

From: Charles G.D. Roberts, *In Divers Tones* (Boston: Lothrop, 1886).

## The Pipes of Pan

Ringed with the flocking of hills, within shepherding watch of Olympus,  
Tempe, vale of the gods, lies in green quiet withdrawn;  
Tempe, vale of the gods, deep-couched amid woodland and woodland,  
Threaded with amber of brooks, mirrored in azure of pools,  
All day drowsed with the sun, charm-drunken with moonlight at midnight,  
Walled from the world forever under a vapour of dreams—, 6  
Hid by the shadows of dreams, not found by the curious footstep,  
Sacred and secret forever, Tempe, vale of the gods.

How, through the cleft of its bosom, goes sweetly the water Penëus!  
How by Penëus the sward breaks into saffron and blue! 10  
How the long slope-floored beech-glades mount to the wind-wakened  
uplands,  
Where, through flame-berried ash, troop the hooped Centaurs at morn!  
Nowhere greens a copse but the eye-beams of Artemis pierce it.  
Breathes no laurel her balm but Phœbus' fingers caress.  
Springs no bed of wild blossom but limbs of dryad have pressed it. 15  
Sparkle the nymphs, and the brooks chime with shy laughter and calls.

Here is a nook. Two rivulets fall to mix with Penëus,  
Loiter a space, and sleep, checked and choked by the reeds.  
Long grass waves in the windless water, strown with the lote-leaf.  
Twist thro' dripping soil great alder roots; and the air 20  
Glooms with the dripping tangle of leaf-thick branches, and stillness  
Keeps in the strange-coiled stems, ferns, and wet-loving weeds.  
Hither comes Pan, to this pregnant earthy spot, when his piping  
Flags; and his pipes outworn breaking and casting away,  
Fits new reeds to his mouth with the weird earth melody in them, 25  
Piercing, alive with a life able to mix with the god's.  
Then, as he blows, and the searching sequence delights him, the goat-feet  
Furtive withdraw; and a bird stirs and flutes in the gloom  
Answering. Float with the stream the outworn pipes, with a whisper,—  
"What the god breathes on, the god never can wholly evade!" 30  
God-breath lurks in each fragment forever. Dispersed by Penëus

Wandering, caught in the ripples, wind-blown hither and there,  
 Over the whole green earth and globe of sea they are scattered,  
 Coming to secret spots, where in a visible form  
 Comes not the god, though he come declared in his workings. And mortals  
 Straying in cool of morn, or bodeful hasting at eve, 36  
 Or in the depths of noonday plunged to shadiest coverts,  
 Spy them, and set to their lips; blow, and fling them away!

Ay, they fling them away, —but never wholly! Thereafter  
 Creeps strange fire in their veins, murmur strange tongues in their brain,  
 Sweetly evasive; a secret madness takes them, —a charm-struck 41  
 Passion for woods and wild life, the solitude of the hills.  
 Therefore they fly the heedless throngs and traffic of cities,  
 Haunt mossed caverns, and wells bubbling ice-cool; and their souls  
 Gather a magical gleam of the secret of life, and the god's voice 45  
 Calls to them, not from afar, teaching them wonderful things.

### The Tantramar Revisited

Summers and summers have come, and gone with the flight of the  
 swallow;  
 Sunshine and thunder have been, storm, and winter, and frost;  
 Many and many a sorrow has all but died from remembrance,  
 Many a dream of joy fall'n in the shadow of pain.  
 Hands of chance and change have marred, or moulded, or broken, 5  
 Busy with spirit or flesh, all I most have adored;  
 Even the bosom of Earth is strewn with heavier shadows, —  
 Only in these green hills aslant to the sea, no change!  
 Here where the road that has climbed from the inland valleys and wood  
 lands,  
 Dips from the hill-tops down, straight to the base of the hills,— 10  
 Here, from my vantage-ground, I can see the scattering houses,  
 Strained with time, set warm in orchards, and meadows, and wheat,  
 Dotted the broad bright slopes outspread to southward and eastward,  
 Wind-swept all day long, blown by the south-east wind.  
 Skirting the sunbright uplands stretches a riband of meadow, 15  
 Shorn of the laboring grass, bulwarked well from the sea,  
 Fenced on its seaward border with long clay dykes from the turbid

Surge and flow of the tides vexing the Westmoreland shores.  
 Yonder, toward the left, lie broad the Westmoreland marshes,—  
 Miles on miles they extend, level, and grassy, and dim, 20  
 Clear from the long red sweep of flats to the sky in the distance,  
 Save for the outlying heights, green-rampired Cumberland Point;  
 Miles on miles outrolled, and the river-channels divide them, —  
 Miles on miles of green, barred by the hurtling gusts.

Miles on miles beyond the tawny bay is Minudie. 25  
 There are the low blue hills; villages gleam at their feet.  
 Nearer a white sail shines across the water, and nearer  
 Still are the slim, grey masts of fishing boats dry on the flats.  
 Ah, how well I remember those wide red flats, above tide-mark  
 Pale with scurf of the salt, seamed and baked in the sun! 30  
 Well I remember the piles of blocks and ropes, and the net-reels  
 Wound with the beaded nets, dripping and dark from the sea!  
 Now at this season the nets are unwound; they hang from the rafters  
 Over the fresh-stowed hay in upland barns, and the wind  
 Blows all day through the chinks, with the streaks of sunlight, and sways  
 them 35  
 Softly at will; or they lie heaped in the gloom of a loft.

