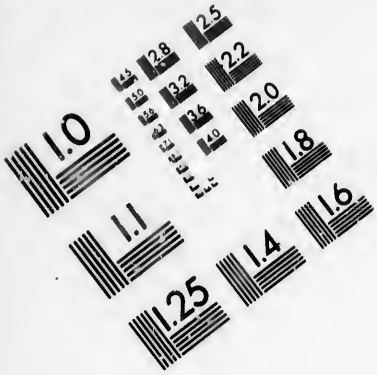

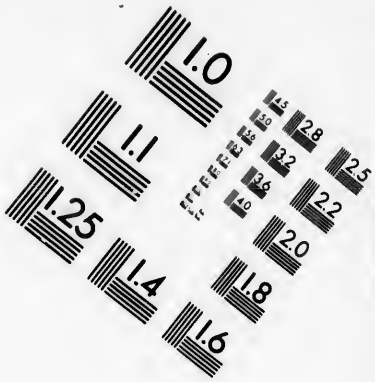

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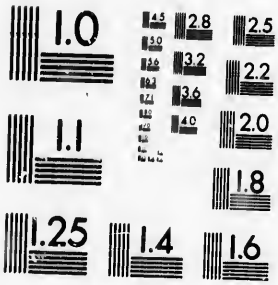

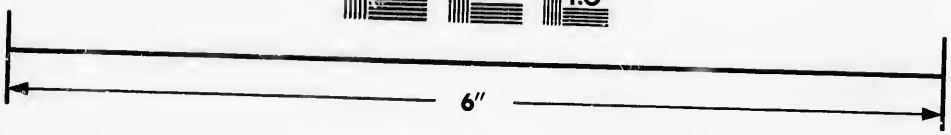

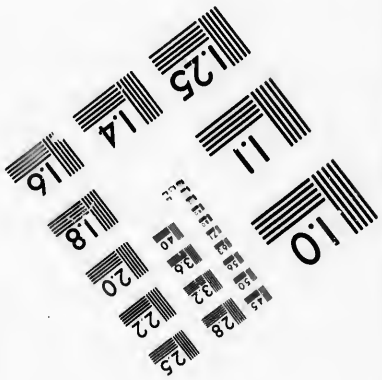

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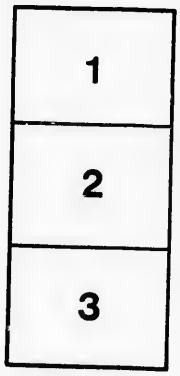

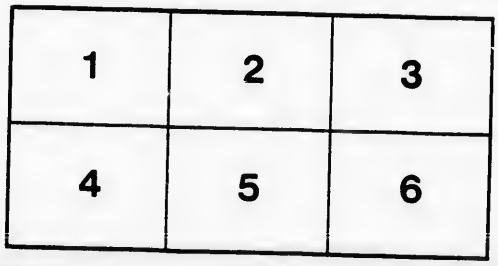

PONASS AND WOWAN;

A POEM IN TWO CANTOS,

On Indian Warfare and Love.

A Story Founded on Fact.

BY

PATRICK COSGROVE.

(ALLUMETT'S ISLAND, September 12th, 1859.)

OTTAWA.
PRINTED AT THE "BANNER" OFFICE, RIDEAU STREET.
1860.

PONASS AND WOWAN;

A POEM IN TWO CANTOS.

On Indian Wayland and Flood

A Story Founded on Fact

BY

KATHLEEN COOKSHOVE.

(Allumette Island) September 12th, 1850.

OTTAWA:

PRINTED AT THE "BANNER" OFFICE, MOSAIC BUILDING.

1850.

To JAS. P. MOFFAT, Esqr.

