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Thompson, A. T.
Her finest hour and other
poems

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OUR

AND
OTHER POEMS

A. T. THOMPSON

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HER FINEST HOUR

AND
OTHER POEMS

BY

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HER FINEST HOUR

Great Britain! never was thy heart more sound.
In crisis is thy secret ever found.
That thou hadst grown decadent, it was said
By those who are by outward sign misled:
Hadst made an easy conquest of thyself
Through senseless love of pleasure, sport and pelf.

The blood of heroes still beats in thy veins,
And, spite of surface scars, e'en yet retains
Its ancient vigour and unbroken power
To strike a blow for freedom in the hour
When blood-stained might and heartless cruelty,
Bereft of reason and humanity,
Would wreak their savage vengeance on a prey,
To gratify the lust of power display.

O Britain! should'st thou fall, then freedom dies.
For thou dost stand alone, without allies,
To bear the brunt of all the cruel blows,
And shed thy blood alike for friends and foes,
That liberty and justice, now assailed,
May rise again and in the world be hailed
As heritage in truth of all mankind,
And thus the secret of a true peace find.
Thou just Defender of the rights of men,
The world awaits thy leadership again!

Thy loyal sons from far-off lands come nigh
To pledge their hearts and arms in cause so high.
As sons of freemen, nursed on freedom's soil,
To arms they spring unbid and leave their toil,
No earthly gain to seek, but at the call
Of liberty arise, to give their all.

Britain, to thine own heart, once more, be true!
The great traditions of thy past renew!
Meet with thy might this crowded hour of fate!
Pulse in thy veins the blood of all thy great!
Arise! and with thy willing sons now fight
For God and King, Humanity and Right.
O God, Who dost the feeblest heart empower,
This hour of crisis be her finest hour!

CHURCHILL

Born for this hour—thou man of destiny!—
When Britain bares her breast to meet the foe.
Her Spirit incarnates itself in thee
And in the name of Freedom strikes the blow—
The fateful blow, a threatened world to free.
“We fight alone,” thy lips, inspired, declared.
Yet, not alone, but in the grand company
Of heroes of our race, who bravely dared
And died yet won against the tyrant brood.
Yet, not alone! Thy sons across the sea
Have heard, and pledge their unleashed lustihood.
Yet, not alone! Thy cause must victory see:
The God of Battles from on high shall send
The strength and courage to the cause defend.

Masterton,

September 14th, 1940.

THE MOTHERLAND

A spirit seems to haunt the place,
And breathe a welcome unto me,
Which gives a sense of coming home—
A strange familiarity!

The trees, the fields, the grass so green;
The clouds that float across the sky;
The mist and haze on rolling downs,
Seem friendly to my eager eye.

And yet my home is far away,
Midst other scenes that nursed the mind.
Do I awaken from a dream,
Or threads of some long past unwind?

Perchance there slumbers in my mind
Faint memory of the far-off days—
Some entail of inheritance—
That time itself cannot erase.

And yet in truth I am at home
On soil where sleeps an ancient line—
From Senlac Hill to Barrafirth
Its mouldering bones in peace recline.

Though ebb and flow of time's swift tide
Its sons may bring and bear away;
Though seasons come and seasons go,
And growth be followed by decay,

Yet ageless, midst the changing years,
Stands nature steadfast in her prime;
And mother earth her offspring rears,
Unwearied by the waste of time.

So live the scenes midst which they lived,
Now to my ardent eyes laid bare;
Their friendly greeting I embrace,
And feel in heart a rightful heir.

I stoop to kiss the sacred soil,
Though but in part I understand
The precious ties that bind my heart
To Thee—Beloved Motherland!

Regents Park,
London, 1940.

THE SILENCE

How calm, how still, the evening falls,
No sound of effort heard!
The awful silence speaks to me,
Yet utters not a word:
Comes as the dawn in quietness,
As moon and moving stars;
The earth, revolving in its flight,
Makes not a stir that jars.
Thou art a God that hid'st Thyself
Behind Thy deeds of might!
From planets and from distant stars
Moves mute the silent light.
No sounds attend the warming rays,
That from the sun pour down,
The whole wide surface of the earth
With varied life to crown.
They paint the flowers and the fields
And trees in divers hue;
This mighty work in peace perform,
As still as falls the dew.
The sap that rises in the trees,
To swell each stem and branch,
Builds quietly as doth the snow,
That makes the avalanche.
Both life and time with stealthful feet
Their peaceful progress make;

Our bodies grow more when we sleep,
Than when we are awake.
No sound of hammer-beat was heard,
When God's great House was raised:
Nor did the prophet on the mount,
With mind and senses dazed
By blasting wind and earthquake crash
And crackling fire that blazed,
The voice of God Almighty hear—
The Silence him amazed!
God speaks to us in silences
His great transforming word.
Be silent then, before Him, heart,
That His still voice be heard!

Masterton, 1939.

NEUTRALITY

Is there no law above the state,
Before which men and nations bow?
Or must we, bound by lesser rules,
The law of conscience disavow?

Dare any nation neutral stand,
When such grave issues are at stake—
Whilst fraud and violence, unprovoked,
The cov'nant law of nations break?

Must dictates of self-interest prove
A nation's first and final law?
The vote to the aggressor give?
The booty to the stronger claw?

Must e'er the jungle law, supreme,
Its sway o'er men continue still,
And right belong unto the strong,
Who take and hold whate'er they will?

Neutrality—a hateful word!
Where moral issues are implied;
As Edom, when his kin were slain,
Stood neutral—on the other side!

And Reuben by the sheep-folds sat:
 Whilst Gilead over Jordan lay:
In peace Dan with his ships remained:
 Whilst by the brooks did Asher stay.

Meanwhile the chariots of the foe,
 With havoc thundered through the land;
Their kinsmen, hazarding their lives,
 The brunt of battle to withstand.

To outlaw war? Nay, better far,
 Outlaw the right that any state
Should neutral be, when lawless foes
 The rights of others violate.

No state may claim a sovereign right,
 The law of nations to defy:
Nor other states the right may claim
 Their unconcern to justify.

