



flint and feather

THE COMPLETE POEMS

OF

C. Pauline Johnson
(TEKAHIONWAKE)

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON
AND A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE AUTHOR.

ILLUSTRATED BY



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INTRODUCTION

IN MEMORIAM: PAULINE JOHNSON

I CANNOT say how deeply it touched me to learn that Pauline Johnson expressed a wish on her death-bed that I, living here in the mother country all these miles away, should write something about her. I was not altogether surprised, however, for her letters to me had long ago shed a golden light upon her peculiar character. She had made herself believe, quite erroneously, that she was largely indebted to me for her success in the literary world. The letters I had from her glowed with this noble passion: the delusion about her indebtedness to me, in spite of all I could say, never left her. She continued to foster and cherish this delusion. Gratitude indeed was with her not a sentiment merely, as with most of us, but a veritable passion. And when we consider how rare a human trait true gratitude is—the one particular characteristic in which the lower animals put us to shame—it can easily be imagined how I was touched to find that this beautiful and grand Canadian girl remained down to the very last moment of her life the impersonation of that most precious of all virtues. I

have seen much of my fellow men and women, and I never knew but two other people who displayed gratitude as a passion—indulged in it, I might say, as a luxury—and they were both poets. I can give no higher praise to the “irritable genus.” On this account Pauline Johnson will always figure in my memory as one of the noblest minded of the human race.

Circumstances made my personal knowledge of her all too slight. Our spiritual intimacy, however, was very strong, and I hope I shall be pardoned for saying a few words as to how our friendship began. It was at the time of Vancouver’s infancy, when the population of the beautiful town of her final adoption was less than a twelfth of what it now is, and less than a fiftieth part of what it is soon going to be.

In 1906 I met her during one of her tours. How well I remember it! She was visiting London in company with Mr. McRaye—making a tour of England—reciting Canadian poetry. And on this occasion Mr. McRaye added to the interest of the entertainment by rendering in a perfectly marvellous way Dr. Drummond’s *Habitant* poems. It was in the Steinway Hall, and the audience was enthusiastic. When, after the performance, my wife and I went into the room behind the stage to congratulate her, I was quite affected by the warm and affectionate greeting that I got from her. With moist eyes she told her friends that she owed her literary success mainly to me.

And now what does the reader suppose that I

had done to win all these signs of gratitude? I had simply alluded—briefly alluded—in the London “Athenæum” some years before, to her genius and her work. Never surely was a reviewer so royally overpaid. Her allusion was to a certain article of mine on Canadian poetry which was written in 1889, and which she had read so assiduously that she might be said to know it by heart: she seemed to remember every word of it.

Now that I shall never see her face again it is with real emotion that I recur to this article and to the occasion of it. Many years ago—nearly a quarter of a century—a beloved friend whom I still mourn, Norman Maccoll, editor of the “Athenæum,” sent me a book called “Songs of the Great Dominion,” selected and edited by the poet, William Douw Lighthall. Maccoll knew the deep interest I have always taken in matters relating to Greater Britain, and especially in everything relating to Canada. Even at that time I ventured to prophesy that the great romance of the twentieth century would be the growth of the mighty world-power of Canada, just as the great romance of the nineteenth century had been the inauguration of the nascent power that sprang up among Britain’s antipodes. He told me that a leading article for the journal upon some weighty subject was wanted, and asked me whether the book was important enough to be worth a leader. I turned over its pages and soon satisfied myself as to that point. I found the book rich in poetry—true poetry—by poets some of whom have since then come to great and world-

wide distinction, all of it breathing, more or less, the atmosphere of Canada: that is to say Anglo-Saxon Canada. But in the writings of one poet alone I came upon a new note—the note of the Red Man's Canada. This was the poet that most interested me—Pauline Johnson. I quoted her lovely canoe song "In the Shadows," which will be found on page 72 of this volume. I at once sat down and wrote a long article, which could have been ten times as long, upon a subject so suggestive as that of Canadian poetry.

As it was this article of mine which drew this noble woman to me, it has, since her death, assumed an importance in my eyes which it intrinsically does not merit. I might almost say that it has become sacred to me among my fugitive writings: this is why I cannot resist the temptation of making a few extracts from it. It seems to bring the dead poet very close indeed to me. Moreover, it gives me an opportunity of re-saying what I then said of the great place Canadian poetry is destined to hold in the literature of the English-speaking race. I had often before said in the "Athenæum," and in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" and elsewhere, that all true poetry—perhaps all true literature—must be a faithful reflex either of the life of man or of the life of Nature.

