
IX—Toronto and McGill

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(1913)

(This poem was composed in celebration of a great football victory of these two colleges over one another. It is written in what is now called vers libre. But in my college days we used to call it worse than that.)

The object of this poem is not very difficult to get on to,

Since it is intended all through as what is called a pæan on Toronto.

I don't deny, have not and never will
My debt of gratitude to old McGill,
Nor have I any other wish or hope
Than here upon Mount Royal's leafy slope
To theorize, to formulate conjectures,
In short to give the kind of thing called lectures,
Here live, here die, and after—who can tell,
To go on giving lectures up in . . .*

Let me explain at once for those who do not know 'em,
The kind of meters, called gas meters, which I use in
this poem.

* Word apparently missing.—Ed.

College Days

Anybody with a quick ear will have no doubt from the very start

That it must be a most extraordinarily difficult kind of art.

Each foot begins and ends just where I end or begin it,
I defy any man to scan it, though it might be possible to skin it.

Not even the combined strength of Dr. Peterson and Mr. Slack

Could tackle one of these verses and throw it on its back.

But as I say, I want to sound the praise
Of old Toronto, long may be her days.

You taught me all I know, oh good old College,
Greek, Latin, Algebra, Religious Knowledge,
Fondly and freely gave it all away,
And made me at the end of it B.A.

You taught me Greek, can I forget it? No!
I've tried to, but it simply will not go.
Still in my dreams my wayward thoughts incline,
Irregular exceptions to decline;
And up and down my midnight fancies go
To the strange rhythm of a δ , η , $\tau\delta$.
When my declining years their shadows lengthen,
I'll end in an irregular declension.

Toronto and McGill

Toronto, you taught me Latin, yes you did,
I have the marks, the thing cannot be hid.
Deep in the fibre of my brain is sunk
The furrow of hic, haec hoc, hujus hunc.
I bear the marks of Virgil and the scar
Where Julius Cæsar wrote his *Gallic War*.
Horatius Flaccus stamped me with his verse
And Cicero : I don't know which was worse.

'Twas cruel while it lasted, it is done :
Through this I learned to use my mother tongue.

You taught me Mathematics, let it pass,
How could you know I was a hopeless ass ?
You tried in vain my intellect to hem
Inside the harsh binomial theorem.
I tried my best, no one can say I wouldn't—
Learned what I could and copied what I couldn't.
This too was, while it lasted, very rotten,
But now, thank God, forgiven and forgotten.

But what I chiefly hope will some day save me
Are the instructors that you nobly gave me.
McGill may boast her Peterson, her Slack,
Rose and Macnaughton, standing back to back.
For such instructors care I not a button,
My mind, good sirs, was fashioned by a Hutton !

College Days

McGill may have in history her Fryer,
And her sagacious Colby still is by her ;
I grant them merit, it is very strong,
Their history is all right, but mine was Wrong !

Or would you speak of French ? You would not dare,
For all of mine was taught me on the Squair.

Or if you boast of German, pause and listen,
I had my dose direct from Vandersmissen.

Yet in my humble self I like to think
I typify a sort of missing link ;
The phrase is ill-advised, I simply mean
I constitute a sort of go-between.
Trained at Toronto, nurtured by McGill
I know not which should my affection fill.
Backward and forward my affection goes,
One gave me knowledge, one supplies my clothes.
One knew me as a gentle silly youth
Eager for learning, passionate for truth,
Deep in philosophy, immersed in Greek,
Looking for mental trouble, so to speak.
The other as a teacher of the young,
Prosing on economics all day long,
Pent in a little classroom giving notes
And stuffing theories down students' throats,—
Nor visible regard for truth whatever
And yet as young and sillier than ever.

Toronto and McGill

Yet if I do thus form a missing link
I am but one of several, I think.
I do not stand alone, will any man
Refuse to lift his hat to our Ruttan ?
Toronto gave him, may her name be blest ;
In giving him she gave us of her best.
Nor he alone, will some one kindly say
What thinks the universe of John McCrae.
That he's all right ! I thank you from my soul.
Toronto numbers him upon her roll.

They may thus stand united, side by side,
McGill and Varsity—with each its pride ;
Let games like this one we have seen to-day
A double glory to the world display.
Where emulation struggles void of spite,
And men who play the game shall guard the right.
If it were possible a toast to fill,
I'd give, you Friends, TORONTO AND MCGILL.