Peace be the sovereign right of all
 And, with it, sovereign duty be
To face the foe, who dares infringe
 The rights of the community.

To leave unchallenged monstrous wrong
 Is surely to betray a trust:
To lightly hold our heritage
 Is to despise our fathers' dust.

Freedom, thou priceless gift to men!
To die for thee is yet to live,
If only in the lives of those
For whom we do our offering give.

The Holy Land of Freedom calls
A new crusade to right the wrong;
The banner with the Cross unfurls—
Her knights the sacred standard throng.

Ye sons of freedom in all lands,
Do ye not hear her urgent call?
Cast indecision to the winds!
To arms, or with your freedom fall!

There is an Arbiter of wills,
Who shall the final judgement make.
The nations stand before His bar,
The boon or bane at last to take.

London,
March, 1940.

ANZAC DAY, 1940

Yes, we remember, we remember yet
Their sacrifice. How could we e'er forget?
They counted not the cost, but bravely went,
The glory of their manhood freely spent,
That we might still retain our liberty,
And all the world from tyrant yoke be free.
Where heroes of the past once fought and died
Our countries live, in gallant deeds allied.
They traced a name midst classic names of old,
For us and future ages to behold.
They wrote your name and mine with blood they shed,
That ever in our hearts and minds be fed
Like passion for the things for which they died—
Truth, honour, justice, freedom—ne'er denied
By those who would the name of Anzac claim.
We only honour and revere that name,
As we ourselves are armed within, without,
With thought and act that leave them not in doubt.

London, 1940.

THE WATERFALLS AT LAKE LYNDON
(N.Z.)

Leaping, dashing, rushing, onward ever go,
Down the hillside running, to the lake below.
Down the deep-cut runnels, over stones smooth worn,
Downward ever tumbling, by your own weight borne.

Bubbling, gurgling, murmuring, glistening as ye go,
Fed by misty rain clouds and the melting snow.
Glad the lake awaits you, with its waters low,
Taxed by summer's sunshine, streamlets running slow.

Here I sit and watch you, on this Easter day,
Listening to your story, what have you to say?
Part of God's great workshop, busy with a task:
To perform your mission—that is all you ask:

Working out the cycle God ordains for all—
True of all His great ones, as of all His small.
You came down from Heaven to this earth below
Gently falling raindrops, or as fleecy snow.

Rushing down the hillside, mixing with the soil,
Watering the rootlets, busy with your toil:
Seeking then the runnels, when this task is done;
Making smooth the rough stones, glistening in the sun.

Downward, ever downward, to the lake below,
Mingling with its waters, now so very low:
Bringing to them healing and refreshment sweet,
After their long struggle with the summer's heat:

Downward, yet still downward, to their lowest bed,
Bringing life and cleansing, on your errand sped.
When your work is ended, and the winter's o'er,
On the wings of sunshine upward you will soar,

Upward, ever upward to the heavens above;
Finishing the cycle of life-giving love.
Hear I in your murmurs notes of sad refrain?
'Tis the plaintive story—joy admixed with pain.

Every new creation pays the painful price,
Offered on the altar of the Sacrifice.
So I read your story on this Easter day,
In your own way telling what Christ's life doth say.

Lake Lyndon, 1938.

ONE NIGHT OF BLOOM

I saw the withered stem and faded flower
 Whose brief pathetic story soon is told—
To bloom and blush but for a single hour!
 No ray of sunlight saw thy leaves unfold,
Nor might thy tender petals face the glare.
 Enough, the soft reflected light of moon
Or distant stars their feeble strength to bear.
 Darkness and shade to thee is bliss and boon.
One glorious night at life's full banquet spent,
 But, when the feast is o'er, thy beauty fled!
The eye of dawn looks to see a bent
 And withered stem—a drooping flowerlet dead!
And fails the life that blooms but in the dark?
 Then fails the song, unheard, of soaring lark.

Note: The *Cereus*, of the Cactus variety, is found in the Hawaiian Islands. It blooms but for a night, fading soon after sunrise.

The Tropics,
August 16th, 1940.

A BLUEBELL

Sweet little bell, with petals blue,
Come once again with offering new.
You ne'er forget, despite the years,
Your mission kind, that ever cheers.
In all the wealth of summer bloom
You come again to deck her tomb.
Your drooping head leans o'er the stone,
As if to speak in tender tone
Your message sweet and comforting—
A message of returning spring:
Of life again, risen from the dead,
And joy and light—and darkness fled.
O little flower, how can I dare
To pluck you from your sacred lair?
But, just one bloom grant unto me,
That I it keep in memory.

Note: Bluebell plucked from the grave-side of Elizabeth Bruce, daughter of King Robert I (The Bruce), and wife of Sir William Oliphant, in the grounds adjoining the chapel at Gask.

TRIBUTE TO LORD RUTHERFORD
OF NELSON

New Zealand greets her greatest son,
Whose name shall live whilst time doth run
Its changeful course midst ebb and flow
Of multitudes that come and go!
Forever on the scroll of fame
Undimmed shall stand thy peerless name,
A beacon light to point the way
To seekers of the truth alway!
The humble home that gave thee birth,
The toilsome years that proved thy worth,
The upward climb, the topmost rung,
Achievements by a whole world sung!
The well-known path the many tread
Was by some pioneer spirit led,
Who ventured forth alone to view
The world of dreams at last come true.
'Tis given to but a chosen few
To open paths of knowledge new.
This rare distinction men accord
To our New Zealand Rutherford,
Who places in our hands a key,
Unlocking doors of mystery,
Revealing secrets long withheld
About the structure of the world—
No longer solid, as it seems,

But insubstantial as our dreams,—
Units of electricity,
Arranged in systems planetary!
Leucippus and Democritus,
Your systems can but interest us
As beacons of a distant past,
That show the pathway reached at last!
And alchemists of later day,
Your theories all have passed away.
Our Master Alchemist has shown
The follies of the once-famed "stone,"
That would all things transmute to gold,
Enriching him, who doth it hold.
By pure pursuit of truth, and blind
To baser gain, 'twas his to find
The secret hid from duller eyes,
Bereft of sight by thought of prize.
The atom's citadel was stormed,
Disclosing to us how 'tis formed—
The indivisible in parts!
The secret of the heart of hearts!
Blest were thine eyes—the first to see
Into the heart of mystery!
Blest were thy lips—the first to tell
What had been seen beneath the spell!
What other doors thy key may ope,
Lie yet beyond our ken and scope;
What other hands may turn the key,

Opening new realms of mystery;
What paths unknown their feet may tread—
We know not. Yet, by thee, still led!
Already other hands apply
Fruits of thy patient industry.
The healing ray a mission finds
In easing pain and troubled minds.
New Zealand bows before thy shrine,
Revering honours only thine;
No greater glory hath she won,
Than her proud right to call thee son!

