

Literature, &c.

OLD SONGS.

BY ELIZA COOK.

Old songs! old songs!—how well I sing. Your varied airs with childish tongue, When breath and spirit, free and light, Caroll'd away from morn till night; When this beginning and that end Were mystically made to blend, And the "Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill" Gave place to her at "Patie's Mill!"

Old songs! old songs!—how thick ye come, Telling of childhood and of home, When home forged links to memory's chain Too strong for Time to break in twain, When home was all that home should be, And held the vast rich world for me!

Old songs! old songs!—what heaps I know, From "Chevy Chase" to "Black-eyed Sue;" From "Flow, thou regal purple stream," To "Rosseau's" melancholy "Dream!" I loved the pensive "Cabin Boy" With earnest truth and real joy; My warmest feelings wander back To greet "Tom Bowling" and "Poor Jack;" And oh, "Will Watch," the smuggler bold, My plighted troth thou'lt ever hold.

I doted on the "auld Scots sonnet," As though I'd worn the plaid and bonnet; I went abroad with "Sandy's Ghost," I stood with Bannockburn's brave host, And proudly toss'd my curly head With "Scots! wha hae wi' Wallace bled!" I shouted "Comin' through the rye," With restless step and sparkling eye, And chased away the passing frown With "Bonnie ran the burnie down."

The tiny "Warbler" from the stall, The fluttering ballad on the wall, The gipsy's glee, the beggar's catch, The old wife's lay, the idiot's snatch, The schoolboy's chorus, rude and witty, The harvest strain, the carol ditty— I tax'd ye all, I stole from each, I spurned no tutor that could teach; Though long my list, though great my store, I'd ever seek to add one more.

Old songs! old songs!—ye fed, no doubt; The flame that since has broken out, For I would wander far and lone, And sit upon the moss wrapp'd stone, Oonning "old songs," till some strange power Beneath a wild magic o'er the hour, Sweeping the pulse-chords of my soul, As winds o'er sleeping waters roll 'Twas done—the volume was unseal'd, The hallow'd mission was reveal'd, The die was thrown, the spell was cast, I barst my earthly bonds at last! "Old songs" called up a kindred tone— An echo started!—'twas my own, Joy, pride, and riches, swell'd my breast— The lyre was mine, and I was blest.

Old songs! old songs!—my brain has lost Much that it gain'd with pain and cost; I have forgotten all the rules Of "Murray's" books and "Trimmer's" schools;

Detested figures—how I hate The mere remembrance of a slate! How have I cast from woman's thought Much goodly lore the girl was taught! But not a word has pass'd away Of "Rest thee, Babe," or "Robin Gray."

Sweet "Rest thee, Babe"—oh peaceful theme, That floated o'er my infant dream, My brow was cool, my pillow smooth, When thou wert sung to lull and soothe By lips that only ceased the strain To kiss my cheek, then sung again. I loved the tune; and many a time I humm'd the air and lipied the rhyme. Till winking 'neath its potent charms, The kitten slumbered in my arms.

Old songs! old songs!—how ye bring back The fairest paths in mortal track, I see the merry circle spread, Till watchman's notice warn'd to bed; When one rude boy would loiter near, And whisper in a well-pleas'd ear, "Come, mother, sit, before we go, And sing "John Anderson, my Joe."

The ballad still is breathing round, But other voices yield the sound; Strangers possess the household room; The mother lieth in the tomb; And the blithe boy that praised her song Sleeps as soundly and as long.

Old songs! old songs!—I should not sigh— Joy of the earth on earth must die; But spectral forms will sometimes start Within the caverns of the heart, Haunting the lone and darken'd cell Where, warm in life, they used to dwell.

Hope, youth, love, home—each human tie That binds we know not how or why— All, all that to the soul belongs, It closely mingled with "old songs," Ah, who shall say the ballad line That stings the heart is not divine! And were the heart that would not dare To place such song beside the prayer!"

From Mr. Catlin's "Notes of the North American Indians." BURNING PRAIRIES.

The prairies burning form some of the most beautiful scenes that are to be witnessed in this country, and also some of the most sublime. Every acre of these vast prairies (being covered for hundreds and hundreds of miles, with a crop of grass, which dies and dries in the fall)

burns over during the fall, or early in the spring leaving the ground of a black and doleful colour. There are many modes by which the fire is communicated to them, both by white men and by Indians—par accident; and yet many more where it is voluntarily done for the purpose of getting a fresh supply of grass, for grazing of their horses, and also for easier travelling during the next summer, when there will be no old grass to lie upon the prairies, entangling the feet of man and horse as they are passing over them. Over the elevated lands and prairie bluffs, where the grass is thin and short, the fire slowly creeps with a feeble flame which one can easily step over; where the wild animals often rest in their lairs, until the flames almost burn their noses, when they will reluctantly rise, and leap over it, and trot off amongst the cinders, where the fire has passed, and left the ground as black as jet. These scenes at night become indescribably beautiful when their flames are seen at many miles distance, creeping over the sides and the tops of the bluffs, appearing to be sparkling and brilliant chains of liquid fire [the hills being lost to the view] hanging suspended in graceful festoons from the skies.

