afloat within that light and lonely shell,
To drift in silence till
Heart-hushed, and lulled and still
The moonlight through the melting air flung forth its fatal spell.

The dusky summer night,
The path of gold and white
The moon had cast across the river's breast,
The shores in shadows clad,
The far-away, half-sad
Sweet singing of the whip-poor-will, all soothed our souls to rest.

You trusted I could feel
My arm as strong as steel,
So still your upturned face, so calm your breath,
While circling eddies curled,
While laughing rapids whirled
From boulder unto boulder, till they dashed themselves to death.

Your splendid eyes aflame
Put heaven's stars to shame,
Your god-like head so near my lap was laid--
My hand is burning where
It touched your wind-blown hair,
As sweeping to the rapids verge, I changed my paddle blade.

The boat obeyed my hand,
Till wearied with its grand
Wild anger, all the river lay aswoon,
And as my paddle dipped,

Thro' pools of pearl it slipped
And swept beneath a shore of shade, beneath a velvet moon.

To-night, again dream you
Our spirit-winged canoe
Is listening to the rapids purling past?
Where, in delirium reeled
Our maddened hearts that kneeled
To idolize the perfect world, to taste of love at last.

Emily Pauline Johnson

When George Was King

Cards, and swords, and a lady's love,
That is a tale worth reading,
An insult veiled, a downcast glove,
And rapiers leap unheeding.
And 'tis O! for the brawl,
The thrust, the fall,
And the foe at your feet a-bleeding.

Tales of revel at wayside inns,
The goblets gaily filling,
Braggarts boasting a thousand sins,
Though none can boast a shilling.
And 'tis O! for the wine,
The frothing stein,
And the clamour of cups a-spilling.

Tales of maidens in rich brocade,
Powder and puff and patches,
Gallants liltng a serenade
Of old-time trolls and catches.
And 'tis O! for the lips
And the finger tips,
And the kiss that the boldest snatches.

Tales of buckle and big rosette,
The slender shoe adorning,
Of curtseying through the minuet
With laughter, love, or scorning.
And 'tis O! for the shout
Of the roustabout,
As he hies him home in the morning.

Cards and swords, and a lady's love,
Give to the tale God-speeding,
War and wassail, and perfumed glove,
And all that's rare in reading.
And 'tis O! for the ways
Of the olden days,
And a life that was worth the leading.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Where Leaps The Ste. Marie

I

What dream you in the night-time
When you whisper to the moon?
What say you in the morning?
What do you sing at noon?
When I hear your voice uplifting,
Like a breeze through branches sifting,
And your ripples softly drifting
To the August airs a-tune.

II

Lend me your happy laughter,
Ste. Marie, as you leap;
Your peace that follows after
Where through the isles you creep.
Give to me your splendid dashing,
Give your sparkles and your splashing,
Your uphurling waves down crashing,
Then, your aftermath of sleep.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Wolverine

'Yes, sir, it's quite a story, though you won't believe it's true,
But such things happened often when I lived beyond the Soo.'
And the trapper tilted back his chair and filled his pipe anew.

'I ain't thought of it neither fer this many 'n many a day,
Although it used to haunt me in the years that's slid away,
The years I spent a-trappin' for the good old Hudson's Bay.

'Wild? You bet, 'twas wild then, an' few an' far between
The squatters' shacks, for whites was scarce as furs when things is green,
An' only reds an' 'Hudson's' men was all the folk I seen.

'No. Them old Indyans ain't so bad, not if you treat 'em square.
Why, I lived in amongst 'em all the winters I was there,
An' I never lost a copper, an' I never lost a hair.

'But I'd have lost my life the time that you've heard tell about;
I don't think I'd be settin' here, but dead beyond a doubt,
If that there Indyan 'Wolverine' jest hadn't helped me out.

'Twas freshet time, 'way back, as long as sixty-six or eight,
An' I was comin' to the Post that year a kind of late,
For beaver had been plentiful, and trappin' had been great.

'One day I had been settin' traps along a bit of wood,
An' night was catchin' up to me jest faster 'an it should,
When all at once I heard a sound that curdled up my blood.

'It was the howl of famished wolves-I didn't stop to think
But jest lit out across for home as quick as you could wink,
But when I reached the river's edge I brought up at the brink.

'That mornin' I had crossed the stream straight on a sheet of ice
An' now, God help me! There it was, churned up an' cracked to dice,
The flood went boiling past-I stood like one shut in a vice.

