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EAGLE QUILLS

EAGLE QUILLS

GEORGE FAUNCE WHITCOMB



THE CORNHILL COMPANY

BOSTON

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1919

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To
M. L. W.

CONTENTS

	Page
FRATERNITY	1
THE WAYSIDE INN—1918	3
THE AVIATOR	4
THE CROSS OF WAR	5
BELGIUM	7
JOAN OF ARC	8
ALONE IN THE FOG	10
HUMAN SEEDS	11
LIFE	12
THE MOULDER	13
THE MASTER—?	14
THINK NOT OF THE PAST	15
INVOCATION	16
WITHOUT INTERRUPTION	17
AN ANSWER	18
INSCRIPTION ON AN URN	19
THE WOOING	20
LIPS	21
SMOKE	22

CONTENTS

	Page
MY CIGARETTE	24
FALL	25
THE GULL	26
ANTS	27
SING	28
THE CROW	29
A PHRASE	30
A HEALTH	31
TO YOU	32
SOLITUDE	
<i>According to the Naturalist</i>	33
<i>According to the Widow</i>	34
<i>According to the Bachelor</i>	35

EAGLE QUILLS

FRATERNITY

As I lounged in my study yesternight,
While the old-fashioned grate poured forth its heat,
With restfully quiet embers alight,
My weary eyelids closed as if to meet
The future brotherhood of man.

Then, clear in frames of blood-stained, lifeless flesh,
Appeared torn faces of war-crazed throngs
Cursing, fighting, struggling, through barbed-wire
mesh
To gain their right to sing the song of songs,
The righteous brotherhood of man.

And, in the background of the fiendish strife,
Huddled together with babes at their breast,
Lay starved, naked women, slashed by the knife
Of the hellish foe whose tortures attest
They scorn the brotherhood of man.

Then a burst of light outlining a star
Shone into my aching soul like a sword,
Bearing this message of strength from afar—
“Strive unto death to make the barb’rous horde
Respect the brotherhood of man.”

EAGLE QUILLS

The bitter cold of the morn awoke me,—
Yet the joy of seeing God's beck'ning light
Fired my veins, and the ling'ring memory
Of the Bethlehem Star urged me to fight
To save the brotherhood of man.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE WAYSIDE INN—1918

One last visit to Sudbury town,
To that inn where once were told
Tales by men of great renown,
And history was handed down.

The cranes were swinging as of yore,
O'er hearts begrimed with soot;
Still burn the huge logs, and the floor
Still creaks as guests come through the door.

Of stalwart men in buff and blue
We still leave memory,
And in their stead have come to view
Sons of their sons in khaki hue.

The old, old spirit still holds sway—
The long hard fight to make men free;
The old-time yearning for the fray
Still quickens hearts of men to-day.

Farewell then, old inn, for a spell,
I am off to join the ranks!
Some day I may come back and tell
Great tales myself—if not—farewell.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE AVIATOR

Strong youth he was, still in his 'teens,
When war clouds rumbled from on high,
And pondering deeply what best means
To serve his land—he chose to fly.
Forthwith he gave his mind and strength
To train acutely ear and eye—
That he might prove his worth at length
And win distinction in the sky.

Each day he strove with all his might;
Each night, when tests were done, he'd lie
Awake with planning every flight
Which he on future days would try—
For those were times when each man's fight
Must be swoop down low, then ply
The foe with tools of death and night—
To win distinction in the sky.

But ere his training was complete
A changing current rushing by—
An instant flare of scorching heat—
Engulfed his plane with whirring sigh,
Swift to the earth, in pain he fell,
But he uttered neither pain nor cry—
The stars mayhap have heard his knell—
Who won distinction in the sky.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE CROSS OF WAR

1913.

Unto his cheerful homestead comes
The young member of Parliament;
A happy chap who always hums
His home-song, where his love is spent
Ah, light of the civilized world.

1914.

Unto the lonely homestead comes
A weeping wife with children three—
Her husband has followed the drums
Of his regiment over the sea.
Ah, slight of the civilized world.

1915.

Unto the anxious household came
A message of the absent one.
With sobs 'twas read, her husband's name
Was there—"fell fighting at his gun."
Ah, plight of the civilized world.

EAGLE QUILLS

1916.

Unto the cheerless household came
A tiny box with medal red,
Proclaiming loud its owner's fame—
What recompense for loved one dead!
Ah, blight of the civilized world.

1917.

Unto the saddened household came
A message from a younger land;
"Have faith, we come to save your name,
We come to lend a helping hand."
Ah, fight of the civilized world.

1918.

Unto the waiting household comes
The joyous peal of victory;
Peace and rest are brought by the drums
Of the men from over the sea.
Ah, might of the civilized world.

