Vancouver Island

AND

OTHER POEMS

Annie Ironside Cowan
VANCOUVER ISLAND

Vancouver—isle whose beauty thrills my heart, 
Isle—that God's hand has made "a thing apart";
He fused this gem superb, and set it fair
In Britain's diadem to sparkle there.

Thy huge upstanding firs, the towering might
Of God's idea, burst upon the sight;
Arbutus, dogwood, broom, in proud array
And colour, crowns the glory of the day!

Thy giant rocks o'er whose Titanic pile
Green mosses, ferns and fairy flowers beguile;
Their wondrous beauty bends me to the theme
Of worship of the God Who made this dream.

Beneath the cover-wonder of their robes,
Like stony heart aroused by passion's probes,
God's sun has made a home for tender things;
Here bluebells bloom, the lark above them sings.

The mountains and the sea lift up their voice;
The heavy-fruited trees in hope rejoice;
The fertile valleys smile and God's good rain
Descends in rills and waterfalls amain.

The people in whose veins the generous blood
Of Britain's virile heart aye runs in flood;
Their hospitality like firelight glows
In every home and "blossoms as the rose."
THE STAR

You were a roving star, lost in the night,
   But when you passed my orbit in your flight
My heart, like some great magnet, turned to you,
   And Joy fulfilled, and Life and Love, I knew.
Out of the vast unknown you came to me
   And troubled all my thoughts, and let me see
The barren years behind that fateful day
   When you came by and charmed my heart away.
MOONLIGHT

When moonlight casts its spell on shimmering sea,
On rugged rocks, broom-crowned, and o'er the vale,
The dancing ripples lapping on the shale,
Bring visions and enchantment deep to me:
My soul lifts thankful praise, fair Moon, to thee,
When holy Night doth o'er the land prevail,
Nor toil, nor stress of labour e'er shall stale
Thy light, on mountain, stream, or flow'ring tree.

Thy soft, effulgent beam that seeks the rose,
Enhances lovely scenes with magic bright,
Spreads silver where the water-lily grows;
With cunning camouflage conceals from sight,
Those faults the garish daylight would expose,
And moon-witched meditations put to flight!
OUR BOY

Yes, he is gone—he fell in Normandy,
   I think with joyous laughter on his lips—
In all my thoughts of him my mem'ry slips
   Back to his peals of lilting melody—
His zest for life, for love, the poetry
   Of Youth, with Nectar near its fingertips,
All cherished plans from his brave heart he strips—
   His Country called;—he owned her Sovereignty.

The day-dreams of his pictured life declined,
   Lost in the fight for Freedom's cause divine—
The blood of heroes consecrates the sod.
   Then in all pride our wounded hearts we bind
And place his image in a holy shrine.
   His Soul lives in the presence of his God.
THE SHADOW

O self conceit thou awful, futile curse,
Thou hallmark puerile-stamped on brain of fools.
Thy taint would foul the fountain at its source—
The stream of brother-love—its limpid pools
That ease the lesson learned in life’s hard schools,
With sympathy some sorrow to disperse—
Allay the thirst of loveless longing souls.
The empty heart with joy to reimburse,
What boots it?—if to thee belong the art
To keep up-stage—unto thyself a law,
If near the spotlight as you play your part
One sees the shadow of the swastika.
The charm that finds the way to human hearts
Lies not in minds self-centred and confined;
A queen’s sweet smile to all the world imparts
The secret—self forgetfulness enshrined.
Who shall assess the potent lift that lies
In kindly greetings thrown from smiling eyes?
PETRARCHAN SONNET

Come, let us roam through lovely wild Ardmore
And view those magic Autumn tints that stain
The woods with red and gold. Soon wind and rain
Will lay the pageant on the forest floor.
My Fairyland, my heart sings evermore—
I will return, I will come back again
And walk in joy. My heart beats the refrain:
I'll walk in Beauty never dreamed before.

To Nature's loveliness the eye is vowed,
Nor frequent contemplation stales its zest,
But sees new glamour each succeeding day,
With song-birds, trilling questions low or loud,
As who should say: Where shall we build our nest
And from these curious mortals hide away?
BUTTERFLIES

Brown Butterflies with blue-touched wings so light,
    What ecstasy in watching you I've found;
    How oft I've tracked you o'er the marshy ground,
    And tried to trap you ere you could take flight!
I think you came to know me well by sight,
    For every summer day I played around;
    My face with sun and freckles was embrowned;
    My mother oft deplored my grubby plight!