'No way ahead, no path aback, trapped like a rat ashore,
With naught but death to follow, and with naught but death afore;
The howl of hungry wolves aback-ahead, the torrent's roar.

'An' then-a voice, an Indyan voice, that called out clear and clean,
'Take Indyan's horse, I run like deer, wolf can't catch Wolverine.'
I says, 'Thank Heaven.' There stood the chief I'd nicknamed Wolverine.

'I leapt on that there horse, an' then jest like a coward fled,
An' left that Indyan standin' there alone, as good as dead,
With the wolves a-howlin' at his back, the swollen stream ahead.

'I don't know how them Indyan's dodge from death the way they do,
You won't believe it, sir, but what I'm tellin' you is true,
But that there chap was 'round next day as sound as me or you.

'He came to get his horse, but not a cent he'd take from me.
Yes, sir, you're right, the Indyan's now ain't like they used to be;
We've got 'em sharpened up a bit an'
now
they'll take a fee.

'No, sir, you're wrong, they ain't no 'dogs.' I'm not through tellin' yet;
You'll take that name right back again, or else jest out you get!
You'll take that name right back when you hear all this yarn, I bet.

'It happened that same autumn, when some Whites was comin' in,
I heard the old Red River carts a-kickin' up a din,
So I went over to their camp to see an English skin.

'They said, 'They'd had an awful scare from Injuns,' an' they swore
That savages had come around the very night before
A-brandishing their tomahawks an' painted up for war.

'But when their plucky Englishmen had put a bit of lead
Right through the heart of one of them, an' rolled him over, dead,
The other cowards said that they had come on peace instead.

'That they (the Whites) had lost some stores, from off their little pack,
An' that the Red they peppered dead had followed up their track,
Because he'd found the packages an' came
to give them back
'

'Oh!' they said, 'they were quite sorry, but it wasn't like as if

They had killed a decent Whiteman by mistake or in a tiff,
It was only some old Injun dog that lay there stark an' stiff.'

'I said, 'You are the meanest dogs that ever yet I seen,'
Then I rolled the body over as it lay out on the green;
I peered into the face-My God! 'twas poor old Wolverine.'

Emily Pauline Johnson

Workworn

Across the street, an humble woman lives;
To her 'tis little fortune ever gives;
Denied the wines of life, it puzzles me
To know how she can laugh so cheerily.
This morn I listened to her softly sing,
And, marvelling what this effect could bring
I looked: 'twas but the presence of a child
Who passed her gate, and looking in, had smiled.
But self-encrusted, I had failed to see
The child had also looked and laughed to me.
My lowly neighbour thought the smile God-sent,
And singing, through the toilsome hours she went.
O! weary singer, I have learned the wrong
Of taking gifts, and giving naught of song;
I thought my blessings scant, my mercies few,
Till I contrasted them with yours, and you;
To-day I counted much, yet wished it more--
While but a child's bright smile was all your store,

If I had thought of all the stormy days,
That fill some lives that tread less favoured ways,
How little sunshine through their shadows gleamed,
My own dull life had much the brighter seemed;
If I had thought of all the eyes that weep
Through desolation, and still smiling keep,
That see so little pleasure, so much woe,
My own had laughed more often long ago;
If I had thought how leaden was the weight
Adversity lays at my kinsman's gate,
Of that great cross my next door neighbour bears,
My thanks had been more frequent in my prayers;
If I had watched the woman o'er the way,
Workworn and old, who labours day by day,
Who has no rest, no joy to call her own,
My tasks, my heart, had much the lighter grown.

Emily Pauline Johnson

Your Mirror Frame

Methinks I see your mirror frame,
Ornate with photographs of them.
Place mine therein, for, all the same,
I'll have my little laughs at them.

For girls may come, and girls may go,
I think I have the best of them;
And yet this photograph I know
You'll toss among the rest of them.

I cannot even hope that you
Will put me in your locket, dear;
Nor costly frame will I look through,
Nor bide in your breast pocket, dear.

For none your heart monopolize,
You favour such a nest of them.
So I but hope your roving eyes
Seek mine among the rest of them.

For saucy sprite, and noble dame,
And many a dainty maid of them
Will greet me in your mirror frame,
And share your kisses laid on them.

And yet, sometimes I fancy, dear,
You hold me as the best of them.
So I'm content if I appear
To-night with all the rest of them.

Emily Pauline Johnson