This Poem is humbly dedicated by the Author

P. C.

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How oft, dear JAMES, upon that shore
Where Ottawa's wild rapids roar
We watched each wave which seemed
to fly
From crag to crag, then passed us by,
Still hurrying on with might and main,
Though gone yet still the same again;
As if Eternity had given
Some emblem here this side of Heaven
To warn poor mortals of that date
Of good or ill which must await
Our souls when in a future state.
'Twas wild delight, dear JAMES, when
young,
To gaze with youth's enlivening dreams.
Such scenes as these loved BURNS sung
Was where Dame Nature once had hung
Her robe where many an eagle screams
And spread its fairy tassels round
Till Echo caught the laughing sound

From rocky hills and streams ;
And many a time with boyish pride
We safely down those streams did glide
Whilst whirling eddies madly flew
Around our frail white bark canoe,
Whose every side and every part
Was fashioned well with Indian art ;
As if Queen Mab with fairy hand
Had made the boat for her light band—
Such was the form you know she bore
That day we sail'd from Pembroke shore
And ere the sun had sunk from view
We safely moor'd our bark canoe,
Where Callumett's romantic pool
Teaches vain man he's but a fool,
With all his arts in Nature's school.
But now, dear James the time is brief
Although such musings give relief
To weary souls beneath the sky,
Who sit and think on days gone bye.
Methinks I hear that dreaded fowl
By Indian tribes the dark grey Owl,

Far in the shadowy grove.
It seems to take some strange delight
To sing its shrill song round at night
Where whispering lovers rove.
The wild wolf howls to hear its scream—
But lo! I see the sun's bright beam
In eastern skies once more.
Arise, dear James, and as we sail
I'll tell to you a mournful tale
Ere we reach Pembroke shore.

Canto the First.

Oh where are those who now could tell
Of Indian Chief or brave who fell
Three hundred years ago.
Or who the war-whoop raised on high
Beneath this bright Canadian sky ?
Come tell me if you know.
"I can" cried one, an aged man,
Of palsied limb and withered hand;
"Their graves I will you show;
Come! go with me to yonder glade,
And there beneath the old oak shade
Lie bones bleach'd white like snow,
Tradition tells", the old man said,
"Of this Brave here, and how he bled;
He was a warrior firm and true
As e'er loved maid or bow-string drew—
He could a hundred yards, I hear,
Bring down a moose or fallow deer;
And his pure soul they ne'er could bribe—
PONASS was loved by all the tribe.

His heart was like the mountain stream
When chequered o'er with Sol's bright
beam.
No darker ray to it was given
But just like rays pure shot from Heaven;
He was the first who could espy
A lurking foe with his dark eye,
And then with sturdy bow well strung
Bold as a lion forth he sprung
Amidst the dark and mortal strife
With Tomahawk and scalping knife.
And I have heard my Father say
That twenty top-knots* in a day
In triumph he hath borne away.
But here the old man gave a sigh
And tears in drops fell from his eye,
"Why should I talk of red Men's broils,
Of Indian's war, his grief or toils:
Alas that e'er I had to tell
Those wicked scenes by wood or dell;
They may not please the ear too well.

Scalps

But to renew again my strain
PONASS was lov'd throughout the plain
By lovely squaw or hunting swain.
WOWAN was she a pretty maid
Who always on her lover staid;
When on a hunting tour they'd go
In winter wilds on frozen snow,
'Twas joy to see her dark loose hair
Broad floating on the winter's air—
With timid look and aspect mild
She'd gaze on PONASS like a child,
And then with Music's magic art
She'd cheer his lonely drooping heart.
There ne'er was Indian queen or king
Had sweeter voice than her to sing,
And all the learning e'er she knew
Was how to sew the bark canoe,
Or set the traps for grizzly bears
And artful fox or timid hares.
She well knew how those gyves to mak
Or skim across the deep blue lake:
Those were her thoughts from morn
night,
And please PONASS then all was right;
Yet still there was some unknown sorrow,
Perhaps to-day, may be to-morrow,

PONASS though wild was happy here,
And wished for naught but WOWAN near,
When beast and bird retired to rest
He'd lay his head on WOWAN's breast,
And sing to her of old Romance,
Of Indian wars, or Indian dance,
No matter whether joy or sorrow
They ne'er looked forward till to-morrow,
But sweet contentment decked their cot
And both were happy with their lot ;
Their winter camp was lined within
With many a deer and racoon skin,
Which Ponass placed with care and grace,
Oh ! Kings would envy such a place,
Though snow was piled around them deep
They both lay down a while to sleep,
Nor never dreamed of human cares
Which steal upon us unawares,
But March her mantle round did fling
And showed the flowers of early spring,
Cold winter had kept down their head
But Spring aroused them from the dead,
The gush of fountains that were still,
Now loose are rushing from each hill,
Just like the wicked Mormons sins