Now at this season the reels are empty and idle; I see them  
 Over the lines of the dikes, over the gossiping grass,  
 Now at this season they swing in the long strong wind, thro' the lonesome  
 Golden afternoon, shunned by the foraging gulls. 40  
 Near about sunset the crane will journey homeward above them;  
 Round them, under the moon, all the calm night long,  
 Wincrowing soft grey wings of marsh-owls wander and wander,  
 Now to the broad, lit marsh, now to the dusk of the dike.  
 Soon, thro' their dew-wet frames, in the live keen freshness of morning, 45  
 Out of the teeth of the dawn blows back the awakening wind.  
 Then, as the blue day mounts, and the low-shot shafts of the sunlight  
 Glance from the tide to the shore, gossamers jewelled with dew  
 Sparkle and wave, where late sea-spoiling fathoms of drift-net  
 Myriad-meshed, uploomed sombrely over the land. 50

Well I remember it all. The salt raw scent of the margin;  
 While, with men at the windlass, groaned each reel, and the net,  
 Surging in ponderous lengths, uprose and coiled in its station;  
 Then each man to his home, —well I remember it all!

Yet, as I sit and watch, this present peace of the landscape,—  
 55

Stranded boats, these reels empty and idle, the hush,  
 One grey hawk slow-wheeling above yon cluster of haystacks,—  
 More than the old-time stir this stillness welcomes me home.  
 Ah, the old-time stir, how once it stung me with rapture,—  
 Old-time sweetness, the winds freighted with honey and salt! 60  
 Yet will I stay my steps and not go down to the marsh-land,—  
 Muse and recall far off, rather remember than see,—  
 Lest on too close sight I miss the darling illusion,  
 Spy at their task even here the hands of chance and change.

From: Charles G.D. Roberts, *Songs of the Common Day, and Ave: An Ode  
 for the Shelley Centenary* (Toronto: Briggs, 1893).

### Prologue

Across the fog the moon lies fair.  
 Transfused with ghostly amethyst,  
 O white Night, charm to wonderment  
 The cattle in the mist!

Thy touch, O grave Mysteriarch, 5  
 Makes dull, familiar things divine.  
 O grant of thy revealing gift  
 Be some small portion mine!

Make thou my vision sane and clear,  
 That I may see what beauty clings 10  
 In common forms, and find the soul  
 Of unregarded things!



### The Pea-Fields

These are the fields of light, and laughing air,  
 And yellow butterflies, and foraging bees,  
 And whitish, wayward blossoms winged as these,  
 And pale green tangles like a seamaid's hair.  
 Pale, pale the blue, but pure beyond compare, 5  
 And pale the sparkle of the far-off seas  
 A-shimmer like these fluttering slopes of peas,  
 And pale the open landscape everywhere.

From fence to fence a perfumed breath exhales  
 O'er the bright pallor of the well-loved fields,— 10  
 My fields of Tantrammar in summer-time;  
 And, scorning the poor feed their pasture yields,  
 Up from the bushy lots the cattle climb  
 To gaze with longing through the grey, mossed rails.

### The Potato Harvest

A high bare field, brown from the plough, and borne  
 Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky  
 Washing the ridge; a clamour of crows that fly  
 In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn  
 To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn; 5  
 A line of grey snake-fence, that zigzags by  
 A pond and cattle; from the homestead nigh  
 The long deep summonings of the supper horn.

Black on the ridge, against that lonely flush,  
 A cart, and stoop-necked oxen; ranged beside 10  
 Some barrels; and the day-worn harvest-folk,  
 Here emptying their baskets, jar the hush  
 With hollow thunders. Down the dusk hillside  
 Lumbers the wain; and day fades out like smoke.





**Ave!***(An Ode for the Centenary of Shelley's Birth, [1892])*

## I

O tranquil meadows, grassy Tantramar,  
 Wide marshes ever washed in clearest air,  
 Whether beneath the sole and spectral star  
 The dear severity of dawn you wear,  
 Or whether in the joy of ample day 5  
 And speechless ecstasy of growing June  
 You lie and dream the long blue hours away  
 Till nightfall comes too soon,  
 Or whether, naked to the unstarred night,  
 You strike with wondering awe my inward sight,— 10

## II

You know how I have loved you, how my dreams  
 Go forth to you with longing, though the years  
 That turn not back like your returning streams  
 And fain would mist the memory with tears,  
 Though the inexorable years deny 15  
 My feet the fellowship of your deep grass,  
 O'er which, as o'er another, tenderer sky,  
 Cloud phantoms drift and pass,—  
 You know my confident love, since first, a child,  
 Amid your wastes of green I wandered wild. 20

## III

Inconstant, eager, curious, I roamed;  
 And ever your long reaches lured me on;  
 And ever o'er my feet your grasses foamed,  
 And in my eyes your far horizons shone.  
 But sometimes would you (as a stillness fell 25  
 And on my pulse you laid a soothing palm)  
 Instruct my ears in your most secret spell;

And sometimes in the calm  
 Initiate my young and wondering eyes  
 Until my spirit grew more still and wise. 30

