

# POETS' TRIBUTES TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THEODORE ROOSEVELT loved vir-  
ile poetry and knew many poets inti-  
mately. He did much to encourage a high  
level of excellence in their work and launched  
several versifiers during his lifetime upon the  
tide of popularity. Thus it is as one com-  
rade to another that the poets of America  
have paid tribute to him. Remembering  
their John Bunyan, they have written of  
Roosevelt as "Mr. Valiant" and as "Great-  
Heart." They have written reverently, real-  
izing that no tribute of words could do jus-  
tice to the epic of his life, and with the feel-  
ing that his strenuous immersion in activity  
served noble ends far beyond the immediate  
purpose of his deeds. The aim of Roosevelt  
and that of the poet are in a sense identical.  
Both in poesy and in the life of Roosevelt  
is the aim to conquer Time, to make life—by  
intensity—outrun its hours. Theodore  
Roosevelt lived as Alfred Noyes said Nelson  
lived: "Gazing beyond all perishable fears to  
some diviner goal above the waste of years."

From the many poems that were published  
during the weeks following his death, the  
following nine have been selected as repre-  
sentative of the feeling of American and  
British poets toward the great national  
leader. "With the Tide," by Edith Whar-  
ton, was published in the *Saturday Evening  
Post* for March 29th.

## WITH THE TIDE

*By Edith Wharton*

Somewhere I read, in an old book whose name  
Is gone from me, I read that when the days  
Of a man are counted, and his business done  
There comes up the shore at evening, with the  
tide,

To the place where he sits a boat—  
And in the boat, from the place where he sits,  
he sees,

Dim in the dusk, dim and yet so familiar,  
The faces of his friends long dead; and knows  
They come for him, brought in upon the tide,  
To take him where men go at set of day.  
Then rising, with his hands in theirs, he goes  
Between them his last steps, that are the first  
Of the new life—and with the ebb they pass,  
Their shaken sail grown small upon the moon.

Often I thought of this, and pictured me  
How many a man who lives with throngs about  
him.

Yet straining through the twilight for that boat  
Shall scarce make out one figure in the stern,  
And that so faint its features shall perplex him  
With doubtful memories—and his heart hang  
back.

But others, rising as they see the sail  
Increase upon the sunset, hasten down,  
Hands out and eyes elated; for they see  
Head over head, crowding from bow to stern,  
Repeopling their long loneliness with smiles,  
The faces of their friends; and such go forth  
Content upon the ebb tide, with safe hearts.

But never  
To worker summoned when his day was done  
Did mounting tide bring in such freight of friends  
As stole to you up the white wintry shingle  
That night while they that watched you thought  
you slept.

Softly they came, and beached the boat, and  
gathered

In the still cove under the icy stars,  
Your last-born, and the dear loves of your heart,  
And all men that have loved right more than  
ease,

And honor above honors; all who gave  
Free-handed of their best for other men,  
And thought their giving taking: they who knew  
Man's natural state is effort, up and up—  
All these were there, so great a company  
Perchance you marveled, wondering what great  
ship

Had brought that throng unnumbered to the  
cove

Where the boys used to beach their light canoe  
After old happy picnics—

But these, your friends and children, to whose  
hands

Committed, in the silent night you rose  
And took your last faint steps—  
These led you down, O great American,  
Down to the winter night and the white beach,  
And there you saw that the huge hull that waited  
Was not as are the boats of the other dead,  
Frail craft for a brief passage; no, for this  
Was first of a long line of towering transports,  
Storm-worn and ocean-weary every one,  
The ships you launched, the ships you manned,  
the ships

That now, returning from their sacred quest  
With the thrice-sacred burden of their dead,  
Lay waiting there to take you forth with them,  
Out with the ebb tide, on some farther quest.

*Hyères, January 7th, 1919.*

Mrs. Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, the  
poet-sister of Roosevelt, has written several  
poems in memory of her brother, which are  
published in her new collection of *verse*, Google

"Service and Sacrifice" (Scribner's). She has written of him also as "Valiant for Truth" in a moving poem that praises his ardency and fearlessness in defense of his ideals. In another poem entitled "Theodore Roosevelt," she has given lyrical form to the tribute paid him by another woman. This is in part as follows:

I never clasped his hand,  
 He never knew my name,  
 And yet at his command  
 I followed like a flame.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 His words would lift the veil  
 That blurred my tired eyes,  
 They seemed to strengthen me  
 To serve and sacrifice.

