

Poems, Songs & Sonnets,

WRITTEN CHIEFLY IN CANADA.



THE CHAUDIERE.

A SCENE ON THE RIVER OTTAWA.

WHERE the Ottawa pours its magnificent tide
Through forests primæval, dark-waving and wide,
There's a scene which for grandeur has scarcely a peer, —
'Tis the wild roaring rush of the mighty Chaudière.

On, onward it dashes—an ocean of spray ;
How madly it lashes each rock in its way !
Like the onset of hosts, when spear breaks against spear,
Is th' omnipotent sweep of the mighty Chaudière.

See ! see where it now from yon ledge wildly leaps, —
Less swift down some Alp the dread avalanche sweeps ;
That vortex below may well agonize where
Right into its throat goes the mighty Chaudière !

Evermore, evermore, where sheer downward it springs,
Its mist-mantle it weaves—its loud anthem it sings ;
Yonder isle* in its path seems to quiver with fear, —
It may well dread the shock of the mighty Chaudière.

The proud conqueror's might is the boast of a day, —
Thine, river majestic ! endureth for aye ;

*The little isle above referred to was, at the time these verses were penned, a conspicuous feature in the channel immediately below the Chaudière. There is no trace of it now remaining.

Strange thought, that just thus upon Time's infant ear
Came the God-speaking voice of the mighty Chaudière !

Though for lips uninspired it seems almost a crime
To be aught else than mute near a scene so sublime,
Could I voice all I feel as I gaze on it here,
How immortal in song were the mighty Chaudière !
Sept. 13, 1859.

THE RELIEF OF LUCKNOW.

In vain, in saddest plight,
Lucknow's defenders fight ;
Its walls to heathen might
Yield at last ;
Yet though they well might grow
Appalled at that dread show,
Defiance to the foe
Still they cast.

'Twas then, amid the wail
Of women, children, frail,
A daughter of the Gael,
Fever-spent,
Found from all care and grief
A merciful relief
In a sweet slumber brief,
Heaven-sent.

Of home and kin she dreams,—
One after one she names,
As loved ones there she seems
To embrace ;

Now seems some Sabbath psalm
To yield its soothing balm,
So heavenly is the calm
On her face.

But hush ! she starts,—her eyes
Uplifting to the skies,
“ We're saved ! we're saved ! ” she cries—
“ Dinna ye hear
The pipes ! the pipes ! Ha ! ha !
Clan-Alpine's battle-ca',
The grandest o' them a',
Swelling near ! ”

Some, 'mid that scene of death,
Take heart from what she saith ;
Some of more feeble faith
Deemed her crazed,
Till, as she shouts anew,
“ Dinna ye hear them noo ! ”
They heard and shouted too,
“ God be praised ! ”

When, lo ! through smoke and fire
Advancing nigh and nigher,
Their saviours in the attire
Of the Gael !
Quick banished are all fears ;
The doomed dry up their tears
And with a storm of cheers
Havelock hail !

CREAG-A-GHÀRIE.

A SCENE ON LOCHFYNE-SIDE.

LET others sing of towering Bens
 With cloud-capped summits stern and scaury ;
 Give me to glory in such scenes
 As grace my native Creag-a-gharie !

You may roam Scotland, east and west,
 From the Bass Rock to Staffa sparry,
 Yet sadly miss where she looks best
 Unless you visit Creag-a-gharie.

Away with Erin's boasting of
 Her own Avoca's Vale and Tara !
 There's naught in them to praise or love
 Compared with thee, dear Creag-a-gharie !

Here, towers Dunleacan o'er the lake ;
 There, loom fair Cowal's summits airy ;
 Nor less Ben-Vuidhe helps to make
 A setting grand to Creag-a-gharie.

When winds are hushed, and night's fair Queen
 Casts o'er Lochfyne a gleaming glory,
 You'd think that Elfland there and then
 Lent all its charms to Creag-a-gharie.

There spring's first lilies love to blow ;
 The gowan white and primrose starry
 You can't help treading on—they grow
 So thick all over Creag-a-gharie !

There oft I've kissed (no mighty wrong)
Some Hebe, 'spite her coy "How dare you!"
The theft requiting with a song
Breathed in her praise in Creag-a-gharie!

There first I sought thy witching smile,
And won thy heart, my long-lost Mary:
Alas, that death so soon should spoil
That love-dream sweet of Creag-a-gharie!