O Childhood's Days! O dear Brown Butterflies!
    O Memories that still shine clear and deep!
I see you yet through limpid, laughing eyes;
    I live again those bright days in my sleep,
    And something deep within me wakes and cries,
    And then the foolish tears away I sweep!
PLANTS

Love is such a tender plant—oft fertilized with tears,
   Make it not a specialty through life's passing years
For self, or for a cherished few in a narrow heart.
   Love is a perennial plant; give room, and it will spread,
Covering remembered ills—the painful past, not dead.
Angels passing on the road will pluck its gorgeous bloom—
   Bring it to despairing souls in the darkest gloom.
   Essence of the flower of love—like a holy leaven
Working in the human heart, brings a glimpse of Heaven.
Many sins of tempted Youth, or wayward heart, begot
   Stand out on a virgin page without another blot.
Love, that seeks with comforting the burden to relieve—
   Love is Christ's swift courier, bringing the glad reprieve.
ROSE

Rose—in thy heart a limpid pearl of dew
   Cooling the wells of magic perfume there,
Within some heart will passion red like you
   Fire flame of love or madness of despair;
But after Time has cooled the fever through,
   True love may find the limpid pearl of dew.

Rose in the bud—thy virgin tint so new
   Told not the splendour of thy blooming rare,
When Sun-god lured thy blushing into view
   And crowned thee queen of all the flora fair.
The roughest winds of Autumn never drew
   From thy dead heart the attar that was you.
STRENGTH SONNET

Give me your strongest, wildest, dearest dreams
Strung on a holding thread of heart's desire,
That I may strew them by Love's flaming fire
Unharmed by stress of life's submerging streams.
Still through the shock of conflict ever gleams
The spark that dies nor strangles, in the ire
Of strenuous opposition—to aspire
To that strange force which banal life redeems.

One strives in vain to find some sterling joy
Where love is stalled, forgotten, or is dead—
Follow the star that guides you to the boy
Who "staked a claim" of romance in his head—
You'll strike the gold of love without alloy,
And straight along the street of Heaven you'll tread.
'CELLO

O 'Cello, with thy soul-enthralling tone,
Thou liftest me to ecstasy, half pain,
Where all Life's joys and griefs are lived again,
As though my poignant sorrows were thine own,
And we as lovers talked again alone;
Thy tones, like muted thunder after rain,
Bring solace, and my restless moods restrain,
And lure me back to Life's prosaic zone.

Never did sounds more heavenly awake,
Than throbbing strings of 'Cello in the still
That comes, as last expectant breath we take
Before that crashing, cold, orchestral thrill,
When deepest pulsing undertones outbreak
Like Love-god mourning on some distant hill!
SONNET
(In memory of Reverend A. de B. Owen)

My heart cried out rebellious, questioning,
Why doth God's hand lie heavy on this Saint
Whose days were spent beside the sick and faint
With tender care striving some ease to bring,
Binding the wounds of heroes languishing?
Giving them hope, bright pictures he would paint—
Cleansed delusion's devastating taint
With visions sweet of love's own fashioning.

The answer came: His purpose was to raise
This beacon light where faith in God was dim,
This Soul who lived the glorious song of praise,
"Yea, though He slay me will I trust in Him."
Nor time nor circumstance shall ere erase
That glory light, or drown that deathless Hymn.

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A PRAYER

Teach me, illummed, to see myself, O Lord,
Unerring in the light of Thy dear face;
Be my redemption the supreme reward,
Purchased for me by Thy forgiving grace.

And lest I falter in Thy footsteps, Lord,
Seeking for respite from my weary load,
Hold Thou my hand until I cross the ford;
Oh, let me walk beside Thee on the road.

Thou whose discerning eye beneath the dust,
The murk and fog of sin's hypnotic rest,
Didst see the gleaming pearls of love and trust,
And rescuing didst hide them in Thy breast.

Thou whose appealing glance could wring the heart
Whose fear surrendered loyalty to Thee.
Saviour, My God, from me do not depart,
Stretch forth Thy royal hand and rescue me!

Mid all the gems that deck Thy kingly crown,
Mid all the crowns upon the glassy sea,
Oh, loving Saviour, take me for Thine own—
A gleam within Thy diadem to be!