And all the values lost  
 When life was cold and grim,  
 Were clear and true again,  
 Interpreted by him.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Clad in an armored truth,  
 And by high purpose shod,  
 He gave us back our youth,  
 Our country and our God.

In a tribute "To My Brother," Mrs. Robinson writes of the sunniness of his nature, of the zest and charm and sympathy that continually and freshly endeared him to the members of his family circle:

#### TO MY BROTHER

I loved you for your loving ways,  
 The ways that many did not know;  
 Although my heart would beat and glow  
 When Nations crowned you with their bays.

I loved you for the tender hand  
 That held my own so close and warm,  
 I loved you for the winning charm  
 That brought gay sunshine to the land.

I loved you for the heart that knew  
 The need of every little child;  
 I loved you when you turned and smiled—  
 It was as though a fresh wind blew.

I loved you for your loving ways,  
 The look that leaped to meet my eye,  
 The ever-ready sympathy,  
 The generous ardor of your praise.

I loved you for the buoyant fun  
 That made perpetual holiday  
 For all who ever crossed your way,  
 The highest or the humblest one.

I loved you for the radiant zest,  
 The thrill and glamour that you gave  
 To each glad hour that we could save  
 And garner from Time's grim behest.

I loved you for your loving ways—  
 And just because I loved them so,  
 And now have lost them—thus I know  
 I must go softly all my days!

"Great-Heart," a poem dedicated to the memory of Theodore Roosevelt, by Rudyard Kipling, appeared on February 8, in the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*.

#### "GREAT-HEART"

By Rudyard Kipling

[“The interpreter then called for a man-servant of his, one Great-Heart.”—*Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."*]

Concerning brave captains  
 Our age hath made known  
 For all men to honor,  
 One standeth alone,  
 Of whom, o'er both oceans,  
 Both peoples may say:  
 "Our realm is diminished  
 With Great-Heart away."

Plain speech with plain folk,  
 And plain words for false things,  
 Plain faith in plain dealing  
 'Twixt neighbors or kings  
 He used and he followed,  
 However it sped . . .  
 Oh, our world is none more honest  
 Now Great-Heart is dead.

The heat of his spirit  
 Struck warm through all lands;  
 For he loved such as showed  
 'Emselves men of their hands,  
 In love, as in hate,  
 Paying home to the last . . .  
 But our world is non—the kinder  
 Now Great-Heart hath passed.

Let those who would handle  
 Make sure they can wield  
 His far-reaching sword  
 And his close-guarding shield;  
 For those who must journey  
 Henceforward alone  
 Have need of stout convoy  
 Now Great-Heart is gone.

One of the most eloquent of the shorter poems is by Amelia Josephine Burr. In "Mr. Valiant Passes Over," one feels the illimitable power of life, not only here but in the "beyond."

#### MR. VALIANT PASSES OVER

(January 6, 1919)

By Amelia Josephine Burr

When the Post came and told him that at last  
 The pitcher that so faithfully and long  
 Had served his fellow-creatures in their thirst  
 Was broken at the fountain, Valiant said:  
 "I am going to my Father's; and, although  
 Not easily I came to where I am,  
 My pains upon the journey were well spent.  
 My sword I give to him who shall succeed  
 My pilgrim steps upon the Royal Road;  
 My courage and my skill I leave to him  
 Who can attain them—but my marks and scars  
 I carry with me for my King to see  
 As witness of his battles that I fought."  
 As he went down into the river, many  
 Stood on the bank, and heard him say, "O death,  
 Where is thy sting?" And as the water grew  
 Deeper—"O grave, where is thy victory?"

So he passed over, and the trumpets all  
Sounded for him upon the other side.

*John Bunyan, did you laugh in paradise  
For joy to-day, to see your dream come true?*

Edward S. Van Zile's verses published in the *New York Evening Sun* touch the feeling that most of us have that his ideals must be embodied in our national life.