Christchurch, N.Z., 1938.

CHRISTMAS

Hail! holy day, of all most dear,
 Good tidings dost thou bring:
Attune our ears that we may hear
 The song the angels sing.

"Glory to God, Who dwells on high,"
 'Twas thus the song began,
Whose heavenly music filled the sky
 And round the whole world ran.

"Peace on earth, where'er goodwill
 Reigns in the hearts of men:"
Sing in a world so full of ill
 Your song of love again.

To you is born in David's town,
 As ancient prophets tell,
The Christ of God, to earth come down,
 The foes of man to quell.

This angel-song the shepherds hear
 When with their flocks by night;
It filled their timid hearts with fear:
 So brightly shone the light.

To Bethlehem with haste they speed
The wonder to behold—
The Lamb of God, the Christ indeed,
Ev'n as the angels told.

A lowly virgin and a child
Their shelter but a shed.
Beside them stood her spouse, who smiled:
The stars shone overhead.

Wrapped in the swaddling clothes He lies,
His cot a manger rude:
Such was the scene to greet their eyes!
Let not the "sign" delude—

The Mighty God, the Prince of Peace,
In hiding of His power!
Time but awaits the full release—
The coming of His "hour."

The shepherds saw—and, filled with joy,
Returned unto their task:
The angels' song their lips employ—
No greater joy they ask.

And wise men coming from afar
To greet the new-born King,
Directed by a guiding star,
Their choicest offerings bring.

Thus to the humble doth He come,
As to the wise and great,
To kindle in hearts cold and dumb
Love that shall conquer hate.

O angels, sing your song again
That all the earth may hear!
O earth, take up the glad refrain
And banish hate and fear.

Christ, the Saviour—let us pray;
Christ, the Lord—let us adore;
Christ, the King—let us obey
Henceforth and for evermore.

Dunedin, 1938.

WINTER

How cold and dead all nature seems,
As if asleep within a tomb!
A mantle white o'er all is laid,
Dropt gently from the welkin's loom.

In icy grip of winter held—
No lively motion anywhere—
The trees stand still and stark
As skeletons—snow-white and bare.

And yet, in death, how beautiful!
Ev'n as the features of our dead,
When freed at last from pain and care,
With peace and loveliness o'erspread.

Hyde Park, London,
January 28th, 1940.

AUTUMN

I feel the chill of Autumn in the air.
The solemn trees stand still, in pensive mood,
And seem as if on passing time to brood.
The pulse of life is slowed, now summer's glare
And fever gone; and light, subdued, doth wear
A softer hue, whilst, in her plenitude,
All nature rests in languid attitude
Before her stern attendants strip her bare.
Yet, with what grace and beauty to her sleep
She goes, denuded of her ample robes
Of colours gay, so gently laid aside
The earth to strew and her rich stores that keep
From hunger's pang when frost of winter probes
And doth, with snow and ice, all pasture hide.

Masterton, 1939.

TO
"THE AULD HOOSE"

My heart is still aglow
At the sight that I have seen—
A picture of "The Auld Hoose"
And all that it doth mean:

The dear ancestral home
Where my kin did long abide
With fortunes oft as changeful,
As ebb and flow of tide.

Oft have her gallant sons
At the pibroch's rousing call
Gone forth in shining armour
For Scotland's cause to fall.

Nor shall we e'er forget
The defence of Stirling's height
In defiance of King Edward,
With all his men of might.

Flodden Field and Solway
Claimed her sons in later days;
For Scotland's cause e'er ready
Should she the standard raise.

The royal house aye dear
Where the blood of Bruce doth run—
"The Auld Hoose" swore its fealty
To the Stewart and his son.

Proudly she remembers
When the Prince once graced her halls—
The tokens of his visit
For long adorned her walls.

Her sons espoused the cause,
Pledging life and limb and land;
Their Chief the call had sounded—
His call was a command.

All is not lost where homage
The sacrifice will make.
The less reward is surely his
Who earthly gain would take.

Though monument and cairn
Mark alone where brave men fell,
Song and story keep the deeds
Which future ages tell.

And not the least of these
Were by a maiden sung—
A daughter of "The Auld Hoose"—
Enriching Scotia's tongue.

And not alone her sons
Did Old Scotia's cause maintain:
War exacts a bitter toll
On all that do remain—

Wife and child and lover
Who must fight behind the lines,
Far from the din of battle,
With a heart that ever pines.

Fair "Flower of Strathearn"
This tribute now I bring,
In memory of "The Auld Hoose"
And sweet songs that you sing!

Note: "The Auld Hoose" of Gask, Perthshire, Scotland, was the seat of the Oliphants for over six centuries and is immortalized in Scottish Minstrelsy by Lady Nairne, née Caroline Oliphant. The above lines were written, in part, by the remains of "The Auld Hoose," June, 1940.

THAT BOY OF MINE

Wonderful little chap he was,
That boy of mine!
His curly-wurly shock of hair,
His mummy used to brush with care,
Admiring as a mother dare,
That boy of mine!

And what a pair of eyes he had,
That boy of mine!
The cherubs seemed to peep through them;
The fairies held them for their den,
And looked at things beyond my ken,
That boy of mine!

The angel face—it haunts me still,
Oh, boy of mine!
Oh! tell me, where I find it may,
It haunts me both by night and day.
Bring back to me once more I pray,
That boy of mine!