But there is yet another character of burning prairies that requires another letter, and a different pen to describe—the war, or hell of fires! where the grass is seven or eight feet high, as is often the case for many miles together, on the Missouri bottoms; and the flames are driven forward by the hurricanes, which often sweep over the vast prairies of this denuded country. There are many of these meadows on the Missouri, the Platte, and the Arkansas, of many miles in breadth, which are perfectly level, with a waving grass, so high, that we are obliged to stand erect in our stirrups, in order to look over its waving tops as we are riding through it. The fires in these, before such a wind, travels at an immense and frightful rate: and often destroy, on their fleetest horses, parties of Indians, who are so unlucky as to be overtaken by it, not that it travels as fast as a horse at full speed, but that the high grass is filled with wild pea vines and other impediments, which renders it necessary for the rider to guide his horse in the zig-zag path of the deers and buffaloes, retarding his progress, until he is overtaken by the dense column of smoke that is swept before the fire—alarmed the horse, which stops, and stands terrified and immovable, till the burning grass which is wafted in the wind, falls about him, kindling up in a moment a thousand new fires, which are instantly wrapt in the swelling flood of smoke that is moving on like a black thunder cloud, rolling on the earth, with its lightning's glare, and its thunder rumbling as it goes.

When Ba'tiste, and Bogard, and I, and Patrick Raymond, [who, like Bogard, had been a free trapper in the Rocky Mountains], and Pah-me-o-ne-gua [The Red Thunder], our guide from a neighboring village, were jogging along on the summit of an elevated bluff, over looking an immense valley of high grass through which we were about to lay our course.

"Well, then, you say you have seen the prairies on fire?" "Yes." "You have seen the fires on the mountains, and beheld it feebly creeping over the grassy hills of the North, where the toad and the timber snail were pacing from its approach—all this you have seen, and who has not? But who has seen the vivid lightnings, and heard the roaring thunder of the rolling conflagration which sweeps over the deep clad prairies of the West? Who had dashed, on his wild horse, through an ocean of grass, with the raging tempest at his back, rolling over the land its waves of liquid fire?" "What!" "Aye even so. Ask the red savage of the wilds what is awful and sublime—ask him where the Great spirit has mixed up all elements of death, and if he does not blow them over the land in a storm of fire? Ask him what foe he has met, that regarded not his frightening yells, or his sinewy bow? Ask these lords of the land, who vauntingly challenge the thunder and lightning of Heavens—whether there is not one foe that travels over their land, too swift for their feet and too mighty for their strength—at whose approach their stout heart sickens, and their strong armed courage withers to nothing! Ask him again [if he is sullen, and his eyes set in their sockets]—"Hush!—ah!—ah!"—[he will tell you, with a soul too proud to confess,—his head sunk on his breast, and his hand over his mouth]—"that's medicine!"

I said to my comrades, as we were about to descend from the towering bluffs into the prairie—"we will take that buffalo trail, where the travelling herds have slashed down the high grass, and making for that blue point, rising as you can just discern above the ocean of grass; a good day's work will bring us over this vast meadow before sunset." We entered the trail and slowly progressed on our way, being obliged to follow the winding paths of the buffaloes, for the grass was higher than the backs of our horses. Soon after we entered, my Indian guide dismounted slowly from his horse, and lying prostrate on the ground, with his face in the dirt, he cried, and was talking to the Spirits of the brave—"For," said he, "over this beautiful plain dwells the Spirit of Fire! he rides in yonder cloud—his face blackens with rage at the sound of the tramping hoofs—the fire bow is in his hand—he draws it across the path of the Indian, and quicker than lightning, a thousands flames rise to destroy him; such is the talk of my fathers, and the ground is whitening with their bones. It was here," said he, "that the brave son of Wah-chee-tan, and the strong armed warriors of his band, just twelve moons since, licked the fire from the blazing wound of that great magician. Their pointed spears were drawn upon the backs of the treacherous Sioux, whose swifter flying horses led them, in vain, to the midst of this valley of death. A circular cloud sprang up

from the prairie around them! it was raised, and their doom was fixed by the Spirit of fire! it was on this vast plain of fire grass that waves over our heads, that the swift foot of Mah-toga was laid. It is here, also, that the fleet bounding wild horse mingles his bones with the red man, and the eagle's wing is melted as he darts over its surface. Friends! it is the season of fire; and I fear, from the smell of the wind, that the spirit is awake!"