#### CLOSE UP THE RANKS!

*By Edward S. Van Zile*

I

Gently Death came to him and bent to him asleep;  
His spirit passed, and, lo, his lovers weep,  
But not for him, for him the unafraid—  
In tears, we ask, "Who'll lead the great crusade?"

II

"Who'll hearten us to carry on the war  
For those ideals our fathers battled for;  
To give our hearts to one dear flag alone,  
The flag beloved whose splendid soul has flown?"

III

With his last breath he gave a clarion cry:  
"They only serve who do not fear to die;  
He only lives who's worthy of our dead!  
Beware the peril of the seed that's spread.

IV

"By them who'll reap a harvest of despair,  
By them whose dreams unstable are as air;  
By them who see the rainbow in the sky,  
But not the storm that threatens by and by."

V

Our leader rests, his voice forever still,  
But let us vow to do our leader's will!  
Close up the ranks! Our Captain is not dead!  
His soul shall live, and by his soul we're led.

Mr. Charles Hanson Towne's poem published in the *New York Tribune* gives the last word of Cecil Rhodes—that there was still so much for him to do—as typifying the tirelessness and eagerness of Roosevelt. That he must pass on to some "divine adventure," the poet is certain.

#### THEODORE ROOSEVELT

*By Charles Hanson Towne*

I

On what divine adventure has he gone?  
Beyond what peaks of dawn  
Is he now faring? On what errand blest  
Has his impulsive heart now turned? No rest  
Could be the portion of his tireless soul.  
He seeks some frenzied goal  
Where he can labor on till Time is not,  
And earth is nothing but a thing forgot.

II

Pilot and Prophet! as the years increase  
The sorrow of your passing will not cease.  
We love to think of you still moving on  
From sun to blazing sun,  
From planet to far planet, to some height  
Of clear perfection in the Infinite,  
Where with the wise Immortals you can find  
The Peace you fought for with your heart and  
mind.

Yet from that bourne where you are journeying  
Sometimes we think we hear you whispering,

July—6

"I went away, O world, so false and true,  
I went away—with still so much to do!"

Samuel Valentine Cole, in his stirring poem published in the *Outlook*, expresses his belief that the life of Roosevelt is a splendid heritage, and one whose power will grow with the years.

#### THEODORE ROOSEVELT

(Memorial Day, February 9, 1919)

*By Samuel Valentine Cole*

Half-mast the flag, and let the bell be tolled:

A tower of strength he was, whose presence  
drew

The people around him, and to-day is rolled

A wave of unaccustomed sorrow through

The land he loved; whatever now be said,

The latest great American is dead.

How quick he slipped from us—this man of might,

Heroic courage, life-abounding ways!

When God's great angel in the silent night

Brought, though invisible to others' gaze,

Some whispered message, he obedient heard,

Left all, and followed him without a word.

He stood for honest purposes: unroll

The record of his years, you seek in vain

For life's disfigurements—there lies the scroll,

No blots upon it, nothing to explain;

But what is worthy and to all men's sight

As open as a landscape to the light.

So lived this man, and died, and lives again—

A white dynamic memory in the land.

Oh, what a heritage, my countrymen!

He'll plead forever now, with voice and hand,

Our righteous causes, and his power will grow.

Cease tolling, bell, and let the bugles blow!

The last words spoken by Roosevelt—  
"Put out the light!"—gave Edith Daley in-  
spiration for a beautiful poem that appeared  
in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

#### THEODORE ROOSEVELT

*By Edith Daley*

"Put out the light!" Altho the stars were dim,  
What need of feeble flickering lamps to him  
In that high-altared hour? The touch of sleep  
Had brought remembrance of his tryst to keep—  
A morning tryst—with God's gray messenger.

No sound—no cry—no hesitating stir;  
His fearless soul long since had knelt and kissed

A waiting Cross; had borne it through life's mist  
From an unlighted lone Gethsemane

To the Christ-hallowed crest of Calvary.

"Put out the light!" Men smile through falling  
tears,

Remembering the courage of his years

That stood, each one, for God, humanity

And covenanted world-wide Liberty!

The Nation mourns. Laurel the chancel-rail;

Muffle the drums. Columbia's banners trail

Their grieving folds; but memories of him flame

And light the deathless glory of his name.

"Put out the light!" He needs it not who won

A place of permanence within the sun

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