When e'er to confess he begins
Those secret vices kept in bond
Break forth like water from a pond,
Which was bound over all with ice
And tells them all but one dark vice,
But I will not in verse it name
I would put their followers to shame,
But to be candid true and plain
And sing the joys of Spring again
Of Ponass and his own dear maid,
As through the shady groves they stray'd,
He smoked his pipe and thus began
The history of his dear Wowan—
The neighboring maids ne'er show'd her scorn
Because she was so nobly born;
Her father on his head did wear
A crown wrought well with human hair
Which he had taken from the dead
Just as the vital spark had fled,
And many a maiden looked with grief
To see such toys upon the chief—
For well they knew such warlike toys
Brought sorrows home instead of joys.
His coat was of a changing hue
With curious beads of green and blue,
His nether garments long and wide

Were rudely shaped of the deer hide,
And on his feet close to his skin
Was tied the neat tight Moccasin* ;
And on his back full well he bore
Of arrows just about two score,
Which were all pointed with hard bone
Or chiselled out of some grey stone.
His hunting grounds were large and wide
And well fenced in on every side
With marsh and fen and stream or lake
" The home of many a water snake."
His fleet was small but sailors true
As ever paddled burch canoe ;
To fight on river, lake or land
They were a noble, sturdy band,
The richness of their hunting ground
Was spread through Canada around,
And many a chief of darker face
Threatened destruction on this race.
One early morning as the sun
His daily course began to run
A messenger in haste did bring
A roll of burch bark to the King,
And on its surface could be seen
Some Hieroglyphics blue and green.
The old man shook with pallid fear
When this dark messenger drew near ;

---

* Indian Shoe.

But when the fire which once was bright
Had flushed his cheek and cleared his sight,
He threw the roll of burch bark down
And stuck an arrow in the ground,
So then once more you could descry
The flash of anger in his eye:
He summoned all his sturdy band,
They were all armed to a man,
So then he gave a sterner scowl
And filled the Callumetts big Bowl
With noxious and loathsome weed,
And bid those drink who dared to bleed ;
So now all round the distant glen
You could discern six hundred men,
Well armed they were from head to toe
With Tomahawk and good cross-bow,
To every hundred men a man
Was chosen well throughout the land.
Amongst those Chiefs with aspect stern
One noble youth you could discern.
The night was dark, no star did show
Save when the fire-fly's lamp did glow ;
And then upon each sable face
Strange marks of valor you might trace ;
Some were asleep, but very few,
Some prayed unto the Manitou*,
That after death they would be driven

* Great Spirit.

Into the hunting grounds of Heaven.
New scouts are placed both near and far,
To watch the progress of the war,
And early on the morrow's dawn
Are seen far off upon the lawn
The Iroquois army coming forth
As fierce as winds blow from the north,
With hideous yells amongst the trees,
Enough a warrior's blood to freeze,
The looks and gestures of this tribe
No mortal man can here describe."—
The old man paused and said he'd stop
And let the present subject drop.
"But no," said I, "this tale doth seem
'Well worth a poet's noblest theme',
And if to me thou dost rehearse
Those savage wars I'll write in verse,
Though simple as they may portend
May yet arrive at some good end;
And rouse some Missionary spark
To bring those creatures from the dark
To tread the paths which good men trod
Till they arrive with Christian's God—
And if we can't arouse a flame
Let dark oblivion hide their name."
"Then since you mean those wars to write"
The old man says "this very night
May I to some wild tribe be sold
If any word I leave untold.

Just pen a pack of wolves, and when
Kept without food up in a den
For six long days, and then let go
Upon a flock of sheep below.
No thundering cannons here did roar
Their deadly shout from shore to shore,
But nimbly as the fleetest roe
Behind a tree each lurking foe
Was seen to spy, to lurk, and prance,
To charge the bow and couch the lance.
Such hideous noise and wild despair
Rose forth upon the morning's air
As ne'er was seen in wood or dell,
Such scenes were only fit for Hell.
Each savage foe did shift his place,
And now they meet each face to face;
Their bows and arrows are thrown by,
Which once with deadly aim did fly,
And nearer and more near the crash
Of sculls and bones forth forth they dash
With Indian savage might and main
Till full three hundred of the slain
Shall never rise to fight again.
Their corpses streaming on the shore
From ears and nose and every pore
Send forth a liquid stream of gore.
'But where is Ponass all this day?'
Some warrior chief was heard to say,
'See how his tribe all run away