And oft a serious look he had,
That boy of mine!
A painful thought would come to me,
That somehow he was made to see
One day he could no longer be
That boy of mine!

Then, tell me, now, what was your dream,
Oh, boy of mine!
Or was it not some God-given plan
To show the way by which you can
Rise up in strength and be a man?
Oh, boy of mine!

Then be a man, a manly man,
Oh, boy of mine!
The man your mother's love hath sought,
The man of whom your father thought,
The man Christ loved and dearly bought,
Oh, boy of mine!

Melbourne, 1928.

SPRING RETURNS

I wonder what this chatter means,
That robs me of my sleep.
I hear it in the window eaves;
I'll draw the blinds and peep.

Ah! there I see two cooing doves,
Greeting the morning light.
Some hidden impulse from within,
Hath stirred them with delight.

Through winter's long and dreary night,
Naught had their presence told.
I knew not that they nestled near,
To keep their vigil cold.

But now the dove-cote is astir—
As ripple of a tide,
Returning o'er the ocean bed
Of nature far and wide.

London, 1940.

SPRING

Decrepit winter, breathing fast,
His icy grip reluctant yields;
No more o'er wold and grassy fields,
With bitter cold and biting blast,
Or threatening skies, deep overcast,
Relentless sovereignty he wields.
The kindly sun in strength now shields
His captive kingdom of the past.
Whilst generous spring, in robes bedight,
Comes in her majesty to reign,
Attended by her retinue—
Fair offspring of the warmth and light.
Come, gentle spring, Oh, come again
With life all nature to renew!

Masterton, 1939.

VIOLETS

Violets purple, violets blue,
Violets make me think of you.
When I met you in the dell,
And on me you cast your spell,
Violets then in leaf and bud,
Everywhere the vale did stud.
Sweet the fragrance of that hour,
As we sat within our bower;
Sweet the memory of it still,
As the years with memories fill.
So when violets reappear,
Then I feel that you are here;
As their fragrance I inhale,
All your sweetness they unveil.

London, 1939.

THOUGHTS AT MELROSE ABBEY

Hard by these sacred ruins lies the dust
Of one whose blood, still warm, runs in these veins.
Seven centuries have swept across the spot,
Yet, undisturbed, thou sleepest here in peace.
Rude hands have wrecked the shrine where thou art
laid,
Destroying what to other hands was dear.
Such is the fate that oft awaits the forms
And customs of the past; and such a fate
Must overtake all form and custom grown
Corrupt, and thus the ministers become
Of death, not life. Still, splendid are thy ruins,
Provoking yet the pious heart to pray,
To love, to live and labour for the things
They bravely sought, by other means, to gain.
So shall the faith in which they lived and died
Live on, as does the warm blood in these veins.

Written by the graveside of Sir Walter Oliphant, third
Justiciar of Lothian, interred in the Chapterhouse of the
Abbey in 1242.

June, 1940.

IVY

As the ivy to the tree,
So I would you were to me,
Ever seeking towards my heart,
Knowing naught of life apart.

With each tendril and new shoot,
Ever striking deeper root,
Interlocked and intertwined,
With one body and one mind.

You to me your beauty give,
I the strength by which you live,
Thus to live our life as one,
Till its course is fully run.

Dorset, 1939.

ENGLISH ROSES

I gave her English roses,
 Cream and gold and red.
I heard each petal whisper.
 This is what they said:

“We bear your love-fraught message
 Hidden in our heart,
As incense in a censer,
 Sweetness to impart:

“As ministers of Cupid,
 Serving at his shrine,
Our mission is to do not
 Our own will, but thine.”

Then go, my English roses,
 Cream and red and gold:
Me fail not in your mission,
 To her my love unfold.

London, 1939.

THE DAISY

O little flower, I never knew
The message you in silence bear.

You stand so meek upon the lawn—
Less than a pawn—with stem so weak.

Upward you look unto the sun,
His course to run—ne'er ray forsook.

Like disc of gold in you I see,
Which, doth he flee, your leaves enfold.

A circle white, the disc of gold
Doth gently hold—a halo bright,

A covering warm, when night is cold,
Your disc of gold to keep from harm.

But I do know that onetime you,
Of golden hue, chose to forgo

The colour bright, the rest to serve,
Without reserve, both day and night.

O little flower—my daisy meek—
To me you speak of that great power,

That wells within the heart of One,
God's only Son, Who knew no sin.

To serve He came; His life to give
That others live—Love was His Name.

Beauty doth shine when sacrifice
Doth pay the price—as His and thine.

Masterton, 1939.

A FALLEN LEAF

(From a plane tree in Berkeley Square, London)

Come, welcome missive, from thy heights above:
To me thou com'st as messenger of love.
Oft on thy lofty branch I thee admired,
As in thy robe of golden green attired,
Thou, with thy sisters, danced unto the breeze,
All through the spring and summer hours with ease,
Though now in autumn's ageing calm grown still,
As if bereft of all thy sprightly skill.
Lost too, the lustre of thy golden green,
Whilst, giving place to richer amber sheen,
With tips and edges of a russet brown,
Thou dost the beauty of thy short life crown.
Alas, no more as pennant dost thou fly,
Adorning thy proud mast-head in the sky.
But to the bosom of the earth art borne,
And, from thy bed, wilt other leaves adorn.

London, 1940.

UNDER THE TRYSTING TREE

She stood beneath the shadow of the tree;
The pale moon veiled by evening mist and haze
Its soft light cast upon her angel face.
She seemed as spirit from another world
That made me stand in awe and reverent fear.
But passion beat its rhythm in my veins,
And, like a rising tide, did onward sweep
To carry me resistless on its crest.
I held her in my arms and found those lips
So warm and sweet with love's unmeasured store.
I drank the draught unto its deepest depths
And sought my ardent spirit's thirst to quench.
Heaven smiled upon me in that blissful hour,
Sweet strains of music echoed in my ears;
Peace cast her mantle on my troubled soul;
Time, life and love seemed one grand harmony,
With all their discords vanished quite away.

