

# THE QUEBEC TRANSCRIPT,

AND GENERAL ADVERTISER.

Vol. II.—No. 40.]

WEDNESDAY, 22ND MAY, 1859.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

## Poetry.

### THE CASTING OF THE CANNON.

BY THOMAS TOD STODDART.

Bring iron! bring iron! what want we with gold?  
Our swords can win wealth—they have won it of old;  
Bring ore from the mines! let the serf forge the chain—  
We'll cast England's cannon and conquer again!  
Then cast the dark cannon, bring ore from the mine,  
We shall keep ourselves kings of the brine.

There is fame to be gathered and victory won,  
We sleep the red fires of the dark-throated gun;  
We have wrongs to redress, we have rights to maintain,  
And England's brave cannon shall thunder again;  
Then cast the dark, &c.

Keep traced on her bosom, our country records  
The fame of her Navies—the deeds of her warriors;  
Bring, long as our mines of dark metal remain,  
We have British cannon shall conquer again!  
Then cast the dark, &c.

Bring ore from the iron! the cannon and blade!  
By the ore never fail and the oak never fade!  
Each hostile invader he threatens in vain,  
Still Britain shall conquer again and again!  
Then cast the dark cannon, bring ore from the mine,  
We shall keep ourselves kings of the brine!

### A FEASANT G'RL'S LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE O'HARA TALES.

The county assizes had commenced in my native town when a new batch of Irish title rangers were brought in prisoners by a young party of police. They had attacked, on the previous evening, a gentleman's house, for the purpose of rifling it of arms—had been repulsed by the police, who, aware of their intentions, lay in ambush for them, and lives were lost on both sides. I was going on one of the bridges, when they passed to the jail, bound with ropes and with spikes to the common cars of the country—some of them were wounded, too, a blow, or cut, or clothing giving vivid evidence of the fact.

But, although the general impressions made by the whole of the wretched groups were painful, one face among them strongly interested me. It was that of a young man, not more than nineteen or twenty; his features were manly, and I would have it, full of goodness and gentleness. His clear blue eyes, too, was it not silky, nor savage, nor reckless, but seemed to express only great awe of his situation, unless when, from some sudden mental surcease to home—perhaps it quailed, or came suffused with tears. I voluntarily followed the melancholy procession towards the jail, thinking of that young man. After all prisoners had been ushered into that new edifice, a popular anti-tithe attorney, whom I well accounted me. He was always ready to aid, gratis, the defenses of poor wretches similarly situated, and he told me his intention of going into the jail that moment to try to collect the materials for saving the lives, at least, some of the new comers. I expressed a wish to assist him in his task, he readily assented, observing, that as the unfortunate would certainly be put on their trials the next day, no offer of aid, in their favour, would be disregarded; so we entered the jail together.

It fell to my lot to visit the cell, among them, of the lad who had so much interested me. His associations, supported, or not contradicted, by most of his band, seemed to argue, that I had not formed a wrong opinion of his character—nay, better still, that there was a good chance of snatching him from the gallows, even though he must leave his native soil for a year. He had been forced, he said, to accompany the others upon their fatal sortie—and had not pulled a trigger or raised a hand against the police; his more guilty associate supported, or else did not contravene his statement. So, confident that the police would also bear him out at the really critical

moment, I took notes of his defence for my friend, the attorney, and passed to the other cells, but of the results of my continued investigation, I will not now speak.

The sagacious attorney was right. By twelve o'clock next day four of the men, including my favourite client, were placed at the bar of their country; three others were too ill of wounds to be at present produced. All was soon over—away over to my affliction and almost consternation. Instead of swearing that the young man had been comparatively forbearing during the battle outside the gentleman's house, the police, one and all, from some great mistake—for surely they thought they were in the right, distinctly deposed that his was the hand which slew one of their force, and badly wounded another. In vain did he protest with the energy of a young man pleading for dear life, and all its array of happy promises, against their evidence; in vain did his fellow prisoners support him; but his fate was the most terrific one—of him the example had been made, and while the other men had been sentenced to transportation for life, he was doomed to be hanged by the neck within forty eight hours, and his body given for dissection.