IV

Purged with high thoughts and infinite desire  
 I entered fearless the most holy place,  
 Received between my lips the secret fire,  
 The breath of inspiration on my face.  
 But not for long these rare illumined hours, 35  
 The deep surprise and rapture not for long.  
 Again I saw the common, kindly flowers,  
 Again I heard the song  
 Of the glad bobolink, whose lyric throat  
 Pealed like a tangle of small bells afloat. 40

V

The pounce of mottled marsh-hawk on his prey;  
 The flicker of sand-pipers in from sea  
 In gusty flocks that puffed and fled; the play  
 Of field-mice in the vetches;—these to me 45  
 Were memorable events. But most availed  
 Your strange unquiet waters to engage  
 My kindred heart's companionship; nor failed  
 To grant this heritage,—  
 That in my veins for ever must abide  
 The urge and fluctuation of the tide. 50

VI

The mystic river whence you take your name,  
 River of hubbub, raucous Tantramar,  
 Untamable and changeable as flame,  
 It called me and compelled me from afar,  
 Shaping my soul with its impetuous stress. 55  
 When in its gaping channel deep withdrawn

Its waves ran crying of the wilderness  
 And winds and stars and dawn,  
 How I companioned them in speed sublime,  
 Led out a vagrant on the hills of Time! 60

## VII

And when the orange flood came roaring in  
 From Fundy's tumbling troughs and tide-worn caves,  
 While red Minudie's flats were drowned with din  
 And rough Chignecto's front oppugned the waves,  
 How blithely with the refluent foam I raced 65  
 Inland along the radiant chasm, exploring  
 The green solemnity with boisterous haste;  
 My pulse of joy outpouring  
 To visit all the creeks that twist and shine  
 From Beauséjour to utmost Tormentine. 70

## VIII

And after, when the tide was full, and stilled  
 A little while the seething and the hiss,  
 And every tributary channel filled  
 To the brim with rosy streams that swelled to kiss 75  
 The grass-roots all a-wash and goose-tongue wild  
 And salt-sap rosemary,—then how well content  
 I was to rest me like a breathless child  
 With play-time rapture spent,—  
 To lapse and loiter till the change should come  
 And the great floods turn seaward, roaring home. 80

## IX

And now, O tranquil marshes, in your vast  
 Serenity of vision and of dream,  
 Wherethrough by every intricate vein have passed  
 With joy impetuous and pain supreme  
 The sharp, fierce tides that chafe the shores of earth 85

In endless and controlless ebb and flow,  
 Strangely akin you seem to him whose birth  
     One hundred years ago  
 With fiery succour to the ranks of song  
 Defied the ancient gates of wrath and wrong. 90

X

Like yours, O marshes, his compassionate breast,  
     Wherein abode all dreams of love and peace,  
 Was tortured with perpetual unrest.  
     Now loud with flood, now languid with release,  
 Now poignant with the lonely ebb, the strife 95  
     Of tides from the salt sea of human pain  
 That hiss along the perilous coasts of life  
     Beat in his eager brain;  
 But all about the tumult of his heart  
 Stretched the great calm of his celestial art. 100

XI

Therefore with no far flight, from Tantramar  
     And my still world of ecstasy, to thee,  
 Shelley, to thee I turn, the avatar  
     Of Song, Love, Dream, Desire, and Liberty;  
 To thee I turn with reverent hands of prayer 105  
     And lips that fain would ease my heart of praise,  
 Whom chief of all whose brows prophetic wear  
     The pure and sacred bays  
 I worship, and have worshipped since the hour  
 When first I felt thy bright and chainless power. 110

XII

About thy sheltered cradle in the green  
     Untroubled groves of Sussex, brooded forms  
 That to the mother's eye remained unseen,—  
     Terrors and ardours, passionate hopes, and storms

Of fierce retributive fury, such as jarred 115  
 Ancient and sceptred creeds, and cast down kings,  
 And oft the holy cause of Freedom marred  
 With lust of meaner things,  
 With guiltless blood, and many a frenzied crime  
 Dared in the face of unforgetful Time. 120

## XIII

The star that burns on revolution smote  
 Wild heats and change on thine ascendant sphere,  
 Whose influence thereafter seemed to float  
 Through many a strange eclipse of wrath and fear,  
 Dimming awhile the radiance of thy love. 125  
 But still supreme in thy nativity,  
 All dark, invidious aspects far above,  
 Beamed one clear orb for thee,—  
 The star whose ministrations just and strong  
 Controlled the tireless flight of Dante's song. 130

## XIV

With how august contrition, and what tears  
 Of penitential, unavailing shame,  
 Thy venerable foster-mother hears  
 The sons of song impeach her ancient name,  
 Because in one rash hour of anger blind 135  
 She thrust thee forth in exile, and thy feet  
 Too soon to earth's wild outer ways consigned,—  
 Far from her well-loved seat,  
 Far from her studious halls and storied towers  
 And weedy Isis winding through his flowers. 140

## XV

And thou, thenceforth the breathless child of change,  
 Thine own Alastor, on an endless quest  
 Of unimagined loveliness didst range,

Urged ever by the soul's divine unrest.  
 Of that high quest and that unrest divine 145  
 Thy first immortal music thou didst make,  
 Inwrought with fairy Alp, and Reuss, and Rhine,  
 And phantom seas that break  
 In soundless foam along the shores of Time,  
 Prisoned in thine imperishable rhyme. 150

