Fragment Of An Ode To Canada

By Duncan Campbell Scott (1926)

This is the land!
It lies outstretched a vision of delight,
Bent like a shield between the silver seas
It flashes back the hauteur of the sun;
Yet teems with humblest beauties, still a part
Of its Titanic and ebullient heart.

Land of the glacial, lonely mountain ranges,
Where nothing haps save vast Æonian changes,
The slow moraine, the avalanche's wings,
Summer and Sun,--the elemental things,
Pulses of Awe,--Winter and Night and the lightnings.
Land of the pines that rear their dusky spars
A ready midnight for the earliest stars.
The land of rivers, rivulets, and rills,
Straining incessant everyway to the sea
With their white thunder harnessed in the mills,
Turning one wealth to another wealth perpetually;
Spinning the lightning with dynamic spindles,
Till some far city dowered with fire enkindles.

The land of fruit, fine-flavoured with the frost,
Land of the cattle, the deep-chested host,
The happy-souled, that contemplate the hours,
Their dew-laps buried in the grass and flowers.
And, O! the myriad-miracle of the grain
Cresting the hill, brimming the level plain,
The miracle of the flower and milk and kernel,
Nurtured by sun-fire and frost-fire supernal,
Until the farmer turns it in his hand,
The million-millioned miracle of the land.

And yet with all these pastoral and heroic graces,
Our simplest flowers wear the loveliest faces;
The sparrows are our most enraptured singers,
And round their songs the fondest memory lingers;
Our forests tower and tremble, star-enchanted,
Their roots are by the timid spirits haunted
Of hermit thrushes,--trancèd is the air,
Ever in doubt when they shall sing or where;
The mountains may with ice and avalanche wrestle,
Far down their rugged steeps dimple and nestle
The still, translucent, turquoise-hearted tarns.

And Thou, O Power, that 'stablishest the Nation,
Give wisdom in the midst of our elation;
Who are so free that we forget we are--
That freedom brings the deepest obligation:
Grant us this presage for a guiding star,
To lead the van of Peace, not with a craven spirit,
But with the consciousness that we inherit
What built the Empire out of blood and fire,
And can smite, too, in passion and with ire.
Purge us of Pride, who are so quick in vaunting
Thy gift, this land, that is in nothing wanting;
Give Mind to match the glory of the gift,
Give great Ideals to bridge the sordid rift
Between our heritage and our use of it.

Then in some day of terror for the world,
When all the flags of the Furies are unfurled,
When Truth and Justice, wildered and unknit,
Shall turn for help to this young, radiant land,
We shall be quick to see and understand:
What shall we answer in that stricken hour?
Shall the deep thought be pregnant then with power?
Shall the few words spring swift and grave and clear?
Use well the present moment. They shall hear.