Well, this article began by remarking that the subject of Colonial verse, and the immense future before the English-speaking poets, is allied to a question that is very great, the adequacy or inadequacy of English poetry—British, American, and

Colonial—to the destiny of the race that produces it. The article enunciated the thesis that if the English language should not in the near future contain the finest body of poetry in the world, the time is now upon us when it ought to do so ; for no other literature has had that variety of poetic material which is now at the command of English-speaking poets. It pointed out that at the present moment this material comprises much of the riches peculiar to the Old World and all the riches peculiar to the New. It pointed out that in reflecting the life of man the English muse enters into competition with the muse of every other European nation, classic and modern ; and that, rich as England undoubtedly is in her own historic associations, she is not so rich as are certain other European countries, where almost every square yard of soil is so suggestive of human associations that it might be made the subject of a poem. To wander alone, through scenes that Homer knew, or through the streets that were hallowed by the footsteps of Dante, is an experience that sends a poetic thrill through the blood. For it is on classic ground only that the Spirit of Antiquity walks. And it went on to ask the question, “ If even England, with all her riches of historic and legendary associations, is not so rich in this kind of poetic material as some parts of the European Continent, what shall be said of the new English worlds—Canada, the United States, the Australias, the South African Settlements, etc. ? ” Histories they have, these new countries—in the development of the human race, in the growth of

the great man, Mankind—histories as important, no doubt, as those of Greece, Italy, and Great Britain. Inasmuch, however, as the sweet Spirit of Antiquity knows them not, where is the poet with wings so strong that he can carry them off into the “ampler ether,” the “diviner air” where history itself is poetry?

Let me repeat here, at the risk of seeming garrulous, a few sentences in that article which especially appealed to Pauline Johnson, as she told me :

“Part and parcel of the very life of man is the sentiment about antiquity. Irrational it may be, if you will, but never will it be stifled. Physical science strengthens rather than weakens it. Social science, hate it as it may, cannot touch it. In the socialist, William Morris, it is stronger than in the most conservative poet that has ever lived. Those who express wonderment that in these days there should be the old human playthings as bright and captivating as ever—those who express wonderment at the survival of all the delightful features of the European raree-show—have not realised the power of the Spirit of Antiquity, and the power of the sentiment about him—that sentiment which gives birth to the great human dream about hereditary merit and demerit upon which society—royalist or republican—is built. What is the use of telling us that even in Grecian annals there is no kind of heroism recorded which you cannot match in the histories of the United States and Canada? What is the use of telling us that the travels of Ulysses and of Jason are as nothing in point of real romance compared with Captain Phillip’s voyage to the other side of the world, when he led his little convict-laden fleet to

Botany Bay—a bay as unknown almost as any bay in Laputa—that voyage which resulted in the founding of a cluster of great nations any one of whose mammoth millionaires could now buy up Ilium and the Golden Fleece combined if offered in the auction mart? The Spirit of Antiquity knows not that captain. In a thousand years' time, no doubt, these things may be as ripe for poetic treatment as the voyage of the Argonauts; but on a planet like this a good many changes may occur before an epic poet shall arise to sing them. Mr. Lighthall would remind us, did we in England need reminding, that Canada owes her very existence at this moment to a splendid act of patriotism—the withdrawal out of the rebel colonies of the British loyalists after the war of the revolution. It is 'the noblest epic migration the world has ever seen,' says Mr. Lighthall, 'more loftily epic than the retirement of Pius Æneas from Ilion.' Perhaps so, but at present the dreamy Spirit of Antiquity knows not one word of the story. In a thousand years' time he will have heard of it, possibly, and then he will carefully consider those two 'retirements' as subjects for epic poetry."

The article went on to remark that until the Spirit of Antiquity hears of this latter retirement and takes it into his consideration, it must, as poetic material, give way to another struggle which he persists in considering to be greater still—the investment by a handful of Achaians of a little town held by a handful of Trojans. It is the power of this Spirit of Antiquity that tells against English poetry as a reflex of the life of man. In Europe, in which, as Pericles said, "The whole earth is the tomb of illustrious men," the Spirit of Antiquity is omnipotent.