## XVI

Thyself the lark melodious in mid-heaven;  
 Thyself the Protean shape of chainless cloud,  
 Pregnant with elemental fire, and driven  
 Through deeps of quivering light, and darkness loud 155  
 With tempest, yet beneficent as prayer;  
 Thyself the wild west wind, relentless strewing  
 The withered leaves of custom on the air,  
 And through the wreck pursuing  
 O'er lovelier Arnos, more imperial Romes,  
 Thy radiant visions to their viewless homes. 160

## XVII

And when thy mightiest creation thou  
 Wert fain to body forth,—the dauntless form,  
 The all-enduring, all-forgiving brow  
 Of the great Titan, flinchless in the storm  
 Of pangs unspeakable and nameless hates, 165  
 Yet rent by all the wrongs and woes of men,  
 And triumphing in his pain, that so their fates  
 Might be assuaged,—oh then  
 Out of that vast compassionate heart of thine  
 Thou wert constrained to shape the dream benign. 170

## XVIII

—O Baths of Caracalla, arches clad  
 In such transcendent rhapsodies of green

That one might guess the sprites of spring were glad  
 For your majestic ruin, yours the scene,  
 The illuminating air of sense and thought; 175  
 And yours the enchanted light, O skies of Rome,  
 Where the giant vision into form was wrought;  
 Beneath your blazing dome  
 The intensest song our language ever knew  
 Beat up exhaustless to the blinding blue!— 180

## XIX

The domes of Pisa and her towers superb,  
 The myrtles and the ilexes that sigh  
 O'er San Giuliano, where no jars disturb  
 The lonely aziola's evening cry,  
 The Serchio's sun-kissed waters,—these conspired 185  
 With Plato's theme occult, with Dante's calm  
 Rapture of mystic love, and so inspired  
 Thy soul's espousal psalm,  
 A strain of such elect and pure intent  
 It breathes of a diviner element. 190

## XX

Thou on whose lips the word of Love became  
 A rapt evangel to assuage all wrong,  
 Not Love alone, but the austerer name  
 Of Death engaged the splendours of thy song. 195  
 The luminous grief, the spacious consolation  
 Of thy supreme lament, that mourned for him  
 Too early haled to that still habitation  
 Beneath the grass-roots dim,—  
 Where his faint limbs and pain-o'erwearied heart  
 Of all earth's loveliness became a part, 200

## XXI

But where, thou sayest, himself would not abide,—  
 Thy solemn incommunicable joy  
 Announcing Adonais had not died,  
 Attesting death to free but not destroy,  
 All this was as thy swan-song mystical. 205  
 Even while the note serene was on thy tongue  
 Thin grew the veil of the Invisible,  
 The white sword nearer swung,—  
 And in the sudden wisdom of thy rest  
 Thou knewest all thou hadst but dimly guessed. 210

## XXII

—Lament, Lericci, mourn for the world's loss!  
 Mourn that pure light of song extinct at noon!  
 Ye waves of Spezzia that shine and toss  
 Repent that sacred flame you quenched too soon!  
 Mourn, Mediterranean waters, mourn 215  
 In affluent purple down your golden shore!  
 Such strains as his, whose voice you stilled in scorn,  
 Our ears may greet no more,  
 Unless at last to that far sphere we climb  
 Where he completes the wonder of his rhyme! 220

## XXIII

How like a cloud she fled, thy fateful bark,  
 From eyes that watched to hearts that waited, till  
 Up from the ocean roared the tempest dark—  
 And the wild heart love waited for was still!  
 Hither and thither in the slow, soft tide, 225  
 Rolled seaward, shoreward, sands and wandering shells  
 And shifting weeds thy fellows, thou didst hide  
 Remote from all farewells,  
 Nor felt the sun, nor heard the fleeting rain,  
 Nor heeded Case Magni's quenchless pain. 230

## XXIV

*Thou* heedest not? Nay, for it was not thou,  
 That blind, mute clay relinquished by the waves  
 Reluctantly at last, and slumbering now  
 In one of kind earth's most compassionate graves!  
 Not thou, not thou,—for thou wert in the light 235  
 Of the Unspeakable, where time is not.  
 Thou sawest those tears; but in thy perfect sight  
 And thy eternal thought  
 Were they not even now all wiped away  
 In the reunion of the infinite day! 240

## XXV

There face to face thou sawest the living God  
 And worshipedst, beholding Him the same  
 Adored on earth as Love, the same whose rod  
 Thou hadst endured as Life, whose secret name  
 Thou now didst learn, the healing name of Death. 245  
 In that unroutable profound of peace,  
 Beyond experience of pulse and breath,  
 Beyond the last release  
 Of longing, rose to greet thee all the lords  
 Of Thought, with consummation in their words: 250

## XXVI

He of the seven cities claimed, whose eyes,  
 Though blind, saw gods and heroes, and the fall  
 Of Ilium, and many alien skies,  
 And Circe's Isle; and he whom mortals call  
 The Thunderous, who sang the Titan bound 255  
 As thou the Titan victor; the benign  
 Spirit of Plato; Job; and Judah's crowned  
 Singer and seer divine;  
 Omar; the Tuscan; Milton, vast and strong;  
 And Shakespeare, captain of the host of Song. 260