Just like the deer when wolves pursue !'
Some favorite spot they had in view
Till all at once they heard a cry,
The noise resounding through the sky,
'Ponass ! Ponass !' in wild despair
They cried and madly tore their hair.
Ponass last eve, ere set of Sun,
Had with a Kingly message run ;
The road was rough, through broken rocks,
Remains of many earthquake shocks,
But well he knew the rugged way,
For oft in childhood he did stray
In those dark groves and shady bowers
To twist a wreath of scented flowers,
Then like the lamb or gentle fawn,
When skipping o'er the distant lawn,
He'd bound away his love to meet,
And lay his wreaths at Wowan's feet.
But happy scenes like those are fled,
And vengeance dire is in their stead.
He gazed around both far and near,
But no friend's voice he now can hear—
His friends are here upon this plain,
Yet some will never speak again ;
Those exultations through the air,
Which he did take for omens fair,
Were naught but war-whoops cruel cry
Proceeding from the enemy.

* * * * * * * * * *

Canto the Second.

Now tell me what will please the mind
Of those whom fate hath blighted?
To tell the Muse is oft inclined
Where they some happy scenes may find,
Yet still they are short-sighted,
Not all the gems the mountain yields,
Nor all the fragrance of the fields,
Till in death they are united.
But onward still Ponass he hies,
'Mongst wounded men and dismal cries,
Till on the spot where he last night
Had taken such untimely flight,
He paused a little now for breath
And gazed around, but all was death.
Then sitting down behind a mound
The tears come trickling to the ground;
Such tear-worn lines you ne'er could trace
Before upon that manly face—
Such noble looks were never given
To vulgar souls this side of Heaven.

But where are all those visions bright
Which crossed his vision yesternight?
Like meteors gliding through the sky,
Forever changing as they fly,
Now gone forever and for aye.
And now poor Ponass all alone
Is left to grieve for shadows gone.
Yet still there reigns within his breast
Some vengeful spirit ill at rest,
Just like the lightning's fearful flash
When thwart the sky its arrows dash,
Till on some mast or lofty spire
It strikes its wicked chains of fire
On sea or land, no matter whether
It fells them prostrate both together.
Ponass leaped up and seized his blade,
And then a fearful plunge he made
Into the thickest of the shade.
The Sun had reached his midway line,
And with his brightest rays did shine
Upon that field of Indian strife,
Where death had triumphed over life.
Ponass he sees with his dark eye
The motions of the enemy;
The blue smoke curling o'er the rill
Had shewn that they were hovering still
Behind the confines of the hill.
And now he ponder'd o'er his fate
To whom should he his woes relate,

The message which he was to bring,
But where was Wowan and the King—
Just like the maiden when asleep,
Bright visions o'er her senses creep
And bring her back to Childhood's hours,
When she had played among the bowers;
But when the morning light appears
Those happy days of younger years
Are fled, and truth begins to beam
That all was nothing but a dream—
And many a sigh and many a look
Ponass cast on the gurgling brook
That ran in playful eddies by,
Unconscious of his troubled sigh,
As smoothly o'er its pebbly bed
Its winding course it gently sped
Through many a shady winding glade
Until it met the high cascade,
Then o'er the rocks it spread in foam
And left the timid eye to roam,
Whilst it in joyful madness crumbled
The hardest rocks as down it tumbled.
But when it reached the level shore
It murmured gently as before.
Ponass though fierce as tiger wild,
Yet still he was Dame Nature's child,
And well could rhyme on stream or rill
With deep, profound, poetic skill.
But now his only thoughts were bent

