



***KATE SEYMOUR  
MACLEAN***

***THE COMING  
OF THE PRINCESS,  
AND OTHER  
POEMS***

**Kate Seymour MacLean**

# **The Coming of the Princess, and Other Poems**

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# INTRODUCTION.

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## BY G MERCER ADAM.

The request of the author that I should write a few words of preface to this collection of poems must be my excuse for obtruding myself upon the reader. Having frequently had the pleasure as editor of *The Canadian Monthly*, of introducing many of Mrs. MacLean's poems to lovers of verse in the Dominion it was thought not unfitting that I should act as foster father to the collection of them here made and to bespeak for the volume at the hands at least of all Canadians the appreciative and kindly reception due to a

Child of the first winds and suns of a nation.

Accepting the task assigned to me the more readily as I discern the high and sustained excellence of the collection as a whole let me ask that the volume be received with interest as a further and most meritorious contribution to the poetical literature of our young country (the least that can be said of the work), and with sympathy for the intellectual and moral aspirations that have called it into being.

There is truth, doubtless, in the remark, that we are enriched less by what we have than by what we hope to have. As the poetic art in Canada has had little of an appreciable past, it may therefore be thought that the songs

that are to catch and retain the ear of the nation lie still in the future, and are as yet unsung. Doubtless the chords have yet to be struck that are to give to Canada the songs of her loftiest genius; but he would be an ill friend of the country's literature who would slight the achievements of the present in reaching solely after what, it is hoped, the coming time will bring.

But whatever of lyrical treasure the future may enshrine in Canadian literature, and however deserving may be the claims of the volumes of verse that have already appeared from the native press, I am bold to claim for these productions of Mrs. MacLean's muse a high place in the national collection and a warm corner in the national heart.

To discern the merit of a poem is proverbially easier than to say how and in what manner it is manifested. In a collection the task of appraisal is not so difficult. Lord Houghton has said: "There is in truth no critic of poetry but the man who enjoys it, and the amount of gratification felt is the only just measure of criticism." By this test the present volume will, in the main, be judged. Still, there are characteristics of the author's work which I may be permitted to point out. In Mrs. MacLean's volume what quickly strikes one is not only the fact that the poems are all of a high order of merit, but that a large measure of art and instinct enters into the composition of each of them. As readily will it be recognized that they are the product of a cultivated intellect, a bright fancy, and a feeling heart. A rich spiritual life breathes throughout the work, and there are occasional manifestations of fervid impulse and ardent feeling. Yet there is no straining of expression in the poems

nor is there any loose fluency of thought. Throughout there is sustained elevation and lofty purpose. Her least work, moreover, is worthy of her, because it is always honest work. With a quiet simplicity of style there is at the same time a fine command of language and an earnest beauty of thought. The grace and melody of the versification, indeed, few readers will fail to appreciate. Occasionally there are echoes of other poets—Jean Ingelow and Mrs. Barrett Browning, in the more subjective pieces, being oftenest suggested. But there is a voice as well as an echo—the voice of a poet in her own right. In an age so bustling and heedless as this, it were well sometimes to stop and listen to the voice. In its fine spiritualizations we shall at least be soothed and may be bettered.

But I need not dwell on the vocation of poetry or on the excellence of the poems here introduced. The one is well known to the reader, the other may soon be. Happily there is promise that Canada will ere long be rich in her poets. They stand in the vanguard of the country's benefactors, and so should be cherished and encouraged. Of late our serial literature has given us more than blossomings. The present volume enshrines some of the maturer fruit. May it be its mission to nourish the poetic sentiment among us. May it do more to nourish in some degree the "heart of the nation", and, in the range of its influence, that of humanity.

CANADIAN MONTHLY OFFICE,  
Toronto, December, 1880



# ENVOI

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A little bird woke singing in the night,  
Dreaming of coming day,  
And piped, for very fulness of delight,  
His little roundelay.

Dreaming he heard the wood-lark's carol loud,  
Down calling to his mate,  
Like silver rain out of a golden cloud,  
At morning's radiant gate.

And all for joy of his embowering woods,  
And dewy leaves he sung,—  
The summer sunshine, and the summer floods  
By forest flowers o'erhung.

Thou shalt not hear those wild and sylvan notes  
When morn's full chorus pours  
Rejoicing from a thousand feathered throats,  
And the lark sings and soars,

Oh poet of our glorious land so fair,  
Whose foot is at the door;  
Even so my song shall melt into the air,  
And die and be no more.