NEW ZEALAND CENTENARY

A THANKSGIVING HYMN

God of our fathers, hear our praise,
As we this day our voices raise,
For all the bounties, great and free,
Bequeathed to us by them and Thee.

We thank Thee for this kindly land,
In beauty fashioned by Thy hand.
Of nature's stores, how rich our share!
The creatures of Thy constant care.

Our fathers' pathway Thou did'st guide,
From distant lands o'er oceans wide,
When forth as pioneers they came,
To write in this new land their name.

For all their courage and their skill,
In facing fortunes good or ill,
For deeds of sacrifice and love,
We give the praise to Thee above.

Sustained of Thee, mid'st arduous toil,
As they subdued a virgin soil,
Blest is the labour of their hands,
In fertile fields and fruitful lands.

For homes replacing forests wild,
To shelter wife and helpless child;
For wistful foresight, frugal care,
The fruits of which we freely share.

For flocks and herds on hill and dale,
For Church and school, and road and rail,
For all that ministers to weal,
Make Thou our hearts true gladness feel.

How can we praise Thee as we ought
For all these gifts so dearly bought?
We lay them on Thy sacred shrine,
And with them pledge ourselves as Thine.

Through all the years that are to be,
Our fathers' God, we look to Thee
To guide us by Thy gracious hand,
To bless and guard our dear homeland.

Not unto us alone we pray
For blessing now and every day.
We share the bounties of Thy grace
With brothers of our Maori race.

Amen.

Masterton, 1939.

EVERY DAY

Every day, when you're away,
I'll think of you;
Enshrine you in my inmost thoughts,
Adoring you.

Every day, when you're away,
I'll pray for you,
That angels keep you in their love,
Protecting you.

Every day, when you're away,
I'll long for you
In ardent passion of desire,
E'er loving you.

Come the day, though it delay,
When I and you
May gather yet the ripened fruit
Of love so true.

London, 1939.

THOUGHTS OF THEE

Each waking hour
Is full of thoughts of thee,
That come unbid,
Like fragrance from a flower—
As sweet and free.

Each hour of sleep
Is sweet with rest and calm,
Because the spell
Of thy fond love for me
Is as a balm.

Both day and night
Are servants of thy charm,
To comfort me
Through each succeeding hour,
And keep from harm.

London, 1939.

UNRESOLVED

I hear the note still sounding,
Although the singer's gone.
Yea, sounding and resounding,
It ever must go on,
Through space and time e'er sounding,
Because of me a part.

It touched a string eternal,
Vibrating in my heart;
A note of plaintive sadness,
Suggestive of a wail—
An unresolvèd harmony—
A life of no avail!

But does life's discord e'er resolve,
And harmony prevail?
Or are we destined ever
To hear a final wail?
Or is life but the tuning
Ere melodies awake,

Midst harmonies of heaven
That on the spirit break,
When, fleeing all its earthliness
And tyrannies of time,
It rises to sublimer Life
In an ampler clime?

Panama, 1939.

ON ME ALONE

Once, all the ardour of your love
Poured like the sun's rays from above
On me alone.

Once, all the birds on every tree
Tuned their sweet notes of melody
For me alone.

Once, every flower on every stalk
Looked up and smiled and tried to talk
To me alone.

And every cloud across the sky
Its message waved on passing by
To me alone.

And every gentle breeze that blew,
Seemed laden with a thought of you
For me alone.

From dawn till dark, each waking hour
Was servant of your sovereign power
O'er me alone.

But now I wander in the dark,
And grope to find love's old landmark.
The leaves have fallen from the tree;
The birds no longer sing to me;
The flowers their drooping heads have bent,
The glory of their petals spent;
The winds blow with a freezing chill;
The clouds look down a-boding ill;
The waking hours seem dumb to bring
A message that is comforting
To me alone.

THE UPPER ROOM

The darkness crept o'er Olivet,
The evening hour had come,
When Jesus His disciples met,
Within the upper room.

The trysting place, where they renew
The sacred rite of old,
When Jesus to His chosen few
Did all His love unfold.

The last act of His ministry,
The farewell to His friends;
No more the open country,
'Tis here the journey ends.

I have desired with strong desire
This sacred hour to see,
Where I the flame may fan to fire,
The flame of love to Me.

This sacramental bread I break
And now hand on to you,
'Tis but a symbol that you take,
I am, Myself, the true.

The Bread am I, the Bread of Heaven,
That cometh from above.
This body broken is a leaven—
The ferment of God's love.

This cup of blessing that I give,
Symbol of sacrifice,
Blood of a lamb that once did live,
Whose death did all suffice.

Behold! the Lamb of God am I,
Soon to be offered up,
For all the sins of men I die.
Now, drink ye, all, this cup.

Was Judas there who did betray
His Lord, who thus did speak?
And Thomas, who did oft gainsay
His Master—far from meek?

And the vacillating Peter,
Who did his Lord deny?
Beyond a doubt they all were there.
You ask the reason why?

At Jesu's table all are guests.
None comes in his own right.
He is a Saviour, Who requests,
The Host, Who doth invite.

All that we have, all that we are,
All that we hope to be
Are of His love, Who puts no bar,
Excluding you or me.

With joy, then, to His table come;
Deep penitence your due.
He hath prepared the upper room
In readiness for you.

Masterton, 1938.

EVENTIDE, MELROSE AND THE EILDONS

Midst scenes of silvan beauty here I sit
To watch the sunlight fade upon the hills.
In pride they lift their arched crests to the skies
To touch the last gleam of the parting rays.
Oft from those heights, in bygone times, have priests
Of Baal their offerings to the Sun-god made,
To greet the waking and departing day.
Yet later years have seen the pagan rites
By Roman hands performed upon thy brows.
At last, the sound of the Evangel sweet
Is heard to echo from thy rocky base,
Where stands a shrine, hewn from thy caverns deep,
In honour of the Virgin's sacred name—
In ruins now, yet splendid to behold!
Soothed by the lapping waters of the Tweed,
The village in the valley, lulled to peace,
Now turns its thought to restfulness and sleep.
The thrush its evensong of praise has sung.
The cuckoo from its green bower said "good night."
And I am left twixt light and dark to watch
The tireless sun draw silently the curtain
Of the night. No drooping eyelids he disturbs,
Nor ears fatigued with toil's harsh note. With soft
And muffled feet he flits away, kissing
Tired eyes and brows with lips inducing sleep—
His last kiss to the Eildons, ere he goes.