## XXVII

Back from the underworld of whelming change  
     To the wide-glittering beach thy body came;  
 And thou didst contemplate with wonder strange  
     And curious regard thy kindred flame,  
 Fed sweet with frankincense and wine and salt,                     265  
     With fierce purgation search thee, soon resolving  
 Thee to the elements of the airy vault  
     And the far spheres revolving,  
 The common waters, the familiar woods,  
 And the great hills' inviolate solitudes.                     270

## XXVIII

Thy close companions there officiated  
     With solemn mourning and with mindful tears,—  
 The pained, imperious wanderer unmated  
     Who voiced the wrath of those rebellious years;  
 Trelawney, lion-limbed and high of heart;                     275  
     And he, that gentlest sage and friend most true,  
 Whom Adonais loved. With these bore part  
     One grieving ghost, that flew  
 Hither and thither through the smoke unstirred  
 In wailing semblance of a wild white bird.                     280

## XXIX

O heart of fire, that fire might not consume,  
     For ever glad the world because of thee;  
 Because of thee for ever eyes illumine  
     A more enchanted earth, a lovelier sea!  
 O poignant voice of the desire of life,                     285  
     Piercing our lethargy, because thy call  
 Aroused our spirits to a nobler strife  
     Where base and sordid fall,  
 For ever past the conflict and the pain  
 More clearly beams the goal we shall attain!                     290

## XXX

And now once more, O marshes, back to you  
 From whatsoever wanderings, near or far,  
 To you I turn with joy for ever new,  
 To you, O sovereign vasts of Tantramar!  
 Your tides are at the full. Your wizard flood, 295  
 With every tribute stream and brimming creek,  
 Ponders, possessor of the utmost good,  
 With no more left to seek;—  
 But the hour wanes and passes; and once more  
 Resounds the ebb with destiny in its roar. 300

## XXXI

So might some lord of men, whom force and fate  
 And his great heart's unvanquishable power  
 Have thrust with storm to his supreme estate,  
 Ascend by night his solitary tower  
 High o'er the city's lights and cries uplift. 305  
 Silent he ponders the scrolled heaven to read  
 And the keen stars' conflicting message sift,  
 Till the slow signs recede,  
 And ominously scarlet dawns afar  
 The day he leads his legions forth to war. 310

From: Charles G.D. Roberts, *New York Nocturnes and Other Poems* (Boston: Lamson Wolfe, 1898).

### A Nocturne of Consecration

I talked about you, Dear, the other night,  
 Having myself alone with my delight.  
 Alone with dreams and memories of you,  
 All the divine-houred summer stillness through

I talked of life, of love the always new, 5  
Of tears, and joy,—yet only talked of you.

To the sweet air  
That breathed upon my face  
The spirit of lilies in a leafy place,  
Your breath's caress, the lingering of your hair, 10  
I said—"In all your wandering through the dusk,  
Your waitings on the marriages of flowers  
Through the long, intimate hours  
When soul and sense, desire and love confer,  
You must have known the best that God has made. 15  
What do you know of Her?"

Said the sweet air—  
"Since I have touched her lips,  
Bringing the consecration of her kiss,  
Half passion and half prayer, 20  
And all for you,  
My various lore has suffered an eclipse.  
I have forgot all else of sweet I knew."

To the wise earth,  
Kind, and companionable, and dewy cool, 25  
Fair beyond words to tell, as you are fair,  
And cunning past compare  
To leash all heaven in a windless pool,  
I said—"The mysteries of death and birth  
Are in your care. 30  
You love, and sleep; you drain life to the lees;  
And wonderful things you know.  
Angels have visited you, and at your knees  
Learned what I learn forever at her eyes,  
The pain that still enhances Paradise. 35  
You in your breast felt her first pulses stir;  
And you have thrilled to the light touch of her feet,  
Blindly sweet.  
Now make me wise with some new word of Her."

- Said the wise earth— 40  
 “She is not all my child.  
 But the wild spirit that rules her heart-beats wild  
 Is of diviner birth  
 And kin to the unknown light beyond my ken.  
 All I can give to Her have I not given? 45  
 Strength to be glad, to suffer, and to know;  
 The sorcery that subdues the souls of men;  
 The beauty that is as the shadow of heaven;  
 The hunger of love  
 And unspeakable joy thereof. 50  
 And these are dear to Her because of you.  
 You need no word of mine to make you wise  
 Who worship at her eyes  
 And find there life and love forever new!”
- To the white stars, 55  
 Eternal and all-seeing,  
 In their wide home beyond the wells of being,  
 I said—“There is a little cloud that mars  
 The mystical perfection of her kiss.  
 Mine, mine, She is, 60  
 As far as lip to lip, and heart to heart,  
 And spirit to spirit when lips and hands must part,  
 Can make her mine. But there is more than this,—  
 More, more of Her to know.  
 For still her soul escapes me unaware, 65  
 To dwell in secret where I may not go.  
 Take, and uplift me. Make me wholly Hers.”
- Said the white stars, the heavenly ministers,—  
 “This life is brief, but it is only one.  
 Before to-morrow’s sun 70  
 For one or both of you it may be done.  
 This love of yours is only just begun.  
 Will all the ecstasy that may be won  
 Before this life its little course has run  
 At all suffice 75  
 The love that agonizes in you eyes?”