How have I joyed in boyhood's days
To list its woodland warblers cheerie,
Nor less the lark whose thrilling lays
Seem'd more for Heaven than Creag-a-gharie!

When nuts were ripe, and autumn skies
Made plump the sles on branches briery,
To me there scarcely seems a choice
'Tween paradise and Creag-a-gharie.

These were the days a planet new
Would joy its finder less than *there* I
To find some blackbird's nest, known to
Myself alone in Creag-a-gharie.

Nor less the rapture in mine eye,
When some shy lythe or sea-trout wary
I, from his native haunts, close by,
Triumphant lodged on Creag-a-gharie.

Small wonder, Alltaneadan's stream,
The music of thy cascade fairy
Is ever present in each dream
I have of home and Creag-a-gharie :

It was within thy bosky bound
I first adventured, somewhat chary,
To weave those lays long after found
Remembered well in Creag-a-gharie.

Twice twenty summers, woe is me !
Have passed since then : A weary far way
Is placed between us :—let it be,—
My heart is still in Creag-a-gharie !

And thus it is from year to year,
No matter how adverse my star be,
I have an offset ever dear
In memories sweet of Creag-a-gharie.

March 1st, 1876.

TO PROFESSOR G—E, ON HIS LAST
HISTORICAL DISCOVERY.

(The gentleman here addressed having, in a speech made at a certain public meeting, ventured to assert that "Scotchmen must admit their country to have been once conquered," the author, who was present, felt himself impelled to deny the truth of his assumption. Hence the following lines, written off-hand, and received by the professor next morning at his breakfast-table.)

SCOTLAND, a conquered land ! Learned sage,
Pray tell us how, and in what age ?
Not so *I* read historic page.

Thou canst not deem a mere invasion —
A brief disputed occupation—
To be the conquest of a nation ?

Think'st thou the homage of a knave
Binding on those he would enslave ?
Let Baliol answer from his grave !

Scotland a conquered land ! Ho, ho !
Proud Edward found it was not so
When dying—vainly still her foe.

No pandering, then, to Saxon pride !
Pretensions by our sires defied
Shall we not also cast aside ?

Forget'st thou Carun's crimsoned stream ?
Is Bannockburn a myth or dream ?
And Wallace a mere minstrel theme ?

Thou speak'st of Cromwell? Be it so:
 Cromwell was never Scotland's foe—
 How then her conqueror, prithee, show?

Her friend and Freedom's, north he came;
Her noblest sons backed well his aim,
 And scotched misrule in Cromwell's name.

Hold up thy head, then, Scotia! Woe
 Thy sons forget that they are men
 Thou may'st be conquered—not till then!

1857.

ROBERT BURNS.

(Written for the centennial celebration of 1859.)

So many minstrels known to fame
 Have made sweet Coila's bard their theme,
 That like an oft-told tale may seem

All I can sing of Robin.

Yet to his cairn however high,
 No Scot can mutely pass it by;
 The tribute of a song and sigh

Let's therefore give to Robin.

His was the true poetic art
 To sing directly from the heart:
 To waken mirth, or tears to start,
 No mortal matches Robin!

Now gently flow his thoughts along,
Now, like a rushing river strong,
A very cataract of song
 Resistless is our Robin !

The sun not aye unclouded shines ;
There's dross within earth's richest mines ;—
Rob had his faults, and grave divines
 Oft shook their heads at Robin.
A lassie " coming through the rye"
Unkissed he never could pass by ;
Nor can I blame him much, for why,
 The lasses all loved Robin !

Rob loved to speak the truth right down,
No matter who might smile or frown ;
A rascal, be he king or clown,
 No mercy had from Robin.
His sympathies—how dread to tell !
Embraced all being—Nick himsel'—
Yes, pity for the very de'il,
 No sin or shame thought Robin.

I see him with scorn-flashing eyes
Detect "a cuif" in lordly guise ;
To see was to denounce—despise :
 "A man's a man," quoth Robin !
Hold, honest Labour, up thy head,
And point with pride to Robin dead ;
The halo round thy path he shed
 Immortal is as Robin.

Alas, that not till they are lost
 The gifts that we should value most
 Are rightly prized ! To Scotland's cost,
 Thus fared it with her Robin.
 Yet may she glory loud and long
 To know, of all earth's sons of song,
 The most world-honoured of the throng
 Is Coila's matchless Robin !

BURNS AGAIN.

(The following anniversary lay was written at the special request of the Burns' Society, of Des Moines, Iowa, to whom it is now respectfully dedicated.)