EAGLE QUILLS

BELGIUM

If you had a sister, and, while she slept
A hideous monster silently crept
 Up beside her to quench his vicious thirst;
 And, being repulsed, his passion was nursed
To fury—he slashed her white neck across,
A dastardly gash with a crimson gloss;
 Then dipped his foul hands in the sanguine flow
 And wiped them upon her soft tresses—so;
If you had a sister—you have indeed—
Belgium—the victim of Autocracy—
 What would you do—what will you do—we want
 to see!

EAGLE QUILLS

JOAN OF ARC

(From the French of Alfred de Musset)

RECITATION

In vain I seek the rest I lack,
My heart is filled with the sorrow of France.
Even from this drear spot of death-like trance
My loved land's grief would draw me back.

CHANT

Sullen forest, retreat so aloof,
Silent witness of such secret spleen,
From my sight at least hide the dark proof
Of my country's shame—its wretched scene.
O saddened boughs, should we fail in the fight,
Conceal with thy branches my father's roof—
Perhaps I shall not see him again.

RECITATION

Quiet pervades the valley.
The nightingale begins to rally
His songs of sorrow and love.
Already on the flowers descends
The daylight from above.

EAGLE QUILLS

What is the noise so loud and shrill?
It is the bugle here beside our walls,
I see the strange flag which rises and falls,
Defiant on yonder hill.

CHANT

Have you forsaken us this day,
Guardian angels of our country?
Have pity, if God does not see—
If he remembers, save us, pray.
I thought I felt the whole earth jar,
I thought the sky began to sway,
And in a ray of light from afar
A voice from the wood bidding me stay,
It was not human, it was not mine.
Mother of Christ, was it Thine?
Didst Thou pity the tears that fell from my eyes?
It was the Holy Ghost did fill me.
I felt the forceful smart
Of an avenging Deity
Descend into my heart—
In war.

EAGLE QUILLS

ALONE IN THE FOG

Do you ever like to walk through a night
When the fog is dense and the rain
Pours down in clouds from skies insane
While all the world sleeps, devoid of sight?

Alone you wander, while the dampness bites
Clear into your lungs till they ache;
Cutting membrane each breath you take;
Yet deep in your soul burn sensitive lights.

Bright fires are kindled that heat up thought's sword
With which you dissect each being
Who blindly on earth tries keying
His soul to the pitch of Infinite chord.

Religion so cold, all routine and fear;
Then commerce which varies each week;
Oft changing the bold to the meek;
And mothers' fond hopes, then suff'ring each year.

Plainly you see the struggles and tangles
Of women and men, mortal knaves,
Yearning to reach, merely as slaves,
The Land of Exemption from wrangles.

Thus the whole world revolves—every cog
Before your eyes—a wretched view.
If you believe these facts untrue—
Walk abroad some night, alone, in the fog!

EAGLE QUILLS

HUMAN SEEDS

We are all judged by our deeds,
Be they small or great;
For by them we plant the seeds
Which are fondly nursed by Fate.

So, like the plant, we mortals
Arise from the deep abyss,
Then open wide the portals
Unsealed by a mother's kiss.

Into the world we wander
Marveling at awesome sights,
Then when it darkens yonder
Return from the dizzy heights.

Soon come the storms upon us,
And to stand the hardest blows
We pray our God to shield us—
To protect us from Life's snows.

Storms in the form of sorrow,
And storms in the form of woe,
But sunshine on the morrow
Warms each weary heart below.

So straighten up, my brothers,
Remember to whine is wrong;
Come dry your eyes, dear mothers,
And cheer the world with your song.

EAGLE QUILLS

LIFE

A cupful of thankful tears at your birth ;
A cupful of loving smiles through your youth ;
A cupful of hope when you're proving your worth,
And a mother's blessing beside.

A cupful of courage when things look bleak ;
A cupful of prayer when you wander afar ;
A cupful of fear when your grip 's growing weak ;
And a mother's blessing beside.

A cupful of friendship while fortune reigns ;
A cupful of pain when you love ;
Then cupfuls of earth to hide your remains ;
And a mother's blessing beside.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE MOULDER

Hark ye, mortals of earth, I am the crater
 Within ev'ry soul, yet few really know
That without my hot lava none would be greater
 Than cold chunks of clay which never could grow.

There would not be book, nor legend, nor verse;
 No great inventions, no bridges of steel;
No dark tunnels, tall buildings, nor money's foul
 curse—
 Yet these things exist for I live, I am real.

To some, I admit I'm more partial than others;
 Bestowing on these the power to write;
For babes, still unborn, I evolve loving mothers;
 And some to perjure their souls I incite—
 For behold—I AM THOUGHT.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE MASTER—?

The silhouette of man, behold,
A shadow from an earthen mould;
 Hard, ungrateful, yet a master
Of all the world since days of old.