Behind the hill where stood each tent,
Which were well filled with all his foes;
And how he would revenge his woes:
The gentle breezes that blow near
His wounded heart, he well could hear
In every zephyr, as it passed,
Were wailings mingled with each blast.
The sufferings of his Wowan dear
How could he stand and him so near?
But well he knew 'twas instant death
If e'er they heard him breathe a breath.
Yet for to leave her thus behind
It never once did cross his mind
Until he'd execute some plan
Upon this wicked savage band.
Ponass he knew, and that full well,
Of every incantation or spell,
His knowledge was by no means scant
Of every poisonous weed and plant,
Which if a potion he would give
His patient had not long to live.
But in his pure heroic breast
Such thoughts as these could never rest;
Although he never dreamed of fame,
Yet still he would not mark his name
With low mean deeds that could be told
By living chief, or warrior bold.
No cloud obscured the Sun's bright ray,
While slowly winding round his way—

But Ponass watched with steady eye
His course across the deep blue sky,
And oft did wish he had the skill
To drag him down behind the hill,
And leave him nought but stars above
Till he would try to find his love;
For ne'er did Sun so slowly roll
To any living, mortal soul.
But evening grey at last came down
With sober sweetness on the ground;
And all was calm, serene and still,
Naught could be heard but whip-poor-will.
Such scenes as these, we've oft been told,
Are dearer to the heart than gold;
Yet groves or gold can ne'er impart
Much pleasure to a drooping heart.
No leaf did stir, nor breath of wind
Blew through the vale that night.
The worn-out hare and hungry hind,
They thought their foes were far behind
And slept 'neath the pale star-light;
But the savage wolf and the bear
Kept gnashing the teeth in their head,
They had risen and left their lair
By the scent of the tainted dead.
But oh how short was their repose!
They awoke from sleep and heard their foes
Eat the warrior slain that bled!
But there was one that did not sleep—

Ponass his faithful watch did keep.
It was just now the midnight hour,
And heavy clouds began to lour,
Then Ponass gently glides away
As Wild Cat steals upon its prey,
Where all his foes were sleeping sound
Their bows and arrows on the ground
Were carelessly all strewn around.
Their upturned faces to the skies,
As if cold death had sealed their eyes.
But oh what horror met his view
When stiff and cold as lead,
Upon the wild flowers there that grew
Fresh blood-stain drops instead of dew,
Where'er his footsteps tread.
For here—within this fatal ring—
Lay his dear Wowan, and the King—
Alas! they both are dead!
This was no time for coward fears
To daub his cheeks with childish tears.
Some wild flowers he did gently strew
Within a lovely bark canoe,
And then his precious load he bore
Away to yonder distant shore.
He laid them both upon the strand,
Then turned his boat away from land
With vengeance in his heart and hand.
He drew his boat upon a cape,
To cause, if need, a quick escape.

The first thing that brave Ponass done,
He cut their arrows every one,
Likewise their bows and Tomahawks,
Ponass he did them take
And sunk them many a fathom deep
Beneath the deep blue lake.
Their bark canoes were landed dry
And turned on the shore.
He sank them in the river,
They never saw them more.
So here upon this lonely isle
With hunger they did wail,
Just three were left of all this tribe
To tell the mournful tale.
He spent next day in grief and woe
With Wowan and the King;
Then he with heart-felt sadness
A Funeral Song did sing—

FUNERAL SONG.

Ope, dearest, ope, and let me see
Those looks which were entrancing
How beautiful they shone to me
When in the Wigwam dancing!
No other maid was like to thee
With thy lovely dark eyes glancing.

CHORUS:

Wowan dear! Wowan dear! oh my dear!
Thou saidst we ne'er would sever.
Canst thou hear? Canst thou hear? Canst thou
hear?
No thy ears are closed forever.

Wake, dearest, wake, and from thee fling
Those ties which doth encumber
Thy tongue, which so well could sing
To me the sweetest number.
Heaven's bells for joy will ring
If thou wake from thy slumber.

Chorus—Wowan dear, &c.

He made a grave both long and deep
And in it placed an arrow,
Saying 'My love died—savage hands
Will die by mine for sorrow.'
He stretched them both in burch bark white.
Woe's me how sad's my Muse
To tell how Ponass placed their traps,
Their beads and broad snow-shoes.
Their grave it now being finished
Ponass's race was run.

He gazed awhile bewildered
Upon the setting Sun ;
He laid his heart upon the shaft
And pierced his body through ;
Then sank to rest on Wowan's breast
And bade the world Adieu !
They loved on earth when they had breath
The old man said to me,
« Their souls are in the spirit land,
Those are their bones you see.