The article then discussed the main subject of the argument, saying how very different it is when we come to consider poetic art as the reflex of the life of Nature. Here the muse of Canada ought to be, and is, so great and strong. It is not in the old countries, it is in the new, that the poet can adequately reflect the life of Nature. It is in them alone that he can confront Nature's face as it is, uncoloured by associations of history and tradition. What Wordsworth tried all his life to do, the poets of Canada, of the Australias, of the Cape, have the opportunity of doing. How many a home-bounded Englishman must yearn for the opportunity now offered by the Canadian Pacific Railway of seeing the great virgin forests and prairies before settlement has made much progress—of seeing them as they existed before even the foot of the Red Man trod them—of seeing them without that physical toil which only a few hardy explorers can undergo. It is hard to realise that he who has not seen the vast unsettled tracts of the British Empire knows Nature only under the same aspect as she has been known by all the poets from Homer to our own day. And when I made the allusion to Pauline Johnson's poems which brought me such reward, I quoted "In the Shadows." The poem fascinated me—it fairly haunted me. I could not get it out of my head; and I remember that I was rather severe on Mr. Lighthall for only giving us two examples of a poet so rare—so full of the spirit of the open air.

Naturally I turned to his introductory remarks to see who Pauline Johnson was. I was not at all

surprised to find that she had Indian blood in her veins, but I was surprised and delighted to find that she belonged to a famous Indian family—the Mohawks of Brantford. The Mohawks of Brantford! that splendid race to whose unswerving loyalty during two centuries not only Canada, but the entire British Empire owes a debt that can never be repaid.

After the appearance of my article I got a beautiful letter from Pauline Johnson, and I found that I had been fortunate enough to enrich my life with a new friendship.

And now as to the genius of Pauline Johnson: it was being recognised not only in Canada, but all over the great Continent of the West. Since 1889 I have been following her career with a glow of admiration and sympathy. I have been delighted to find that this success of hers had no damaging effect upon the grand simplicity of her nature. Up to the day of her death her passionate sympathy with the aborigines of Canada never flagged, as shown by such poems as "The Cattle Thief" (page 12), "The Pilot of the Plains" (page 9), "As Red Men Die" (page 6), and many another. During all this time, however, she was cultivating herself in a thousand ways—taking interest in the fine arts, as witness her poem "The Art of Alma-Tadema" (page 131). Her native power of satire is shown in the lines written after Dreyfus was exiled, called "'Give us Barabbas'" (page 117). She had also a pretty gift of *vers de société*, as seen in her lines "Your Mirror Frame" (page 119).

Her death is not only a great loss to those who knew and loved her: it is a great loss to Canadian literature and to the Canadian nation. I must think that she will hold a memorable place among poets in virtue of her descent and also in virtue of the work she has left behind, small as the quantity of that work is. I believe that Canada will, in future times, cherish her memory more and more, for of all Canadian poets she was the most distinctly a daughter of the soil, inasmuch as she inherited the blood of the great primeval race now so rapidly vanishing, and of the greater race that has supplanted it.

In reading the description of the funeral in the "News-Advertiser," I was specially touched by the picture of the large crowd of silent Red Men who lined Georgia Street, and who stood as motionless as statues all through the service, and until the funeral cortège had passed on the way to the cemetery. This must have rendered the funeral the most impressive and picturesque one of any poet that has ever lived.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

THE PINES,
PUTNEY HILL.

20th August, 1913.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THIS collection of verse I have named "Flint and Feather" because of the association of ideas. Flint suggests the Red man's weapons of war; it is the arrow tip, the heart-quality of mine own people; let it therefore apply to those poems that touch upon Indian life and love. The lyrical verse herein is as a

"Skyward floating feather,
Sailing on summer air."

And yet that feather may be the eagle plume that crests the head of a warrior chief; so both flint and feather bear the hall-mark of my Mohawk blood.

E. P. J.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

E. PAULINE JOHNSON (TEKAHIONWAKE) is the youngest child of a family of four born to the late G. H. M. Johnson (Onwanonsyshon), Head Chief of the Six Nations Indians, and his wife, Emily S. Howells, a lady of pure English parentage, her birth-place being Bristol, England, but the land of her adoption was Canada.

Chief Johnson was of the renowned Mohawk tribe, and of the "Blood Royal," being a scion of one of the fifty noble families which composed the historical confederation founded by Hiawatha upwards of four hundred years ago, and known at that period as the Brotherhood of the Five Nations, but which was afterwards named the Iroquois by the early French missionaries and explorers. These Iroquois Indians have from the earliest times been famed for their loyalty to the British Crown, in defence of which they fought against both French and Colonial Revolutionists; and for which fealty they were granted the magnificent lands bordering the Grand River in the County of Brant, Ontario, and on which the tribes still live.