Pah-me-o-ne-gua said no more, but mounting his wild horse, and waving his hand, his red shoulders were seen rapidly vanishing as he glided through the thick mazes of waving grass. We were on his trail, and busily traced him until mid-day sun had brought us to the ground, with our refreshments spread out before us. He partook of them not, but stood like a statue, while his black eyes, in sullen silence swept the horizon round; and then with a deep drawn sigh, he gracefully sunk to the earth, and laid his face to the ground. Our buffalo tongues and pemican, and narrow fat, were spread before us; and we were in the full enjoyment of these dainties of the Western world, when quicker than the frightened elk, our Indian friend sprang upon his feet! His eyes skimmed again slowly over the prairies' surface and he laid himself as before on the ground.

"Red Thunder seems sullen to day," said Bogard, "he startles at every rush of wind, and scowls at the whole world that is about him."

"There's a rare chap for you—a fellow who would shake his fist at heaven, when he is at home: and here, grass patch, must take his fire medicine for a circumstance that he could easily leave at a shake of his horse's heels."

"Not sate sure 'o that, my hooney, though we'll not be making too lightly of the matter, nor either be frightened at the mon's strange actions. But, Bogard, I'll tell ye in a 'ord [and that's enough], there's something more than odds in all this 'o medicine." If this man's a fool, he was born out of his own country, that's all—and if the devil ever gets him, he must take him cowl, for he is too swift and too wide awake to be taken alive—you understand that, I suppose? But to come to the plain matter—supposin' that this Ere Spirit should just impty his pipe on tother side of this prairie, and strike up a bit of a blaze in this high grass, and send it packing across in this direction, before such a death of a wind as this is! By the bull barley, I'll bet you'd be after 'making medicine,' and taking a bit of it too, to get rid of the racket."

"Yes, but you see, Patrick—"

"Never mind that, and suppose the blowin wind was coming ahead o'lowin about our ears a world of smoke, and choking us to dith, and we dancin about a Virginy reel among these little paths, where the devil would we be by the time we got to that bluff, for its now fool of a distance! Givin you time to spake I would say a word more (askin your pardon), I know by the expression of your face, man, you never have seen the world on fire yet, and therefore, you know nothin at all of a hurly burly of this kind—did ye—did ye ever see [and I just want to know] did ye ever see the fire in high grass, runnin with a strong wind, about five miles and the half, and thin hear it strike into a slash of dry cane brake! I would just ax you that! By thunder you never have—for your eyes would just stick out of your head at the thought of it! Did you ever look way into the backside of Mr Maelze's Moscow, and see the flashin flames a ruinin up; and then hear the poppin of the militia fire just afterwards? than you have just a touch of it! ye'er just beginnin—ye may talk about fires—but this is such a baste of a fire? Ask Jack Sandford, he's a chap that can tell you about it. Not wishin to disturb you, I would say a word more—and that is this—if I were advisin I would say that we are gettin too far into this imbestible meadow; for the grass is dry, and the wind is too strong to make a light matter of, at this season of the year; and now I'll just tell ye how M'Kenzie and I were served in this very place about two years ago; and he's a worldly chop, and niver aslape, my word for that—hollo, what's that!"

Red Thunder was on his feet!—his long arm was stretched over the grass, and his blazing eye balls starting from their sockets! "What man, (said he), see ye that small cloud lying itself from the prairie? he rises! the hoofs of our horses waked him! The Fire Spirit is awake—this wind is from his nostrils, and his face is this way!" No more—but his swift horse darted under him, and he gracefully slid over the waving grass as it was bent by the wind. Our viands were left, and we were swift on his trail. The extraordinary leaps of his wild horse, occasionally raised his red shoulders to view, and he sank again in the waving billows of grass. The tremulous wind was hurrying by us fast, and on it was borne the agitated wing of the eagle. His neck was stretched for the towering bluff, and the thrilling screams of his voice told the secret that was behind him. Our horses were swift, and we struggled hard, yet hope was feeble, for the bluff was yet blue, and nature nearly exhausted! The sunshine was dying, and a cool shadow advancing over the plain. Not daring to look back, we strained every nerve. The roar of a distant cataract seemed gradually advancing on us—the winds increased, the howling tempest ed beetle and heath hens instinctively drew their straight lines over our heads. The fleet bounding antelope passed us also; and the still swift-as-he-flies! Here was no time for thought—but I recollect the heavens were overcast—the distant thunder was heard—the lightning's glare was reddening the scene—and the smell that came on the winds struck terror to my

soul! The piercing yell of my savage guide at this moment came back upon the winds—his robe was seen waving in the air, and his foaming horse leaping up the towering bluff!

