

THE SONG FISHERMEN'S SONG SHEET

"Come All Ye"

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ANNOUNCEMENT

With the September number the Song-Sheet will have rounded out its first year. After the September number comes out we have half intentions of drying out the year's catch, pressing it into drums, and loading it aboard a three-master for ports unknown, perhaps Demerara; in other words, binding some of our songs into a printed book for more permanent and wider distribution. Therefore you are urged to send in your best as early as possible, so that there may be a wide basis for selection.

We are fully conscious that in doing any such thing we are endangering the casualness which has been the mark of our undertaking. We have been writing for fun, and for our own fun. We are rather isolated down here in Nova Scotia. The material and commercial centre of gravity is distant from us, and has drawn many of our people away. The march of progress goes by us on the other side of the hill. It is a march which leaves little time for playing or singing.

There is always plenty of time here, and it is when time is on your hands that you will sing. Ross Bishop, the clock-maker of Bridgetown, locks his shop, hangs a sign on the door, "Gone Fishing," and goes. You cannot do that in Toronto or New York. Ross has plenty of time on his hands. He plays five or six instruments of music. He studies geology. He is an inventor. He loves to sit quiet in the woods and listen to nothing in particular for no definite length of time. The windows of his soul are open. He does a certain amount of mending clocks, but he does not have to punch them as he did that time he worked up in Waltham.

Let us not get too ambitious. Keep your eyes free from the glare of big cities and big reputations. Keep your mind free from the contemporary illusion which names every new thing a good thing, and turns its back on old things which have been proved in many thousand years of human blood and tears. An instance is the Gaelic

tongue, an instrument of spiritual and lyric expression welded through untold centuries by a poetic people, living right here in our midst and allowed by our educational authorities to wither and die for lack of literary development in our schools.

We had hoped to have a gathering of the Song Fishermen during the Canadian Authors' Association Convention held recently in Halifax. There we could have taken advantage of the presence of distinguished writers from Canada, while at the same time we could have met one another and seen what we looked like.

This gathering will be held early in September, somewhere in the vicinity of Halifax, perhaps at Prospect, perhaps at McGrath's Cove. Or it may be held at (or near) Malagawatch; C. B. Who knows? At any rate the talkative Molly Beresford will be there as well as the sphinx-like Stuart McCawley, the winner of the Boat Prize. He will be crowned with the Dulse, and perhaps other things if he is not careful! We hope that William Ross will come and that he will send in a shot of hot verse in the meantime. Bob Norwood will be there, quiet and diffident as ever, back from the sun-baked hills of Palestine. Connie Woodrow will be there, if her health permits, and will warble to us in her native Manx. James D. Gillis will play his pipes for two hours and twenty two minutes in the ear of the culprit Bob Leslie who will be quite bored with the proceedings. Joe Wallace will be building barricades and the skipper will "abstain from propaganda." So get ready.

COMMISERATION

Forgive me that I cannot hear the things
You hear so clearly; nor with you can see
Through eyes that penetrate the outer crust
Into the earth whence flow the living springs;
Nor pierce with shafts of understanding trust
The well-wrought armor of eternity.

When day greets night in time's brief armistice,
And thoughtful quiet bends its emphasis
Upon their whispering - you are one preferred
To learn strange secrets I have never heard,
And dream strange dreams that I can never dream.
For me these things are only what they seem:
Day is but day - the night is very long.
The pity is that one of us is wrong.

- Robert Leslie.

NIGHT FISHING

Take a net of music,
Bait it with a dream,
Cast it in the silver
Of a sleeping stream.

If your luck be friendly,
If the tide set fair,
You may catch a mermaid
With moonlight in her hair,

From the crystal waters,
From the coral caves,
Rising green and golden
Through the wistful waves

(Bridesmaids of her beauty,
Loth to let her go,
Flinging wedding rice of foam
And weeping very low)

Ah, but you must shield her
Now that she is caught,
Bind her to your bosom
With a lover's knot,

Or the murmuring moonlight,
Or the crooning rain
Whispering at her windows
Will call her back again,

Never more to yield her
To your yearning net,
(Never more to find her
Find her . . . or forget)

-Joe Wallace

I CANNOT SING A NEW SONG

I cannot sing a new song,
I fear to sing the old;
And I want to sing a love song
To win a heart of gold.

If I should play an old tune,
I know that I'd be blamed;
Though of their ancient madrigals
The birds are unashamed;

Though yellow buttercups are filled
With oft-repeated showers,
And year by year the swale is thrilled
With never-changing flowers.

Upon the sea's dark scroll the moon,
Before the world was old,
Did write in silver what the sun
Had written first in gold.

So I must sing an old song
To a tune that's ancient too;
But should it touch your heart, love,
Your tears would make it new!

- Kenneth Leslie.