

Letter 6.

P. O. Dept. Ottawa
May 1885

Dear May

I send you three poems of mine writ this spring with much labour and I am afraid imperfect result. "Winter"¹ is the best, being the most artistic, and truest to nature. I think it is the best poem I have yet written. The "three pilgrims"² I do not like; it is uneven and very flat here and there: some day I shall add to it and recast parts of it. "Abu Midjan"³ I rather like. I got the little story from a note in Simon Ockley's *History of the Saracens* [sic].⁴ Abu Midjan was a fine soldier, also a creditable poet though somewhat of a wine bibber, and when he died was buried under a vineyard at his own request.⁵

The spring time is come at last and I am breaking my back with digging paths in the garden and laying out beds. I walk out to the woods also very often and sit down on old logs and dream: for this is the sweetest season of the year for wood-wandering; there are no mosquitoes yet.

I write a little when I can get time. I have got to the end of the long poem Arnulph⁶ and am going over it again and straightening it up where it's too excruciatingly bad. When it is done, prologue, conclusion and everything, I shall send it to you.

Please write to me and tell me what you do and how you succeed, and what plans for good and great things for the future you are brewing.

I remain

Your sincere friend
A. Lampman

¹ Dated 10 April 1885; *Among the Millet, and Other Poems* 27-29, *Poems* 24-27.

² "The Three Pilgrims," dated 4 April 1885; *Among the Millet, and Other Poems* 69-73, *Poems* 59.

³ Dated April 1885; *Among the Millet, and Other Poems* 64-66, *Poems* 54.

⁴ *The History of the Saracens* (1757), which combines an earlier (1718) volume of the same title and *The Conquest of Syria* (1708), by the English orientalist Simon Ockley (1679-1720) was later published in numerous editions, including a "Revised, Improved, and Enlarged" edition in 1847 in Bohn's Standard Library series.

⁵ Abu Midjan appears in a footnote to Ockley's account of the Battle of Cadesia in the section on Omar I in "Successors of Mohammed" in *The History of the Saracens* (1847 ed., 148-49). At the time of the battle Abu Midjan was imprisoned for singing a "wine song," but he escaped and distinguished himself in the fray. The footnote includes a translation of the song stating Abu Midjan's wish that his "grave be midst the vines on the hill" (149).

⁶ See Letter 1 n5.