Melrose,
June 3rd, 1940.

BEDA VENERABILIS

(Galilee Chapel, Durham Cathedral)

I stood beside the tomb in reverent awe
To pay a debt to him, who never saw
The fruits of that great work, by skilful hands
Begun—a harvest greater than the sands
On many a seashore flung. I was alone,
Communing with the spirits round the throne,
Whilst slanting rays played through the coloured light
And settled on the stone. The coming night
Was close at hand. Methought of that same hour,
Long years gone by, when, spite of ebbing power,
He toiled his self-appointed task to end—
The crowning act, in which did richly blend
All the ripe vintage of a mind and heart
Endowed of God, and schooled in every art
By patient industry. Nor could be found
In all the land his peer in knowledge sound.
His chiefest task—to make our Angle tongue,
Of letters bare, to lisp the message sung
By angels first to simple sons of toil
In fields of Bethlehem, the city royal;
Nay, even more,—beseech the Heavenly King,
Great David's Son, in lowliness assenting,
Like to ourselves become, and thus to speak
Our Mother tongue, no longer vain and weak,

But weighted now with words of power and love,
That lift and flight the soul to heights above.

The seal of the Evangel didst thou break,
And John, disciple loved of Jesus, spake
In Saxon tongue the sweetest story told.
Thy labour done! But, long as life did hold,
This swan-song didst thou sing, chaunting at last,
In sacred song, thy spirit to the vast.

Beda venerabilis! Be my bliss
Beside thine ancient tomb to kneel and kiss
Its cold grey stone amidst the gathering gloom,
Whilst in the mind's eye do I see the bloom
Of many a flower, whose roots do firmly cling
To this live rock, their scent afar to fling.
Through all the world the Word has gone, and will,
Until the prophet's promise men fulfil,
When all the tongues of man in truth proclaim
The wonder-saving knowledge of His Name.

MASTER OF ALL THE ARTS

Arise, arch-artist of the skies,
And chase the gloom of night away:
Ingrain thy colours bright and gay;
Bring joy unto my weary eyes!

The sabled archway change to blue,
And sombre clouds, that, like a pall,
Spread dusk and darkness over all,
Limn in the shades of brightest hue.

Etch in the hills, with verdure clad,
The fields and pastures far and near;
Let all the landscape now appear
In forms of beauty that make glad.

Tint once again the flowers that blow,
With colours from the rainbow drawn;
Unfold the wonder of the dawn,
Its awe spread wide on all below.

In kingly state thou dost appear,
Beauty to strew in every part.
In kingly state thou dost depart,
To leave the scene behind thee drear.

Mastery of colour and of form—
This but a portion of thy skill.
Winds of the heavens await thy will,
And fierce wild music of the storm.

Of all the arts the master, thou!
All nature at thy call awakes,
With notes of song the silence breaks—
We place the laurels on thy brow.

Wellington, N.Z., 1939.

STOKE POGES — TWO HUNDRED YEARS
AFTER

Sweet singer of the mute, inglorious dead,
Whose sacred dust now mingles with the mould
Of humbler graves thou didst in honour hold,
Thy spirit's brooding wings o'er all are spread!

Lowly I kneel beside thy silent bed
To catch the breathing of thy thoughts of old,
And "words that burn" yet from thy grave so cold,
That deeper reverence in my soul be bred.

Still stand the village church with ivied tower,
Bearing a witness to the things unseen,
The yew tree with its drooping boughs and shade,

Whose leaves give yet no hint of waning power.
But these shall pass, as shall the ivy green.
Thy spirit and its song do never fade.

Note: Written by the graveside of the poet Gray, Stoke
Poges, 1940.

VOICES OF THE PAST

I sometimes creep, as if by stealth
 Away into the past,
With all its long-forgotten dreams
 And hopes aforeside vast.

With trembling hand I turn each page,
 Revealing what is there:
The writing oft so indistinct,
 Some folios quite bare.

Yet, there are faces still that smile,
 As in the days gone by.
I long to greet them as of old—
 My greeting but a sigh.

Their voices, with familiar tones,
 Re-echo in my ear.
I long in vain to answer them—
 My answer but a tear.

Oh, shall we ever meet again,
 And fellowship renew,
Or does the changing hand of time
 Make change of interest too?

We do not leave this earthly scene,
Where they were called away.
The potter's moving wheel of time
Has wrought much with our clay.

Ah! there it is. It still is clay.
The clay we leave behind.
The form and use may change with time—
The essence is the mind,

The mind that feels and knows and wills,
Whate'er the state may be.
We shuffle off the clay in time:
Mind has eternity.

Masterton, 1938.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S LAMENT

Oh, 'tis a life monotonous,
To rise at break of day,
To face the same old humdrum tasks,
That ever with me stay.

If I could go and build a house,
And watch its rise each day;
See something done for each day's work,
It would my toil repay.

But, just to sweep and clean a house,
And wipe the dust away,
And tidy up and things arrange—
The same from day to day;

Wash pots and pans and knives and forks,
And dirty dishes too—
The whole thing gets upon my nerves;
I know not what I do.

Ah, me! It is a tiresome job,
That makes of one a drudge.
It is not work that I detest—
The lack of change, my grudge!

Perchance there are some questions,
That I myself should ask,
Ere I pass a final judgment
Upon the humdrum task.

Does not all nature loud proclaim,
Despite her law of change,
A constant repetition, rife,
Where'er her realm doth range?—

The sun each day must rise and set;
The tide must ebb and flow:
"Do it again!"—the common law,
That governs all below.

And once again, is not the life
More than the things we do?
'Tis not the act, but how we toil,
That makes or mars us too.

Life-building is the end of toil,
Though humble it may be.
The kind of soul we aim to make,
Must count with you and me.