Arising slow from some consent
Of love or passion violent
 He thrives, nor pauses once to think
He might have been an accident.

He straightway yearns to press the lips
Of Fame, yet e'er she yields, she dips
 His being in a seething cup
Of Pride, and while he feels it, slips

The chair of Fortune from his side.
His shame, thus moved, he tries to hide
 Behind the veil of penitence
And seeks to heal his wounded Pride.

The silhouette of man behold,
A shadow from an earthen mould,
 And, tho', a master of the world,
He's ne'er one of himself till cold.

EAGLE QUILLS

THINK NOT OF THE PAST

Happiness, though sublime, oft leads us far apace,
Heedless of our duty to all the human race,
 We spent such pleasant hours in revelries last night
 The morrow we ignored which brought new cares
 to light.
And thus one day was lost—it will not come again—
What pity we could not have turned it all to gain.

So think not of the past, to-morrow has its hours,
But mind you use them well, and open all your doors
 Of kindness, bounty, joy for ev'ry one around
 To share and glory in—let all their praise resound.
'Tis sometimes just a word that changes their whole
 life,
And makes the weak ones stronger to carry on their
 strife.

EAGLE QUILLS

INVOCATION

Thy eyes are passion's blue,
 Yet soft and pure,
Thy lips are crimson hue,
 Thy mien demure.

Thou art my goddess fair.
 Near thee I feel
The warmth of virtue rare—
 Thy holy seal.

I pray ere death to gain
 The longed-for right
To love thee and attain
 Thy crown of light.

EAGLE QUILLS

WITHOUT INTERRUPTION

My loved one has fallen asleep,
Tired and full of care,
So I quietly rise and creep
Down to my favorite chair—
Without interruption.

My pen and cigarettes are near,
Waiting my coming it would seem,
Waiting to woo a smile or tear,
Or merely a fond dream—
Without interruption.

Two hours, perchance, have thus passed by,
When I hear a sound on the stair—
A rustle of silk and a step so shy,
Planning to take me unaware—
Without interruption!

I pretend I do not hear her,
But my heart beats happily,
For my loved one's drawing nearer—
How empty my life would be
Without interruption!

EAGLE QUILLS

AN ANSWER

Distance holds perils past our ken,
And letters are empty at best ;
Won't you forget the trifles and then
See how useless is all your unrest?

You should know by the love which I gave,
Love growing stronger each day ;
You should know by our love, so save
Your tears, dear, save them I pray.

Distance holds perils past our ken
And letters are but futile qualms ;
Forgive my thoughtless errors and then
Enfold me once more in your arms.

EAGLE QUILLS

INSCRIPTION ON AN URN

Marvelous mistress of love, you seemed
Always to entrance anew
With some sweet, subtle fancy which you dreamed
And then by your art have made come true.

You bled my soul with your passion ;
You tore my heart strings away ;
Wretched enchantress, who didst fashion
My whole life in your hands like clay.

And then, my Lythra, you left me,
Not granting me one last fond proof
Which my lone, aching heart, in mis'ry,
Might hold as a love-balm aloof.

But I knew the cling of your kisses ;
I knew your surrender divine ;—
Now I know how the wand'rer misses
In the desert a flask of wine.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE WOOING

A tiny sunbeam from above
Tripped gaily on his toes
Down to earth with shining light
To woo a little rose.
She sweetly nodded to his plea,
Then shyly did disclose
Her tender bloom for his delight,
O, happy little rose.
She learned the warmth of burning love,
And when her strength was spent,
Her petals closed, she died content,
Oh, happy little rose.

EAGLE QUILLS

LIPS

Lips,
Scarlet lips,
Moist with passion
Mocking lines without compassion,
Outstanding veins throbbing the while
Beck'ning, then repulsing with ironic smile ;
Sensitively rubbed to the point of bleeding
By the heated sand-paper of Lust, unheeding
All quenching coolness of mad desire's too sudden reeling.
Never passes the light of day but that feeling
Of dire dread hovers maliciously before my mind
No eyes glaring, and no form outlined.
To whom or to what belong
Those damnable lips of wrong
Haunting yet adoring me
To Fame maybe
Or to—
Death.

EAGLE QUILLS

SMOKE

BACHELOR DIALOGUE

JAY: So you're going to marry to-morrow, eh?
Something quite sudden, you decided to-day?
Let me in on the secret, what's her name?

PAUL: Myrrha Barton of Grand Opera fame.
By Jove, she's wonderful, old man . . . I say
Got anything to smoke? . . . I'll tell you all
About her.

JAY: I've a pipe I bought last Fall.
Broke it in, smoked it till it got mellow;
Sorry I've got nothing better, old fellow.
Here, if you like it, keep it . . . not at all.