AGAIN comes round that happy day,
 More welcome than thy brightest, May,—
 A day that Scotia will for aye
 Hold sacred to her Robin.
 Let winds without blow e'er so chill,
 That Scottish heart is colder still
 Which beats not with a joyful thrill,
 This day, to think of Robin.

The sovereign lord of song confessed,
 He lives enthroned in every breast,
 Where well I ween that dispossessed
 Shall never be our Robin.
 O, never was with laurels crowned
 A bard more worthily renowned ;
 All Scotland is made classic ground
 By thee, immortal Robin !

As freely as yon sun forth flings
Incessant light in dazzling rings,
So, rare and rich imaginings
 Around him flung our Robin.
The truest censor of his age—
He in the bard ne'er sank the sage ;
No mortal man could better gauge
 The human heart than Robin.

The manners of his native clime
Are all made deathless in his rhyme ;
Poor toiling Worth throughout all time
 Will bless the name of Robin.
What Scotsman reads his "Hallowe'en"
But feels as if a boy again,
And well may ask, Was ever seen
 A wizard like our Robin ?

Though tender as a cushat's croon
He sings of love by "bonnie Doon,"
To war he well his lyre could tune,—
 A hero born was Robin.
His "Scots wha hae" what patriot hears
And pants not for the strife of spears ?
He sings, and Bannockburn appears
 Fought o'er again with Robin !

To see the hypocrite laid bare,
Just list to "Holy Willie's Prayer ;"
Let "Hornbrook" and "The Calf" declare
 How witty was our Robin.

How eloquent the grief expressed
Beside yon "mousie's" ruined nest !
Oh, try him by whatever test,
 No bard can match with Robin !

Let bigots, ready to deride,
Themselves examine ere they chide,
And learn, abashed, to cast aside
 The stone they'd fling at Robin.
To judge of him by *their* mean test
Of sanctity were sure a jest !
"He prayeth best who loveth best
 All things," and this did Robin.

It may be Scotland did him wrong
To leave him poor, the poor among ;
Yet, to her honor be it sung,
 She always loved her Robin.
She gave him inspiration true,
Such as no other land could do ;
Hurrah, then, for the matchless Two—
 Auld Scotland and her Robin !

THE MODERN HERCULES.

OFFSPRING renowned of Water and of Fire !
Thy triumphs, Steam, to sing I would aspire :
Let critics who would deem my numbers tame
Confess at least the greatness of my theme.

Power unmatched ! what wonders hast thou wrought !
What feats sublime beyond the reach of thought !
In thee we gladly realize at length
The fabled Titans' all-compelling strength—
A might that dwarfs what Grecian bards have told
Of deeds Herculean done in days of old.
The wingéd Mercury of *their* proud day
Were, matched with thee, a lagger on the way :
Scornful of distance, unfatigued by toil,
No task thy temper or thy strength can spoil,—
Whate'er thou dost doing with good will,
And at such speed as seems a miracle.
Man's mightiest ally upon land or sea,
He owns indeed a glorious gift in thee !

Not mine the skill to sing in fitting phrase
How science yokes thee to her car—the maze
Of tubes metallic, wondrous as a spell,
In which, like to a spirit, thou dost dwell—
A worker with a zeal that naught can tire,
Determined, prompt, impetuous as fire,—
Seeming as almost taught to think and feel
With that complex anatomy of steel !
To this let others fitting homage pay,
My task be thy achievements to pourtray.

Power surpassing fancy's wildest flight,
No less for thy docility than might !
Unlike the "Brownie"—Scotia's wayward loon,
Who wrought such marvels at night's silent noon—
Once at thy work, by day and night the same,
No respite from thy labors dost thou claim.
I see thee toiling in the busy mill,
The faithful doer of thy master's will :
Ever submissive,—if he but commands,
Thine is the labor of a thousand hands ;
The shuttle darteth with the speed of thought ;
The fabric grows as if by magic wrought ;
Th' astonished gazer freely must allow
Penelope less diligent than thou !
Less complex work, tho' valued not the less—
We see thee yoked now to the plough and press ;
Our corn thou threshest and our grain dost grind :
We yet may teach thee both to reap and bind.
Thy aid is asked, and from the lake below
The limpid wave ascends in copious flow,
And to the distant city rasketh, where
Thou art confessed a benefactor rare.
The oak that long has stood the forest's pride
Thou with a speed like lightning dost divide :
Thou strikest the anvil with such force as might
Make Vulcan stare with wonder and delight :
Thou heavest up from earth's internal store
Pile upon pile of ever-precious ore—
Such weight, I trow, as Atlas never bore.
O wonder-worker ! with results so grand,
Well may thy praises ring throughout the land ;
Well may the muse declare, exultingly,
Man owns indeed a glorious gift in thee !