Therefore be wise.  
 Content you with the wonder of love that lies  
 Between her lips and underneath her eyes.  
 If more you should surprise, 80  
 What would be left to hope from Paradise?  
 In other worlds expect another joy  
 Of Her, which blundering fate shall not annoy,  
 Nor time nor change destroy.”

So, Dear, I talked the long, divine night through, 85  
 And felt you in the chrismal balms of dew.  
 The thing then learned  
 Has ever since within my bosom burned—  
 One life is not enough for love of you.

### The Solitary Woodsman

When the grey lake-water rushes  
 Past the dripping alder bushes,  
     And the bodeful autumn wind  
 In the fir-tree weeps and hushes,—

When the air is sharply damp 5  
 Round the solitary camp,  
     And the moose-bush in the thicket  
 Glimmers like a scarlet lamp,—

When the birches twinkle yellow,  
 And the cornel bunches mellow, 10  
     And the owl across the twilight  
 Trumpets to his downy fellow,—

When the nut-fed chipmunks romp  
 Through the maples' crimson pomp,  
     And the slim viburnum flushes 15  
 In the darkness of the swamp,—

When the blueberries are dead,  
 When the rowan clusters red,  
     And the shy bear, summer-sleekened,  
 In the bracken makes his bed,— 20

On a day there comes once more  
 To the latched and lonely door,  
     Down the wood-road striding silent,  
 One who has been here before.

Green spruce branches for his head, 25  
 Here he make his simple bed,  
     Crouching with the sun, and rising  
 When the dawn is frosty red.

All day long he wanders wide  
 With the gray moss for his guide, 30  
     And his lonely axe-stroke startles  
 The expectant forest-side.

Toward the quiet close of day  
 Back to camp he takes his way,  
     And about his sober footsteps 35  
 Unafraid the squirrels play.

On his roof the red leaf falls,  
 At his door the blue-jay calls,  
     And he hears the wood-mice hurry  
 Up and down his rough log walls; 40

Hears the laughter of the loon  
 Thrill the dying afternoon,—  
     Hears the calling of the moose  
 Echo to the early moon.

And he hears the partridge drumming, 45  
 The belated hornet humming,—  
     All the faint, prophetic sounds  
 That foretell the winter's coming.

And the wind about his eaves  
 Through the chilly night-wet grieves, 50  
 And the earth's dumb patience fills him,  
 Fellow to the falling leaves.

From: Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Iceberg, and Other Poems* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1934).

### The Iceberg

I was spawned from the glacier,  
 A thousand miles due north  
 Beyond Cape Chidley;  
 And the spawning,  
 When my vast, wallowing bulk went under, 5  
 Emerged and heaved aloft,  
 Shaking down cataracts from its rocking sides,  
 With mountainous surge and thunder  
 Outraged the silence of the Arctic sea.

Before I was thrust forth 10  
 A thousand years I crept,  
 Crawling, crawling, crawling irresistibly,  
 Hid in the blue womb of the eternal ice,  
 While under me the tortured rock  
 Groaned, 15  
 And over me the immeasurable desolation slept.

Under the pallid dawning  
 Of the lidless Arctic day  
 Forever no life stirred.  
 No wing of bird— 20  
 Of ghostly owl low winnowing  
 Or fleet-winged ptarmigan fleeing the pounce of death,—  
 No foot of backward-glancing fox

Half glimpsed, and vanishing like a breath,—  
 No lean and gauntly stalking bear, 25  
 Stalking his prey.  
 Only the white sun, circling the white sky.  
 Only the wind screaming perpetually.

And then the night—  
 The long night, naked, high over the roof of the world,  
 Where time seemed frozen in the cold of space,— 31  
 Now black, and torn with cry  
 Of unseen voices where the storm raged by,  
 Now radiant with spectral light  
 As the vault of heaven split wide 35  
 To let the flaming Polar cohorts through,  
 And close ranked spears of gold and blue,  
 Thin scarlet and thin green,  
 Hurtled and clashed across the sphere  
 And hissed in sibilant whisperings, 40  
 And died.  
 And then the stark moon, swinging low,  
 Silver, indifferent, serene,  
 Over the sheeted snow.

But now, an Alp afloat, 45  
 In seizure of the surreptitious tide,  
 Began my long drift south to a remote  
 And unimagined doom.  
 Scornful of storm,  
 Unjarred by thunderous buffeting of seas, 50  
 Shearing the giant floes aside,  
 Ploughing the wide-flung ice-fields in a spume  
 That smoked far up my ponderous flanks,  
 Onward I fared,  
 My ice-blue pinnacles rendering back the sun 55  
 In darts of sharp radiance;  
 My bases fathoms deep in the dark profound.

And now around me  
 Life, and the frigid waters all aswarm.

The smooth wave creamed 60  
 With tiny capelin and the small pale squid,—  
 So pale the light struck through them.  
 Gulls and gannets screamed  
 Over the feast, and gorged themselves, and rose,  
 A clamour of weaving wings, and hid 65  
 Momently my face.  
 The great bull whales  
 With cavernous jaws agape,  
 Scooped in the spoil, and slept,  
 Their humped forms just awash, and rocking softly,—  
 Or sounded down, down to the deeps, and nosed 71  
 Along my ribbed and sunken roots,  
 And in the green gloom scattered the pasturing cod.