It was upon this Reserve, on her father's estate, "Chiefswood," that Pauline Johnson was born,

And it is inevitable that the loyalty to Britain and Britain's flag which she inherited from her Red ancestors, as well as from her English mother, breathes through both her prose and poetic writings.

At an extremely early age this little Indian girl evinced an intense love of poetry ; and even before she could write composed many little childish jingles about her pet dogs and cats. She was also very fond of learning by heart anything that took her fancy, and would memorize, apparently without effort, verses that were read to her. A telling instance of this early love of poetry may be cited, when on one occasion, while she was yet a tiny child of four, a friend of her father's, who was going to a distant city, asked her what he could bring her as a present, and she replied, " Verses, please."

At twelve years of age she was writing fairly creditable poems, but was afraid to offer them for publication, lest in after years she might regret their almost inevitable crudity. So she did not publish anything until after her school days were ended.

Her education was neither extensive nor elaborate, and embraced neither High School nor College. A nursery governess for two years at home, three years at an Indian day school half a mile from her home, and two years in the central school of the City of Brantford was the extent of her educational training. But besides this she acquired a wide general knowledge, having been, through childhood and early girlhood, a great reader, especially of poetry. Before she was twelve years old she had

read every line of Scott's poems, every line of Longfellow, much of Byron, Shakespeare, and such books as Addison's "Spectator," Foster's Essays and Owen Meredith.

The first periodicals to accept her poems and place them before the public were "Gems of Poetry," a small magazine published in New York, and "The Week," established by the late Professor Goldwin Smith, of Toronto, the "New York Independent," and "Toronto Saturday Night." Since then she has contributed to "The Athenæum," "The Academy," "Black and White," "The Pall Mall Gazette," "The Daily Express," and "Canada," all of London, England; "The Review of Reviews," Paris, France; "Harper's Weekly," "New York Independent," "Outing," "The Smart Set," "Boston Transcript," "The Buffalo Express," "Detroit Free Press," "The Boys' World" (David C. Cook Publishing Co., Elgin, Illinois), "The Mothers' Magazine" (David C. Cook Publishing Co.), "The Canadian Magazine," "Toronto Saturday Night," and "The Province," Vancouver, B.C.

In 1892 the opportunity of a lifetime came to this young versifier, when Frank Yeigh, the President of the Young Liberals' Club, of Toronto, conceived the idea of having an evening of Canadian literature, at which all available Canadian authors should be guests and read from their own works.

Among the authors present on this occasion was Pauline Johnson, who contributed to the programme one of her compositions, entitled "A Cry from an Indian Wife"; and when she recited without text

this much-discussed poem, which shows the Indian's side of the North-West Rebellion, she was greeted with tremendous applause from an audience which represented the best of Toronto's art, literature and culture. She was the only one on the programme who received an encore, and to this she replied with one of her favourite canoeing poems.

The following morning the entire press of Toronto asked why this young writer was not on the platform as a professional reader ; while two of the dailies even contained editorials on the subject, inquiring why she had never published a volume of her poems, and insisted so strongly that the public should hear more of her, that Mr. Frank Yeigh arranged for her to give an entire evening in Association Hall within two weeks from the date of her first appearance. It was for this first recital that she wrote the poem by which she is best known, " The Song my Paddle Sings."

On this eventful occasion, owing to the natural nervousness which besets a beginner, and to the fact that she had scarcely had time to memorize her new poem, she became confused in this particular number, and forgot her lines. With true Indian impassiveness, however, she never lost her self-control, but smilingly passed over the difficulty by substituting something else ; and completely won the hearts of her audience by her coolness and self-possession. The one thought uppermost in her mind, she afterwards said, was that she should not leave the platform and thereby acknowledge her defeat ; and it is undoubtedly this same determina-



J. Pauline Johnson
T. H. W. A. C.

tion to succeed which has carried her successfully through the many years she has been before the public.

The immediate success of this entertainment caused Mr. Yeigh to undertake the management of a series of recitals for her throughout Canada, with the object of enabling her to go to England to submit her poems to a London publisher. Within two years this end was accomplished, and she spent the season of 1894 in London, and had her book of poems, "The White Wampum," accepted by John Lane, of the "Bodley Head." She carried with her letters of introduction from His Excellency the Earl of Aberdeen and Rev. Professor Clark, of Toronto University, which gave her a social and literary standing in London which left nothing to be desired.

In London she met many authors, artists and critics, who gave this young Canadian girl the right hand of fellowship; and she was received and asked to give recitals in the drawing-rooms of many diplomats, critics and members of the nobility.