Darer of danger in a thousand forms—
Thou canst not shun, but thou canst scorn the storms !
Where, zig-zag, slowly toils the sail-urged bark,
As if she'd never reach her destined mark,
How grand to see, upon her ocean way,
Some stately ship beneath thy potent sway
Cleaving the waves opposing her career
As forceful as a thunderbolt the air !
Naught recketh *she* of adverse winds or tides ;
No canvas needs she as the wave she rides ;
Straight as an arrow on her way she goes,
Uncaring though Leviathan oppose,
Till, a wide wilderness of waters past,
Her anchor in the wished-for port is cast.

Lo !—dashing on through forest, glen and glade,—
O'er rushing rivers—gorges deep and dread,—
Now lost, now seen, far o'er the landscape's face,—
Yon fiery steed, so peerless in his pace,
A steed whose speed annihilateth space !
Each passing minute over miles he sweeps ;
Matched with his flight the hurricane but creeps :
You'd think him and his chariot, madly hurled,
Just off to make the circuit of the world,
And bound to verify how may be done
What Fiction feigned of coursers of the Sun !
But see !—his goal emerging into view,
His speed he slackens with a shrill halloo,
And, as if conscious of a welcome wide,
Into the city's heart doth proudly glide.
Murmur'd applauses through the crowd prevail ;
Long-parted friends once more each other hail,—

Friends who, but for their faith in him, I ween,
Had never thus each other sought or seen.

But that this tributary lay I sing
Might seem too long—my muse too weak of wing—
With eye prophetic, fain would I pursue
Thy future triumphs crowding on my view,—
How to earth's utmost limits they extend,
Age after age increasing to the end,—
How the far Isles now 'neath barbaric sway,
Shall smile and flourish in thy better day,—
How the swart Indian, quitting club and spear,
Shall be himself, in time, thy charioteer—
His savage appetites all laid aside,
His hunting grounds transformed to cornfields wide,—
“A stoic of the woods” no longer now,
But going forth to toil with cheerful brow,
Grateful to Him who framed the social plan—
Thus reaching the true dignity of man !

Peerless discovery ! Blessing rich and true !
When such thy pow'r, and such thy promise, too,
We well may hope in thee at last to find
A chain that shall in peace the nations bind—
A chain of love embracing all mankind.

Immortal WATT ! I surely were to blame
If ceased my song forgetful of thy fame.
By thee a secret, long by all-wise Heaven
Concealed from man, at last to man was given.
Though some there be who with presumption vain
Would make their own the fruitage of thy brain,

Justice and Truth must scout the base design,
And own the great achievement to be thine
That has enriched the nations tenfold more
Than all earth's boasted mines of golden ore,
And giveth to thy name a right to be
Throughout all time remembered gratefully :
Scotland may well be proud to claim a son in thee.

CANADIAN GIRLS.

CANADIAN girls—the truth to tell—
Sly arts coquettish practice well,
Yet must we own them not the less
Unrivalled in their loveliness.

I know of one whose lips to kiss
To me were earth's most perfect bliss ;
A lass whose loving heart to own
A king might gladly give his crown.

Her step is light as is the flake
Of snow just falling in the brake ;
A creature full of life and grace—
There's naught 'neath Heaven to match her face !

Small wonder that I would with pride
Make this Canadian girl my bride ;
None ever sees that darling one
But owns her nature's paragon.

Then cease, ye bards, to longer hold
 As matchless Beauty's queen of old ;
 Ye would, if you could come with me
 And bonnie Mary Murray see !*

THE CLANS OF 'FORTY-FIVE.

“ Ho ! landed upon Moidart's coast is Scotland's rightful
 King ! ”

Such was the news to which the Gael once gave warm wel-
 coming ;

And soon, glad-buckling on their arms, stout chiefs and clans-
 men true

Have sworn in his good cause 'to try what good broadswords
 can do.

No cravens they to count the cost of failure : Man alive !
 We'll never see their like again—the Clans of 'Forty-five.