As the judge ushered in the last words of his sentence, a shriek—I shall never forget it—a woman's shriek—and a young woman's too, pierced up to the roof of the silent courthouse, and then I heard a heavy fall. The young culprit had been trembling and swaying from side to side, during his sentence; at the soul thrilling sound he started into upright and perfect energy; his hands which had grasped the bar of the dock, were clasped together with a loud noise; the blood mounted to his forehead; his lips parted widely, and having almost shouted out—"Moya! Moya! It's she! I knew she'd be here!" He suddenly made a spring to clear the back of the dock—obviously no impulse to escape dictated the action; he wanted to raise Moya, his betrothed Moya, from the floor of the courthouse and clasp her in his arms—and that was all. And, doubtless, in his vigorous and thrice-nerved strength, he must have succeeded in his wild attempt, but that the sleeve of one arm, and the hand of the other became impaled on the sharp iron spikes which surmounted the formidable barrier before him.—Thus cruelly forbidden, however, he was easily secured, and instantly let down, through a trap door in the bottom of the dock, to his condemned cell, continuing till his voice was lost in the depths beneath us, to call out, "Moya, cuishia-ma-chree, Moya!" I hastened, with many others, into the body of the court, and there learned, from her father and mother, and other friends, the connexion between her and the sentenced lad. They were to have been married at Easter. This did not lessen my interest in him—my attorney joined me, and we spoke of all possible efforts to obtain a commutation of his sentence, after Moya's parents had forced her out of the courthouse, on the way to their home, rejecting all her entreaties to be let into the jail and—married.

We thought of hearing what the wounded policeman might say. But he was fourteen miles distant, where the affray had occurred, and, even, though his evidence might be favourable, we knew we must be prepared to forward it to Dublin, as the judge would leave our town that day. We set to work, however, mounted two good horses, and within three hours learned from the lips of the wounded man that the Rockette who had fired at him was an elderly and ill-favored fellow. It was our next business to convey our new evidence into the town; we did so, in a carriage borrowed from the person whose house had been attacked. He was confronted with all the prisoners; we cautioned him to say nothing that might give a false hope to the object of our interest—but after leaving the cell, he persisted in exculpating him from having either killed his comrade or wounded himself, and, moreover, pointed out the real culprit among those who had not yet been put on trial. This was a good beginning. An affidavit was soon prepared, which the policeman signed. A few minutes afterwards the attorney, help-

ed in his expenses for the road by some friends, myself among the number, started for Dublin, as fast as four horses could gallop. Ten hours out of the forty-eight allowed to the condemned to prepare for death, had already elapsed. Our good attorney must now do the best he could within thirty-seven hours—it was fearful not to have an hour to spare—to calculate time when it would just be merging into eternity. But we had good hopes. If horses did not fail on the road, going and returning, if the judge, and, after him the Lord Lieutenant, could be rapidly approached, it was a thing to be done. That if, however—I scarcely slept a wink through the night. Next morning early I called on the clergyman whose sad duty it was to visit the poor lad in the condemned cell; he and I had been school fellows; and he was a young man of most amiable character. He told me "his poor penitent" was not unfit to die, nor did he dread the fate before him, notwithstanding his utter anguish of heart at so sudden and terrible a parting from his young mistress. I communicated the hopes we had, and asked the clergyman's opinion as to the propriety of alleviating the lad's agony by a slight impartment of them. My reverend young friend would not hear of such a thing; his conscience did not permit him. It was his duty, he said, his sacred duty, to allow nothing to distract the heart of his penitent from resignation to his lot; and should he give him a hope of life, and then see that hope dashed, he would have helped to kill a human soul, not to save one. I gave up the project, and endeavoured to seek occupations and amusement, to turn my thoughts from the one subject which absorbed and fevered them. But in vain; and when night came, I had less sleep than on the first.

Early on the next morning I took a walk into the country, along the Dublin road, vaguely hoping to meet, even so early, our zealous attorney returning to us, with a white handkerchief streaming from his pocket—his picture; that idea had got into my head, like a picture, and would recur every moment. I met him not. I lingered on the road. I heard our town clock pealing twelve—the boy had but an hour to live. I looked toward the county jail, whither he had been removed for execution—the black flag was waving over the trap door. Glancing once more along the Dublin road, I ran as fast as I could towards the jail.