The Master at the joiner's bench
Shared in our common toil.
The humble task that stained His hands,
Could not His Spirit soil.

Masterton, 1938.

LIFE'S REFUSALS

Life is a thing of promise,
Of hope, desire and dream,
Of looking to a future,
Of following a gleam.

These be the driving forces
To urge us on alway.
Without them we must languish
And perish by the way.

But does life keep its promise,
Rewarding all our toil?
Or does it rob attainment
And all our efforts foil?

Alas, how oft denied us
What we have dearly sought
And we are left lamenting,
To sigh for what is not!

Some unseen hand removed it,
When just within our grasp;
Not ours the joy to hold it,
Nor to our bosom clasp.

And, even though we claimed it
And held it for our own,
Joy of possession left us—
The fascination flown!

Does this not tell the story
That all our hopes are vain,
That dream, desire and promise
Do not their goal attain?

Is this not God's great blunder,
Who did our life so frame?
Can this bring any glory
Unto the Sacred Name?

"No! it is not His blunder,"
Some of the sages say:
"The evil thing is our desire,
Which we must surely slay."

And other wise men tell us,
If we would happy be:
"Meet life's refusals calmly—
With equanimity."

Does Pessimist or Stoic
Or Buddhist, with his lore,
Elucidate the problem
Of the wounded heart and sore?

Do not our life's refusals,
But tell the story plain,
That man has hopes far greater
Than this world can sustain?

The draught of the Eternal
Alone can satisfy
The longings of the spirit
That haunts humanity.

Masterton, 1938.

MY DREAMLAND

Oh! come with me to my dreamland,
Where oft my fancy plays,
That we may dwell in happiness,
Until the end of days.

I see the little cottage there,
Of rock hewn from the hill;
I hear the murm'ring music of
The gently flowing rill.

The shaded grove upon its banks
Offers a calm retreat;
The rustic bridge that spans its breadth
Provides a restful seat.

The cuckoo sounds the break of day,
The owl his vigil keeps,
The nightingale for very joy
Sings when all nature sleeps.

The fairies dance upon the lawn,
Where'er the moonbeams play;
The water nymphs sport on the rill
Amidst the mist and spray.

The meadows and the rolling downs,
Far as the eye can sweep,
Enclose the idly browsing herds,
And flocks of snow-white sheep.

The distant hills now wrapt in haze,
At even are purple clad:
They rise at dawn to greet the day
In colours that make glad.

Spring strews the fields with daffodils,
Wild hyacinth and bells,
Red poppies peep from out the corn,
And violets scent the dells.

Oh! come with me, my dream-girl, come
The little house to claim.
Within its walls you'll be content,
For heartsease is its name.

London, 1939.

AS SHIPS THAT PASS
IN THE NIGHT

Like ships that pass each other in the night,
Their greetings give with friendly glow of light,
Then plunge into a darkness all profound—
Each laden with a cargo outward bound,
Shall we, as they, be left to cleave our way
Through dark and lonely seas, or comes a day
When we shall sight a shore and haven reach,
To find ourselves at last upon a beach
Of one great common land, where we shall meet
And one another in affection greet,
No more by fate or fortune sundered be,
But live in love through an eternity?

At Sea, 1939.

THE DEAREST THING I KNOW

Oh! sweetest thing that I do know
What mystic magic makes it so?
When you look at me with those eyes,
Then flees all power to analyse.

And then your smile, your voice, your face,
Your movements, all surpassing grace;
Pray tell me where the magic lies
That witches me with fresh surprise?

Some hidden wave of secret power,
As subtle as the scent of flower,
Rays forth from you in every part
To find its way straight to my heart,

Awaking music in my soul,
That brings me peace and makes me whole.
You are the dearest thing I know;
The love of God hath made you so.

TO LOVE YOU IS MY LIFE

Though the river cease from flowing
And the sun no longer shine,
Though the heart may stop its beating
And all earthly power resign,
I could not cease from loving you
Unless I life decline;
For you have wakened in my heart
The life I know is mine.

THE SEA — A CONTRAST

I am listening to the wavelets
Gently gliding back and fore;
To the music of their murmur
Softly breaking on the shore.

Like a hesitating lover,
When in doubt of his approach,
Now advancing, now receding,
Fearful lest he should encroach.

I can hear the sigh and moaning
Of the slowly ebbing tide;
I can feel the pang of hunger
Of a heart unsatisfied.

I am standing on a headland,
High above the open sea,
Where I watch the breakers rolling
In their might and majesty.

On they come with power resistless,
Nothing dare their might withstand,
Reaching forth strong arms embracing
Massive rocks and yielding sand.

As a lover passion-driven,
Overriding, unrestrained,
Blind, regardless of refusal,
So his object be attained.

Though the ocean's tide be ebbing,
Yet 'tis ever at the flow.
I can see it still caressing
Massive rocks and sand below.

Christchurch, 1938.

O SPIRIT OF BEAUTY!

O spirit of beauty, of life and of love
I find you in all things, wherever I rove!
Concealed in the sunset and hid in the dawn,
Asleep in the daisies that bloom by the lawn:
Unseen in the scent of the violet and rose
And borne on the wings of the wind as it blows:
Enwraught in the clouds that float over the sky
And veiled in the mists on the soft downs that lie.
I find you in hiding in heaven's blue o'erhead,
In springs in the mountains, where streamlets are fed.
I list to the murmur and sigh of the trees,
As backward and forward they play in the breeze,
And fancy you there midst the rustle of leaves,
But, finding you not, my heart for you grieves.
O spirit of beauty and life from above
I find you in all things, because you I love!

Toronto, 1940.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR ME

Lord! is it true Thou seekest me
To claim me for Thine own,
To love Thee, and to serve but Thee,
To live for Thee, alone?

A captive, bound by sin, am I
Whose mastery everywhere,
Fills me with fear and deep distrust,
And impotent despair.

How can'st Thou seek one such as I
And for my service sue?
Thy judgments and Thy fierce rebuke
Lord, are my only due.