Our breath, and our sinews, in this last struggle for life, were just enough to bring us to its summit. We had risen from the sea of fire!

"Great God (I exclaimed) how sublime to gaze in that valley, where the elements of nature are so strangely convulsed." Ask not the poet or painter how it looked, for they can tell you not; but ask the naked savage, and watch the electric twinge of his many nerves and muscles, as the lengthened "hush!—sh!—"

I beheld beneath me an immense cloud of black smoke, which extended from one extremity of this vast plain to the other, and seemed majestically to roll over its surface in a bed of liquid fire, and above this mighty desolation as it rolled along, the whitened smoke, pale with terror, was steaming and rising up in a magnificent cliff to heaven!

I stood secure, but tremblingly, and heard the maddening wind, which hurled this monster o'er the land—I heard the roaring thunder, and saw its thousand lightnings flash; and I saw behind, the black and smoking desolation of this storm of fire."

From Prescott's Conquest of Mexico. HUMAN SACRIFICES: THE GARLAND-ED VICTIM.

ONE of their most important festivals was that in honor of the god Tezcatlepeca, whose rank was inferior only to that of the Supreme Being. He was called the 'soul of the world,' and supposed to have been its creator. He was depicted as a handsome man, endowed with perpetual youth. A year before the intended sacrifice, a captive, distinguished for his personal beauty, and without a blemish on his body, was selected to represent this deity. Certain tutors took charge of him, and instructed him how to perform his new part with becoming grace and dignity. He was arrayed in a splendid dress, regaled with incense, and with a profusion of sweet scented flowers, of which the ancient Mexicans were so fond as their descendants at the present day. When he was abroad, he was attended by a train of the royal pages, and as he halted in the streets to play some favorite melody, the crowd prostrated themselves before him, and did him homage as the representative of their good deity. In this way he led an easy, luxurious life, till within a month of his sacrifice. Four beautiful girls, bearing the names of the principal goddesses, were then selected to share the honors of his bed; and with them he continued to live in idle dalliance, feasted at the bouquets of the principal nobles, who paid him all the honors of a divinity.

At length the fatal day of sacrifice arrived. The term of his short lived glories was at an end. He was stripped of his gaudy apparel, and bade adieu to the fair partners of his revelries. One of the royal barges transported him across the lake to a temple which rose at its margin, about a league from the city. Hither the inhabitants of the capital flocked, to witness the consummation of the ceremony. As the sad procession wound up the sides of the pyramid, the unhappy victim threw away his chaplet of flowers, and broke in pieces the musical instruments, with which he had soaced the hours of captivity. On the summit he was received by six priests, whose long and matted locks flowed disordered over their robes, covered with hieroglyphic scrolls of mystic import. They led him to the sacrificial stone, a huge block of jasper, with its upper surface somewhat convex. On this the stranger was stretched. Five priests scoured his head and his limbs; while the sixth, clad in a scarlet mantle emblematic of his bloody office, dexterously opened the breast of the wretched victim with a sharp razor of flint—a volcanic substance hard as flint—and, inserting his hand in the wound, tore out the palpitating heart. The minister of death, first holding this up towards the sun, an object of worship throughout Anubac, cast it at the feet of the deity to whom the temple was devoted, while the multitudes below prostrated themselves in humble adoration. The tragical story of this prisoner was expounded by the priests as the type of human destiny, which, brilliant in its commencement, so often closes in sorrow and disaster.

Such was the form of human sacrifice usually practiced by the Aztecs. It was the same that often met the indignant eyes of the Europeans in their progress through the country, and from the dreadful doom of which they themselves were not exempted. There were, indeed some occasions when preliminary tortures, of the most exquisite kind—with which it is unnecessary to shock the reader—were inflicted, but they always terminated with the bloody ceremony above described. It should be remarked, however, that such tortures were not the spontaneous suggestions of cruelty as with the North American Indians; but were all rigorously prescribed in the Aztec ritual, and doubtless were often inflicted with the same complexions of visits which a devout experience in the Holy Office might at times experience in executing its stern decrees. Women as well as the other sex, were sometimes reserved for sacrifice. On some occasions, particularly in seasons of drought, at the festival of the insatiable Tlaloc, the god of rain, children, for the most part infants, were offered to. As they were borne along in open litters, dressed in their festal robes, and decked with the fresh blossoms, they moved the hardest heart to pity, though their cries were drowned in their tears, a chants of the priests, who read in their tears a favorable augury for their petition. These innocent victims were generally bought by the