And so I voyaged on, down the dim parallels,  
 Convoyed by fields 75  
 Of countless calving seals  
 Mild-featured, innocent-eyed, and unforeknowing  
 The doom of the red flenching knives.  
 I passed the storm-racked gate  
 Of Hudson Strait, 80  
 And savage Chidley where the warring tides  
 In white wrath seethe forever.  
 Down along the sounding shore  
 Of iron-fanged, many-watered Labrador  
 Slow weeks I shaped my course, and saw 85  
 Dark Mokkovic and dark Napiskawa,  
 And came at last off lone Belle Isle, the bane  
 Of ships and snare of bergs.  
 Here, by the deep conflicting currents drawn,  
 I hung, 90  
 And swung,  
 The inland voices Gulfward calling me  
 To ground amid my peers on the alien strand  
 And roam no more.  
 But then an off-shore wind, 95  
 A great wind fraught with fate,  
 Caught me and pressed me back,

And I resumed my solitary way.

Slowly I bore  
 South-east by bastioned Bauld, 100  
 And passed the sentinel light far-beaming late  
 Along the liners' track,

And slanted out Atlanticwards, until  
 Above the treacherous swaths of fog  
 Faded from the view the loom of Newfoundland. 105

Beautiful, ethereal  
 In the blue sparkle of the gleaming day,  
 A soaring miracle  
 Of white immensity,  
 I was the cynosure of passing ships 110  
 That wondered and were gone,  
 Their wreathed smoke trailing them beyond the verge.  
 And when in the night they passed—  
 The night of stars and calm,  
 Forged up and passed, with churning surge 115  
 And throb of huge propellers, and long-drawn  
 Luminous wake behind,  
 And sharp, small lights in rows,  
 I lay a ghost of menace chill and still,  
 A shape pearl-pale and monstrous, off to leeward, 120  
 Blurring the dim horizon line.

Day dragged on day,  
 And then came fog,  
 By noon, blind-white,  
 And in the night 125  
 Black-thick and smothering the sight.  
 Folded therein I waited,  
 Waited I knew not what  
 And heeded not,  
 Greatly incurious and unconcerned. 130  
 I heard the small waves lapping along my base,  
 Lipping and whispering, lipping with bated breath

A casual expectancy of death.  
 I heard remote  
 The deep, far carrying note 135  
 Blown from the hoarse and hollow throat  
 Of some lone tanker groping on her course.  
 Louder and louder rose the sound  
 In deepening diapason, then passed on,  
 Diminishing, and dying,— 140  
 And silence closed around.  
 And in the silence came again  
 Those stealthy voices,  
 That whispering of death.

And then I heard 145  
 The thud of screws approaching.  
 Near and more near,  
 Louder and yet more loud,  
 Through the thick dark I heard it,—  
 The rush and hiss of waters as she ploughed 150  
 Head on, unseen, unseeing,  
 Toward where I stood across her path, invisible.  
 And then a startled blare  
 Of horror close re-echoing,—a glare  
 Of sudden, stabbing searchlights 155  
 That but obscurely pierced the gloom;  
 And there  
 I towered, a dim immensity of doom.

A roar  
 Of tortured waters as the giant screws, 160  
 Reversed, thundered full steam astern.  
 Yet forward still she drew, until,  
 Slow answering desperate helm,  
 She swerved, and all her broadside came in view,  
 Crawling beneath me; 165  
 And for a moment I saw faces, blanched,  
 Stiffly agape, turned upward, and wild eyes  
 Astare; and one long, quavering cry went up  
 As a submerged horn gored her through and through,

Ripping her beam wide open; 170  
 And sullenly she listed, till her funnels  
 Crashed on my steep,  
 And men sprang, stumbling, for the boats.

But now, my deep foundations  
 Mined by those warmer seas, the hour had come 175  
 When I must change.  
 Slowly I leaned above her,  
 Slowly at first, then faster,  
 And icy fragments rained upon her decks.  
 They my enormous mass descended on her, 180  
 A falling mountain, all obliterating,—  
 And the confusion of thin, wailing cries,  
 The Babel of shouts and prayers  
 And shriek of steam escaping  
 Suddenly died. 185  
 And I rolled over,  
 Wallowing,  
 And once more came to rest,  
 My long hid bases heaved up high in air.

And now, from fogs emerging, 190  
 I traversed blander seas,  
 Forgot the fogs, the scourging  
 Of sleet-whipped gales, forgot  
 My austere origin, my tremendous birth,  
 My journeyings, and that last cataclysm 195  
 Of overwhelming ruin.  
 My squat, pale, alien bulk  
 Basked in the ambient sheen;  
 And all about me, league on league outspread,  
 A gulf of indigo and green. 200  
 I laughed in the light waves laced with white,—  
 Nor knew  
 How swiftly shrank my girth  
 Under their sly caresses, how the breath  
 Of that soft wind sucked up my strength, nor how 205

The sweet, insidious fingers of the sun  
 Their stealthy depredations wrought upon me.