To serve Thee, Lord! To live for Thee!
To love Thee with my all!
It is a dream too fair for me,
Who am a helpless thrall.

I cannot to such heights attain;
I feel the chains that bind;
The very brightness of the dream
My poor dull eyes doth blind.

Yet in my darkness and despair
A glimmer now I see;
The vision with its dazzling light,
Lord, is inspired by Thee.

This sweet assurance of Thy love
Now can I plainly see.
It is not I that seek Thee, Lord,
Thy love is seeking me.

O Love, that will not let me die,
O Love, that died for me,
Thy love, O Lord, has conquered
Love's captive!—I am free.

O Love, whose height and breadth and length,
Whose depths no eye can see,
The very Love of God Thou art,
O Love, that lovest me.

O Love, that kindest love in me,
O Love now come to stay,
Thou wilt not leave me on the road,
But take me all the way.

Masterton, 1937.

SONS OF ST. ANDREW'S

St. Andrew's College Twenty-First Anniversary.
(Christchurch, N.Z.)

Sons of St. Andrew's, far and near,
This happy day greet with a cheer!
Your Alma Mater calls to you
Once more the home ties to renew.

Then let us to old haunts repair,
The life of former years to share;
And whilst we think of other days,
Our Alma Mater let us praise.

We bring our tributes to thy shrine,
And bless the fate that made us thine.
Once more our love and loyalty
We pledge through all the years to be.

The memories dear of days now past
We'll cherish long as life shall last.
One sacred hearth our hearts unite,
Where burns the home fire warm and bright.

Out in the world midst stress and strain
We'll do our utmost to maintain
The truth and freedom learned of thee,
More precious than prosperity.

By toil of brain, or skill of hand,
We'll seek forever to command
Respect and honour for thy name,
And ever scorn what would defame.

Our Alma Mater, Guiding Star!
Thy loyal sons from near and far
This day their homage to thee pay—
"Vincite vera virtute."

"Vincite vera virtute."—
Or conquer truth by deeds alway;
The Master's test of long ago—
Doing His Will the Truth we know.

Christchurch, 1938.

JESUS, THE THOUGHT OF THEE

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
Prostrates me to the dust.
I have no virtue in myself;
In Thee, alone, I trust.

Those eyes of purity that pierce
The secret depths within
Lay open to Thine awful gaze
The haunts of all my sin.

I brought Thee to the cruel cross;
Thy crown of thorns my gift.
With those that would Barabbas choose,
I did my voice uplift.

I joined the fickle crowd that cried
That death on Thee might fall.
I passed the cup from which was drunk
The draught of bitter gall.

O Jesus, canst Thou me forgive
Betrayal such as this?
With Judas I have given Thee, too,
The false and trait'rous kiss.

No depths of hell too deep for me,
Who sin against the light,
And know the sunshine of Thy love,
Yet walk into the night.

O feeble will and frailer flesh,
That drive me from Thy breast!
Thy miracle in me perform—
Live in me, Lord, as Guest!

Masterton, 1937.

PAIN

My oldest and my closest friend!
I think we know each other well:
There's little left, after the years,
That, to each other, we can tell.

Yet would I now my mind declare;
My inmost thoughts to others tell,
After the years that I have spent
Beneath your dark, unbroken spell.

Your first advances, lightly made,
Were almost pleasure in disguise.
They made me conscious of myself;
Important in my neighbour's eyes.

But, when at last you did presume
You had some rightful claim on me,
I grew suspicious of your aims:
Would now and then resentful be.

But still you did insinuate,
And all your subtle ways pursue,
Despite resistance fierce and strong,
You surely meant me to undo.

Oft have you sought me at my toil
To force on me your presence dire.
Not even when my strength you sapped
Had you the pity to retire.

At night you have my rest disturbed,
And would with me dark vigil keep,
Until at last my worn-out frame
Escaped you in protective sleep.

And even when I pleasure sought,
You made your evil presence felt;
With impish smile upon your lips
The losing cards to me you dealt.

Oft did I curse your evil name,
And fought against you to the last,
And still will fight you to the end,
When you my utmost power shall blast.

Ah! yes, we know each other well;
As intimate as lovers twain;
And, as sincere as lovers love,
So do I hate you, hateful pain.

Yet, there are some who would proclaim
That pain is not a real thing—
An empty figment of the mind,
To which, in ignorance, men cling.

They rear their churches in full sight
Of hospital and nursing home,
Oblivious of the invalids,
Who in the streets beside them roam.

Yet, Master, may I ne'er forget
The pain that Thou did'st once endure,
Both in Thy life and in Thy death
That Thou the ills of man might'st cure.

Has pain a mission to perform?
Did'st Thou not reach Thy perfect end
Through its dark door and thorny road,
And to Thy sons such way commend?

In truth, a ministry towards health—
To sound a warning of dread ill,
Awakening sympathy and love,
Inspiring works of rare goodwill.

And you may prove the door to prayer,
That brings the Great Physician near,
Whose healing touch and loving voice
Release the mind and heart from fear.

Pain! I forgive you all the ill,
Wrought to my body and my mind,
If, through your chastening ministry,
The healing touch of Christ I find.

Some day to you I'll say farewell,
When you have wrought your gracious work.
Heaven's threshold you may never cross,
But must in mystery's twilight lurk.

Toronto, 1940.

NAN

We see each other every day,
And always find we've much to say.
She sits so still and close to me,
With big brown eyes, where sympathy,
In silent eloquence, doth tell
She loves me deeply, loves me well.
She puts her little hand in mine,
Her eyes beam with a joy divine,
As each and every day I tell,
That she on me has cast her spell,
That no one in the world could be,
As faithful in her love as she.
You make me love you all I can,
You dear old English Sheepdog—Nan.

Masterton, 1938.

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Te Puna Mātauranga
o Aotearoa



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83
PAM
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THO
1940

Thompson, A. T.
Her finest hour and other
poems

ERRATA

Page 18, line 11: For "The eye of dawn looks to
see a bent" read "The eye of dawn looks down
to see a bent"

Page 43, line 17: For "mid'st arduous toil," read
"midst arduous toil,"

