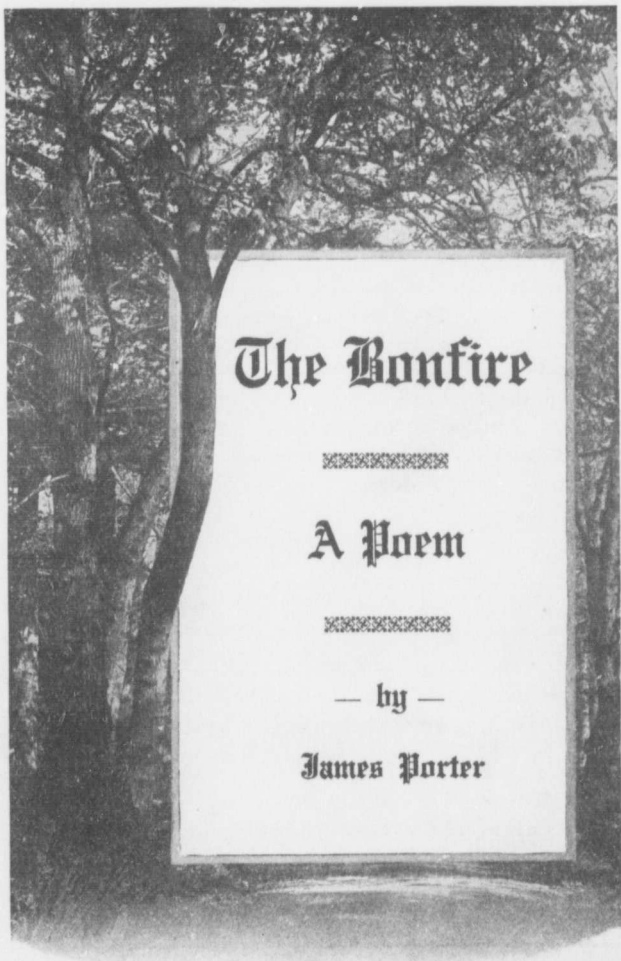


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# The Bonfire



A Poem



— by —

James Porter

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## Dominion Day—1908

THIS is the forty-first anniversary of the founding of the Dominion of Canada and the thirty-seventh anniversary of the union of British Columbia with Canada. It is an occasion when one naturally becomes reminiscent. In forty-one years there are great changes in any community. It has been long enough for all the members of the conference, which decided upon the terms of Confederation, with two exceptions, Sir Charles Tupper, Bart. and Senator A. A. Macdonald, Prince Edward Island, to pass off the stage of life's activities.

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“Honor and reverence, and the good repute  
That follows faithful service as its fruit,  
Be unto them, whom living we salute.

Where are the others? Voices from the deep  
Caverns of darkness answer me: ‘They sleep!’

*Longfellow*

## The Bonfire

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Behold this stump, remnant of mighty tree,  
Prepared for bonfire, to please you and me,  
And mark the date our provinces combined  
To make a nation and advance mankind.

This noble tree once pointing to the skies,  
In height and girth attained tremendous size,  
Till heartless man with heavy blows laid low  
Its giant form, that took so long to grow.

Was it useful purpose, or to rid the land  
Of thy great presence, that with axe in hand  
This vandal cut thee down, his fate to share?  
As if God made mistake to place thee there!

The man who needlessly cuts down a tree  
That takes so long to come to what we see,  
Unless to rightly use and bless posterity,  
Commits a crime and punished he should be.

The time will come when trees like thou hast been,  
Will scarcely more throughout our land be seen;  
O, may some power restrain destruction's bent,  
And wanton waste and greed thus circumvent.

Where are thy comrades, when thy slender stem  
First pointed upward, green as emerald gem,  
And unmolested grew till cruel fate  
Did lay thee low?—an act of recent date!

After to-night thy memory will fade  
Into oblivion, for the ruthless spade  
Will stir the mould to which thy roots held fast;  
But bright was thy departure at the last.

This tree reminds us that we too shall fall,  
And go the way which is the lot of all;  
For three score years and ten our measure is;  
How little when compared to that of his!

Today we celebrate our nation's birth,  
And thou hast helped us, not with mirth,  
But light and heat, torch flaming high,  
Until thou didst illumine all the sky.

Bless, Lord, our loved land, our people too,  
May we be wise to plan and strong to do,  
May those in place seek honor more than gain,  
And from that which contaminates abstain.

May plain and valley, mountain, stream and sea  
All lend their substance, and we thankful be,  
May light and truth and righteousness prevail,  
For if they do our efforts cannot fail.

We love, O Lord, the things which Thou hast  
made;

We thank Thee for the sunshine and the shade,  
For trees and flowers, for rocks, and hills and sky,  
And all the twinkling stars hung out on high.

Teach us, O Lord, to love our fellow man,  
A law thou gavest when the world began,  
But little understood, and practiced less:  
May it be ours this passion to express.

Be Thou our help to treat man as we ought,  
E'en though it be the naked Hottentot,  
Or Doukhobor in like scanty clothes,  
In search of clime where winter has no snows.

The docile Chinaman and little Jap,  
Have come to us here at old ocean's gap;  
No yellow peril need we be afraid,  
This world was not for selfish mortals made.

The swarthy Hindu with turbaned head  
At disadvantage has to earn his bread,  
Why should we make his burden hard to bear,  
When we have got enough and much to spare?

A time there was when lovers of fair play  
With back to wall, would hold the foe at bay,  
And none more noted than the very sires,  
Of those now filled with sordid, mean desires.

Return, O age of chivalry! and bless  
Dear Canada, her from all wrongs redress;  
And gentle Charity come to our aid,  
Help play the part for which we all were made.

Bless, Lord, the children throughout our favored  
land,

May they be pure in heart and deft of hand  
Its greatness to achieve, its foes withstand,  
And out of this cause greatness to expand.

Again, Lord, bless our land outstretched from sea  
to sea,

Preserve on every hand this people free,  
Who are in power and place, them wisdom give;  
God save our King, grant that he long may live.

—James Porter  
Victoria, B. C.

July 1st, 1908