Her book, "The White Wampum," was enthusiastically received by the critics and press; and was highly praised by such papers as the Edinburgh "Scotsman," "Glasgow Herald," "Manchester Guardian," "Bristol Mercury," "Yorkshire Post," "The Whitehall Review," "Pall Mall Gazette," the London "Athenæum," the London "Academy," "Black and White," "Westminster Review," etc.

Upon her return to Canada she made her first

trip to the Pacific Coast, giving recitals at all the cities and towns *en route*. Since then she has crossed the Rocky Mountains nineteen times, and appeared as a public entertainer at every city and town between Halifax and Vancouver.

In 1903 the George Morang Publishing Company, of Toronto, brought out her second book of poems, entitled "Canadian Born," which was so well received that the entire edition was exhausted within the year.

About this time she visited Newfoundland, taking with her letters of introduction from Sir Charles Tupper to Sir Robert Bond, the then Prime Minister of the colony. Her recital in St. John was the literary event of the season, and was given under the personal patronage of His Excellency the Governor-General and Lady McCallum, and the Admiral of the British Flagship.

After this recital in the capital Miss Johnson went to all the small seaports and to Hearts' Content, the great Atlantic Cable station, her mission being more to secure material for magazine articles on the staunch Newfoundlanders and their fishing villages than for the purpose of giving recitals.

In 1906 she returned to England, and made her first appearance in Steinway Hall, under the distinguished patronage of Lord and Lady Strathcona, to whom she carried letters of introduction from the Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada. On this occasion she was accompanied by Mr. Walter McRaye, who added greatly to the Canadian interest of the programme



"CHIEFSWOOD," E. PAULINE JOHNSON'S BIRTHPLACE.

House in which the Indian poetess was born, on the Six Nations Reserve 12 miles south from Brantford, on the banks of the Grand River.



MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN IN STANLEY PARK, VANCOUVER, B.C.
IN MEMORY OF E. PAULINE JOHNSON.

Erected by Women's Canadian Club and dedicated May, 1922.

by his inimitable renditions of Dr. Drummond's Habitant poems.

The following year she again visited London, returning by way of the United States, where she and Mr. McRaye were engaged by the American Chautauquas for a series of recitals covering eight weeks, during which time they went as far as Boulder, Colorado. Then, after one more tour of Canada, she decided to give up public work, settle down in the city of her choice, Vancouver, British Columbia, and devote herself to literature only.

Only a woman of tremendous powers of endurance could have borne up under the hardships necessarily encountered in travelling through North-Western Canada in pioneer days as Miss Johnson did ; and shortly after settling down in Vancouver the exposure and hardship she had endured began to tell upon her, and her health completely broke down. For more than a year she has been an invalid ; and as she was not able to attend to the business herself, a trust was formed by some of the leading citizens of her adopted city for the purpose of collecting, and publishing for her benefit, her later works. Among these is a number of beautiful Indian legends which she has been at great pains to collect ; and a splendid series of boys' stories, which were exceedingly well received when they ran recently in an American boys' magazine.

During the sixteen years Miss Johnson was travelling she had many varied and interesting experiences. She has driven up the old Battleford trail before the railroad went through, and across

the Boundary country in British Columbia in the romantic days of the early pioneers; and once she took an 850-mile drive up the Cariboo trail to the gold-fields. She was always an ardent canoeist, ran many strange rivers, crossed many a lonely lake, and camped in many an unfrequented place. These venturous trips she took more from her inherent love of nature and of adventure than from any necessity of her profession.

After an illness of two years' duration Miss Johnson died in Vancouver on March 7, 1913. The heroic spirit in which she endured long months of suffering is expressed in her poem entitled "And He Said 'Fight On'" which she wrote after she was informed by her physician that her illness would prove fatal.

Time and its ally, Dark Disarmament
Have compassed me about;
Have massed their armies, and on battle bent
My forces put to rout,
But though I fight alone, and fall, and die,
Talk terms of Peace? Not I.

It is eminently fitting that this daughter of Nature should have been laid to rest in no urban cemetery. According to her own request she was buried in Stanley Park, Vancouver's beautiful heritage of the forest primeval. A simple stone surrounded by rustic palings marks her grave and on this stone is carved the one word "Pauline." There she lies among ferns and wild flowers a short distance from Siwash Rock, the story of which she has recorded

in the legends of her race. In time to come a pathway to her grave will be worn by lovers of Canadian poetry who will regard it as one of the most romantic of our literary shrines.