Slowly now  
 I drifted, dreaming. 210  
 I saw the flying-fish  
 With silver gleaming  
 Flash from the peacock-bosomed wave  
 And flicker through an arc of sunlit air  
 Back to their element, desperate to elude  
 The jaws of the pursuing albacore. 215

Day after day  
 I swung in the unhasting tide.  
 Sometimes I saw the dolphin folk at play,  
 Their lithe sides iridescent-dyed,  
 Unheeding in their speed 220  
 That long grey wraith,  
 The shark that followed hungering beneath.  
 Sometimes I saw a school  
 Of porpoise rolling by  
 In ranked array, 225  
 Emerging and submerging rhythmically,  
 Their blunt black bodies heading all one way  
 Until they faded  
 In the horizon's dazzling line of light.  
 Night after night 230  
 I followed the low, large moon across the sky,  
 Or counted the large stars on the purple dark,  
 The while I wasted, wasted and took no thought,  
 In drowsed entrancement caught;—  
 Until one noon a wave washed over me, 235  
 Breathed low a sobbing sigh,  
 Foamed indolently, and passed on;  
 And then I knew my empery was gone;  
 As I, too, soon must go.  
 And well content I was to have it so. 240

Another night  
 Gloomed o'er my sight,  
 With cloud, and flurries of warm, wild rain.  
 Another day,  
 Dawning delectably 245  
 With amber and scarlet stain,  
 Swept on its way,  
 Glowing and shimmering with heavy heat.  
 A lazing tuna rose  
 And nosed me curiously, 250  
 And shouldered me aside in brusque disdain,  
 So had I fallen from my high estate.  
 A foraging gull  
 Stooped over me, touched me with webbed pink feet,  
 And wheeled and skreeled away, 255  
 Indignant at the chill.

Last I became  
 A little glancing globe of cold  
 That slid and sparkled on the slow-pulsed swell.  
 And then my fragile, scintillating frame 260  
 Dissolved in ecstasy  
 Of many coloured light,  
 And I breathed up my soul into the air  
 And merged forever in the all-solvent sea.

### **The Squatter**

Round the lone clearing  
 Clearly the whitethroats call  
 Across the marge of dusk and the dewfall's coolness.

Far up in the empty  
 Amber and apple-green sky 5  
 A night-hawk swoops, and twangs her silver chord.

No wind's astir,  
 But the poplar boughs breathe softly  
 And the smoke of a dying brush-fire stings the air.

The spired, dark spruces 10  
 Crowd up to the snake fence, breathless,  
 Expectant till the rising of the moon.

In the wet alders,  
 Where the cold brook flows murmuring,  
 The red cow drinks,—the cow-bell sounds tonk-tonk. 15

• • •

From his cabin door  
 The squatter lounges forth,  
 Sniffs the damp air, and scans the sky for rain.

He has made his meal,—  
 Fat bacon, and buckwheat cakes, 20  
 And ruddy-brown molasses from Barbados.

His chores all done,  
 He seats himself on the door-sill,  
 And slowly fills his pipe, and smokes, and dreams.

He sees his axe 25  
 Leaning against the birch logs.  
 The fresh white chips are scattered over the yard.

He hears his old horse  
 Nosing the hay, in the log barn  
 Roofed with poles and sheathed with sheets of birch-bark.

Beyond the barn 31  
 He sees his buckwheat patch,  
 Its pink-white bloom pale-gleaming through the twilight.

Its honeyed fragrance  
Breathes to his nostrils, mingled 35  
With the tang of the brushfire smoke, thinly ascending.

Deepens the dusk.  
The whitethroats are hushed; and the night-hawk  
Drops down from the sky and hunts the low-flying night-moths.

• • •

The squatter is dreaming. 40  
Vaguely he plans how, come winter,  
He'll chop out another field, just over the brook.

He'll build a new barn  
Next year, a barn with a haymow,  
No more to leave his good hay outside in the stack. 45

He rises and stretches,  
Goes in and closes the door,  
And lights his lamp on the table beside the window.

The light shines forth.  
It lights up the wide-strewn chips. 50  
For a moment it catches the dog darting after a rabbit.

It lights up the lean face  
Of the squatter as he sits reading,  
Knitting his brow as he spells out a month-old paper.

• • •

Slowly the moon, 55  
Humped, crooked, red, remote,  
Rises, tangled and scrawled behind the spruce-tops.

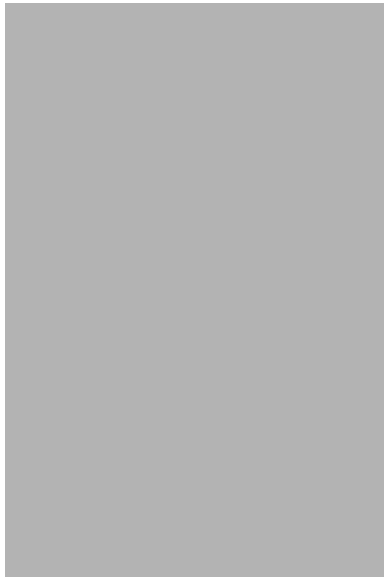
Higher she rises,—  
Grows round, and smaller, and white,  
And sails up the empty sky high over the spruce-tops.      60

She washes in silver,  
Illusively clear, the log barn,  
The lop-sided stack by the barn, and the slumbering cabin.

She floods in the window,—  
And the squatter stirs in his bunk,      55  
On his mattress stuffed with green fir-tips, balsamy scented.

• • •

From the dark of the forest  
The horned owl hoots, and is still.  
Startled, the silence descends, and broods once more on the  
clearing.



Frontispiece, from Charles G.D. Roberts, *Poems* (1907).