PAUL: Well, to begin with I met her . . . a light?
Thanks, not a bad taste . . . I met her one night
At a dinner in the usual way;
One of Fred's gala affairs, you know . . . Jay,
Why stare at me . . . are you ill?

JAY: I'm all right.
Only it's funny. Let's see what was . . . when?
In October. That's it. I see . . . and then—
Go ahead.

EAGLE QUILLS

PAUL: What's the idea of joking?

JAY: Nothing, only the pipe you are smoking
 Was bought late that same night, and smoked
 again
 But last evening . . . here in this very room.

PAUL: For God's sake, old man, you look like a tomb.
 What's up?

JAY: You're my very best friend, aren't you?

PAUL: Yes.

JAY: Well, that pipe you are smoking, can't you
 See? . . . BURNED out . . . cold ashes for a
 bridegroom.
 Here, take a bit of brandy, Paul.

PAUL: Thanks, thanks.

EAGLE QUILLS

MY CIGARETTE

When my deeply wearied soul
 Grows tired of Life's monotony,
When my brain disputes control,
 And all my nerves start mutiny—
 I light a cigarette,
 A quiet cigarette,
A soothing, soulful, sleepy thing.

When pleasures crown my day,
 When my heart is filled with bliss,
I turn from some enchanting lay,
 I leave fond arms and glowing kiss
 To light a cigarette,
 A joyous cigarette,
A wondrous, warming, wistful thing.

EAGLE QUILLS

FALL

Cold gleaming moon with biting ray,
Bright algid star with steel-blue light,
Proclaim fond summer's heated play
Has ceased its round of warm delight.

Autumnal hue of limb and bough
Long since has lost its dying charm;
No more do farmers guide the plow,
Nor lovers loiter arm in arm.

And thus at this time ev'ry year,
The dread of winter fills the mind,
For howling blasts will soon appear
To chill the souls of all mankind.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE GULL

White 'gainst the black horizon of the sea,
Loom the arched wings of the gull
In solitary flight o'er dull
Wet lashings of the cold, forbidding sea.
Over rocks where many a hull
Is crashed, and many a skull
Of sailing man is cast up by the sea.
Swift he flies, through the tempest's lull,
To his nest where the mother gull,
Waits with her young for the food snatched from the
sea.

EAGLE QUILLS

ANTS

Most men are like ants, drudging through life,
Their nose to the grindstone, edging Self's knife;
Far happier they'd be to give and to claim
The wealth of thought than the lucre of strife.

EAGLE QUILLS

SING

Sing happily, ye bards, of coming spring,
It lingers but a moment ere it flies—
So love it when ye may, for ye who sing
May not be living when the new Spring cries.

EAGLE QUILLS

THE CROW

What creature is uglier than a crow,
With body black as death and hideous beak,
That shapes the harshness of its preying shriek,
Shrilling through the air when the sun is low?
But—did you ever hear the love-note of the crow?

EAGLE QUILLS

A PHRASE

A fleeting phrase, I try to clasp
Ere it passes from my mind,
But free, it struggles from my grasp,
Leaving not a trace behind—
Is not life just such a blind?

EAGLE QUILLS

A HEALTH

Here's a health to those we love,
And the same to those we hate;
May the sunbeams from above
Shine alike on friend and foe;
For when we hear the voice of Fate,
Side by side we all must go.

EAGLE - QUILLS

TO YOU

Along with the knocks, my friend,
Snatch brief pleasures too—
For when Life is at an end,
You'll just lie down and say,
"I'm through."

EAGLE QUILLS

SOLITUDE

ACCORDING TO THE NATURALIST

The air grows chill, each wintry cloud
Descending slowly from its lofty berth,
Lets fall white, snowy flakes to warm the earth
And wind it tight in crystal shroud.
Each growing plant has lost its bloom;
The birds, forewarned, in haste, have flown away;
While ev'ry insect, snake and beast of prey
Has crept to its hibernal tomb.



EAGLE QUILLS

SOLITUDE

ACCORDING TO THE WIDOW

Rebellious burns my candle flame,
As if fatigued from burning far too long
In vain attempt to cheer me with its song
And hints of dreams I dare not name.
I would that I were made of wax,
Then when my outer self, as now, burns low,
My inner cord of flame, called soul, might flow
To him as dreams in sleep relax.

EAGLE QUILLS

SOLITUDE

ACCORDING TO THE BACHELOR

Each midnight hour I pass alone
Within my stately chamber huge and bleak;
No warmth glows in my heart, my spirit meek
Longs for the things it does not own,
Fair simple things it holds most dear;
Not jewels, not fame, nor bright gold unblest;
But a little son at his mother's breast
And a life at last sincere.

W 23





JAN 13 1980