Arrived at the iron gate of its outer yard, I was scarce conscious of the multitude who sat on a height, confronting it, all hushed and silent, or of the strong guard of soldiers at the gate, till one of them refused me way. I bribed the sergeant to convey my name to the governor of the prison, and was admitted, first, into the outer yard, then by the guard room door, along a colonnade of pillars, connected with the iron work at either hand, into the inner courts of the jail. The guard room was under the execution room, and both formed a building in themselves separated from the main pile; the colonnade of which I have spoken leading from one to the other.—What had sent me where I now found myself, was an impulse to beseech the Sheriff, (whom I knew, and who was necessarily in the jail to accompany the condemned to the door of the execution room,) for some short postponement of the fatal moment. He came out to me, at one of the courts at either side of the colonnade; we spoke in whispers, as the good and kind hearted governor had done—though there was not a creature to overhear us, in the deserted and sunny spaces all around. I knew the sheriff would at his peril make any change in the hour; but told him our case, and his eyes brightened with real benevolence, while he put back his watch three quarters of an hour, and assuaged with my uncle Toby's oath, I believe, that he would swear it was right, and that all their clocks were wrong, and "let them hang himself for his mistake." Our point arranged we sunk into silence. It was impossible to go on talking even in our unconscious whispers; one o'clock soon struck! The governor, who was pale and agitated, appeared making a dash at the sheriff. We beckoned him over to us,

and he was shown the infallible watch, and retired again without a word.—My friend and I continued standing side by side in resumed silence.—And all was silence around us, too, save some low melancholy, most appalling sounds: one caused by the step of a sentinel under the window of the condemned cell, at an unseen side of the prison; another by the audible murmurings of the condemned and his priest, heard through that window—both growing more fervent in prayer since the jail clock had pealed one; and a third was made by some person, also unseen, striking a single stroke with a wooden mallet, about every half minute, upon a large muffled bell at the top of the prison.—Yes—I can recall two sound which irritated me greatly: the chirping sparrows in the sun—and I thought that their usual pert note was now strangely sad—and the tick, tick, of Sheriff's watch, which I heard distinctly in his fob. The minutes flew. I felt pained in the throat—burning with thirst—and losing my presence of mind. The governor appeared again. My friend entered the prison with him. I remained alone—confused and agonized. In a few minutes the governor came out, bareheaded, and tears on his cheeks. The clergyman and his penitent followed; the former had passed an arm through one of the manacled ones of the latter, and the hands of both were clasped, and both were praying audibly. My old schoolfellow wept like a child. My poor client had passed the threshold into the colonnade, with a firm step, his knees kept peculiarly stiff, as he paced along, and his cheeks and forehead were scarlet and his eye widened and beamed, and was fixed on the steps going up to the execution room, straight on before him. He did not yet see me gazing at him. As the sheriff appeared behind him and his priest, who bare-headed, I rapidly snatched my hat from my head. The action attracted his attention, our glances met—and oh! how the flash instantly fooked his forehead and his cheeks—and how his eyes closed—while cold perspiration burst out on his brow, and he started, stopped and faltered! Did he recognise me as the person who had spoken kindly to him in his cell, before his trial, and perhaps with all my precaution, given him a vague hope? or, was it that the unexpected appearance of a human creature, staring at him in utter commiseration, in that otherwise lonely court yard, had touched the chord of human association and called him back to earth, out of his enthusiastic vision of heaven? I know not, I cannot even guess; who can? As he faltered, the young priest passed his arm round his body, and gently urged him to his knees and knelt with him, kissing his cheek, his lips, pressing his hands, and in tender whispers manning him again for facing shame, and death, and eternity. The governor, the sheriff, and I, instinctively assumed the attitude of prayer at the same moment. But I hate to give a character of clap-trap to a real though wonderful occurrence, by continuing too circumstantially. Moya's own boy never even mounted the steps of the execution room. We were first started, while we all knelt, by, as it afterwards proved—her shrieks at the outer gates; she had escaped from the restraint of her family, and had come to be married to him "wid the rope itself round his neck, to live a widow for him forever"—and next there was a glorious shout from the multitude on the rural heights before the prison, and my one ceaseless idea of our attorney, with a white handkerchief streaming through the window of his post chaise, was realised, though every one saw it but me.—And Moya, self-transported for life, went out to Van Deiman's land, some weeks afterwards a happy and contented wife, her family having yielded to her wishes at the instance of more advocates than herself, and put some money into her purse also.

Sir Nicholas Bacon, a judge in the time of Queen Elizabeth, was once, while on the bench importuned by a criminal to spare his life on account of his kindred. How so? asked the judge. Because my name is Hog and yours is Bacon, and hog and bacon are so near akin that they cannot be separated. "Aye," said the judge, "but you and I can-