

the materials come from beyond the lyrist; they are furnished by the nature of the crisis. What is paramount is a medium to express an idea or a system of ideas, and the very readiest lyrical expression of these ideas. The last thought on the part of an inspirational martial lyrist must be his craftsmanship or artistry, so long as his verses have a carrying rhythm and lilt. Bayard Taylor's famous lyric, "A Song of the Camp," though its origin and structure were literary, expresses the immediate necessity to which the martial lyrist responds as best he can. The soldier must have a song—a means of expression of emotion—at all hazards. Let the words or thoughts be crude, but so long as they are real and have a simple and "catching" rhythm they suffice for the purpose and are welcomed.

The danger, then, in the case of an inspirational martial lyric is two-fold. The fact that the occasion or exigency is patriotic or moral, leads the ungifted, as well as the gifted, to attempt martial lyrics, and, in any case, both respond to an outside influence and not to a personal necessity for self-expression. The result is that what is produced as martial verse is either rhythm without ideas or sense, that is, doggerel, or ideas without rhythm, that is, metrical prose. So that while it is true that a crisis creates the demand for martial verse, and that this species of verse needs no fine artistry, to compose a war-lyric which is neither doggerel nor metrical prose, and to compose it immediately on demand, is an extraordinarily difficult task. It must come warm from the heart and hand, it must be human, manly, direct in thought, and it must be ringing in lilt and swinging in rhythm.

When, then, we observe the necessity for all these qualities in inspirational martial verse, we can truly say that Mrs. Moodie excelled in this species of lyricism. It is true that Harriet A. Wilkins, Mrs. Curzon, Mrs.

Annie Rothwell-Christie, Miss Crawford and Agnes Machar surpassed her, but this was due to the fact that their martial verse was commemorative, and was written *after* the deeds or events celebrated by them, and at a time when they could compose in peace and at leisure.

Of these later Canadian martial poetesses the supreme artist was Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie. The verse of the others, even Miss Crawford's novel, "The Rose of a Nation's Thanks," and Miss Machar's swinging "Our Lads to the Front," though choicer in diction and imagery than Mrs. Moodie's, hardly rises above the quality of good verse. Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie's martial verse, on the other hand, attains to the dignity and beauty of pure poetry. We do not need the statement of Sir Edwin Arnold that "the best war songs of the Half-breed Rebellion were written by Annie Rothwell." Dignity, and beauty, and compelling pathos are in every line she wrote and we shall see this for ourselves in the samples I shall quote. I choose, first, two stanzas from "After the Battle":

"Ay, lay them to rest on the prairie, on
the spot where they fell,
The shout of the savage their requiem,
the hiss of the rifle their knell."

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"As the blood of the martyr enfruitens
his creed, so the hero sows peace,
And the reaping of war's deadly harvest
is the earnest his havoc shall cease."

The extraordinary imagery of the last line of the first stanza (couplet) and the novel beauty of the comparison in the first line of the second stanza are enough to raise these verses to the dignity of pure poetry. Besides, there is a hymn-like music in the rhythm that soothes or solaces, while it solemnises, the soul, begetting resignation to the Will of the Universe. Or listen to the triumphant, sonorous verbal music of these lines from "Welcome Home:":