Brief time hath passed till Finnan's vale is all astir with men
 From east and west in loyal haste proud-gathering : To their
 ken

The royal standard is unfurled—their Prince himself is there,
 Their loving homage to receive, their dangers all to share ;
 Stout Chiefs who for his fathers fought, the fires of youth
 revive,

To stirring piobrochds marshalling the Clans of 'Forty-five.

* A Hamilton lady, then in her girlhood, and now the still charm-
 ing wife of W. Hendrie, Esq., of that city.

Let no man say that to restore a creed proscribed they arm ;
They think but of *his* loving trust, his Highland heart so
warm,

His royal rights usurped,—and they upon his princely brow
Would place his father's crown or die : Too well they kept
their vow !

Let men who prate of loyalty, in this our day, derive
Instruction in that virtue from the clans of 'Forty-five !

Ay! let them think of brave Lochiel and Borrodale the bold,—
Of Keppoch and Glengarry too, both men of might extolled,—
The Chisholm, Cluny, Athol's lord, the Macintosh so keen,—
The Appin Stuarts and MacColls,—thy lion-hearts, McLean,—
With many a chief and clan besides, who quickly did con-
trive

To make their names immortal in the famous 'Forty-five !

How well they fought let Falkirk-field and Prestonpans de-
clare ;

Well might all Europe, as it marked, applaud their valor
rare ;

Woe's me for dark Culloden Moor, where, all too rashly
brave,

They to a force their own thrice told unequal battle gave !

What mortal might *could* do, they did,—but who 'gainst fate
can strive ?

To destiny alone succumbed the Clans of 'Forty-five.

Alas, that their descendants now, upon their native soil,
Can hardly find, for deer and sheep, a spot whercon to toil !

Our good old race of Chiefs give place to mercenary knaves
 Who, for a bushel, less or more, would plough their father's
 graves !

"The age of chivalry is past," yet shall its fame survive
 Forever brightened by their deeds—the Clans of 'Forty-five.

A "FABLED OSSIAN."

[“He (Burns) was pre-eminently the poet of the Scottish people ; not that Scotland cannot boast of other bards. They shine as lights—they stud her history as stars, all along from the time of the fabled Ossian down to Adam Smith.” *From a speech by an English clergyman present at the Kingston celebration of the Centenary of Burns.*]

A “FABLED” Ossian, did'st thou say ?
 That warrior-bard of deathless lay
 “*Fabled*,” indeed ! I tell thee, *Nay* !

A bard whose praise all ages ring,
 Forsooth, a mere imagining !
 How judgest *thou* of such a thing ?

Go learn a tongue to thee unknown,
 Be guided by the truth alone,
 Then sit the critic's seat upon !

Do more,—read Scotia's bards forthwith ;
 I think it will take all thy pith
 Among them to find *Adam Smith* !

Adam a poet !—hear it, Cocker !
Was ever such a funny joker !
You'd be a fortune to "The Poker."

But as a nod's as good's a wink,
I say no more about that "kink"—
My duty is to make thee think.

Think, then, through what long ages came,
Unwritten, Homer's song and fame :
Why could not Ossian's come the same ?

What marvel that a strain that winds
Its way into all hearts and minds
A never-ending audience finds ?

Be not, then, sceptical, but wise ;
Scan Ossian with no jaundiced eyes,
And learn to blush at Saxon lies.

Yes, read the songs of Selma through ;
Though old, they may be fresh to you—
A study manifestly *new* !

 THE LAKE OF THE THOUSAND ISLES.

THOUGH Missouri's tide may majestic glide,
 There's a curse on the soil it laves ;
 The Ohio, too, may be fair, but who
 Would sojourn in a land of slaves ? *
 Be my prouder lot a Canadian cot
 And the bread of a freeman's toils ;
 Then hurrah for the land of the forests grand,
 And the Lake of the Thousand Isles !

I would seek no wealth, at the cost of health,
 'Mid the city's din and strife :
 More I love the grace of fair nature's face,
 And the calm of a woodland life ;
 I would shun the road by ambition trod
 And the lore which the heart deñiles ;—
 Then hurrah for the land of the forests grand.
 And the Lake of the Thousand Isles !

O, away, away ! I would gladly stray
 Where the freedom I love is found ;
 Where the pine and oak by the woodman's stroke
 Are disturbed in their ancient bound ;
 Where the gladsome swain reaps the golden grain,
 And the trout from the stream beguiles ;
 Then hurrah for the land of the forests grand,
 And the Lake of the Thousand Isles !

*The above verses were written some years prior to the abolition of Slavery in the U. S. of America.