But thou shalt live, part of the nation's life;  
The world shall hear thy voice  
Singing above the noise of war and strife,  
And therefore I rejoice!

# THE COMING OF THE PRINCESS

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### I.

Break dull November skies, and make  
Sunshine over wood and lake,  
And fill your cells of frosty air  
With thousand, thousand welcomes to the Princely pair!  
The land and the sea are alight for them;  
The wrinkled face of old Winter is bright for them;  
The honour and pride of a race  
Secure in their dwelling place,  
Steadfast and stern as the rocks that guard her,  
Tremble and thrill and leap in their veins,  
As the blood of one man through the beacon-lit border!  
Like a fire, like a flame,  
At the sound of her name,  
As the smoky-throated cannon mutter it,  
As the smiling lips of a nation utter it,  
And a hundred rock-lights write it in fire!  
Daughter of Empires, the Lady of Lorne,  
Back through the mists of dim centuries borne,  
None nobler, none gentler that brave name have worn;  
Shrilled by storm-bugles, and rolled by the seas,  
Louise!  
Our Princess, our Empress, our Lady of Lorne!

### II.

And the wild, white horses with flying manes  
Wind-tost, the riderless steeds of the sea.  
Neigh to her, call to her, dreadless and free,  
"Fear not to follow us; these thy domains;  
Welcome, welcome, our Lady and Queen!  
O Princess, oh daughter of kingliest sire!  
Under its frost girdle throbbing and keen,  
A new realm awaits thee, loyal and true!"  
And the round-cheeked Tritons, with fillets of blue  
Binding their sea-green and scintillant hair,  
Blow thee a welcome; their brawny arms bear  
Thy keel through the waves like a bird through the air.

### III.

Shoreward the shoal of mighty shoulders lean  
Through the long swell of waves,  
Reaching beyond the sunset and the hollow caves,  
And the ice-girdled peaks that hold serene  
Each its own star, far out at sea to mark  
Thy westward way, O Princess, through the dark.  
The rose-red sunset dies into the dusk,  
The silver dusk of the long twilight hour,  
And opal lights come out, and fiery gleams  
Of flame-red beacons, like the ash-gray husk  
Torn from some tropic blossom bursting into flower,  
Making the sea bloom red with ruddy beams.

### IV

Still nearer and nearer it comes, the swift sharp prow  
Of the ship above and the shadow ship below,  
With the mighty arms of the Titans under,  
All bowed one way like a field of wind-blown ears,  
Still nearer and nearer, and now  
touches the strand, and, lo,  
With the length of her bright hair backward flowing  
Round her head like an aureole,  
Like a candle flame in the wind's breath blowing,  
Stands she fair and still as a disembodied soul,  
With hands outstretched, and eyes that shine through tears  
And tremulous smiles  
When the trumpets, and the guns, and the great drums roll,  
And the long fiords and the forelands shake with the  
thunder  
Of the shout of welcome to the daughter of the Isles.

## V

Bring her, O people, on the shoulders of her vassals  
Throned like a queen to her palace on the height,  
Up the rocky steeps where the fir tree tassels  
Nod to her, and touch her with a subtle, vague delight,  
Like a whisper of home, like a greeting and a smile  
From the fir-tree walks and gardens, the wood-embowered  
castles  
In the north among the clansmen of Argyle.  
Now the sullen plunge of waves for many a mile  
Along the roaring Ottawa is heard,  
And the cry of some wood bird,

Wild and sudden and sweet,  
Scared from its perch by the rush and trample of feet,  
And the red glare of the torches in the night.  
And now the long facade gay with many a twinkling light  
Reaches hands of welcome, and the bells peal, and the  
guns,  
And the hoarse blare of the trumpets, and the throbbing  
of the drums  
Fill the air like shaken music, and the very waves rejoice  
In the gladness, and the greeting, and the triumph of  
their voice.

## VI.

Under triumphal arches, blazoned with banners and  
scrolls,  
And the sound of a People's exulting, still gathering as it  
rolls,  
Enter the gates of the city, and take the waiting throne,  
And make the heart of a Nation, O Royal Pair, your own.  
Sons of the old race, we, and heirs of the old and the new;  
Our hands are bold and strong, and our hearts are faithful  
and true;  
Saxon and Norman and Celt one race of the mingled blood  
Who fought built cities and ships and stemmed the unknown  
flood  
In the grand historic days that made our England great  
When Britain's sons were steadfast to meet or to conquer  
fate  
Our sires were the minster builders who wrought