



BY R. A. CLARKE.

Oh swiftly to the golden West,
To end its bolts on ocean's breast,
The mighty river flows ;
Its floods are gathered far away,
Where mountains rise to bar the day—
Old with eternal snows.

O, wondrous river ! could I well
Reveal the wonder of that spell
Which rests thy shores along,
And show, responsive to my lay,
Thy shades of fir and cliffs of gray,
That would indeed be song !

Then should the Cascades' low refrain
Thrill through my song, a ceaseless strain,
To tell thy legend's story ;
Then sky of blue and wooded cliff
And struggling stream should glow as if
They knew a sunset's glory.

Then should the children of the wood
Live in my song as once they stood,
And knew these shores their own ;
Then Indian maid, with lover near,
Should saunter by thy waters clear,
As in the days long flown.

A score of years have passed since we
(She still is more than life to me),
With youth our happy lot,
Ere steamer's keel had marred thy flow,
With paddle stroke made passage slow,
And saw each charm-ed spot.

More sure far than sky or wave
The views that love and youth so gave—
Hope's hues thy wild banks wore ;
The mountains wear their forms alway,
The cataract pours its floods to-day—
I know them as of yore.

The greatest river of the West
Is born of ranges far and wide ;
A broad and grandly heaving crest—
The Western Hemisphere's divide.
It harvests all the mountain rills
And all the winding valley streams ;
Thus great Columbia's channel fills,
And, brimming o'er its current gleams ;
Then winding, widening toward the sea,
Its floods are swept in majesty.

Time was—in some dim, far-off day—
That rude sierras barred the way ;
For frowning Cascade ranges stood,
And ages long held back the flood ;
From heights that snows eternal crown
Impatient streams came hurrying down.
They gathered from the frozen zone,
And southward marched for many a day ;
Through deep defiles of Idaho
They brought Montana's wealth of snow ;
And Utah, from her plains so drear,
Sent faithful tribute year by year.
But grandly firm the mountains stood,
And untold ages held the flood ;
Then as the countless cycles gave
No passage to the pent-up wave,
It rose and swept the ranges low,
To make a highway for its flow.

And here the Titan fight was made—
Here where we see the grand Cascade.
Where all these rapids toss and quiver
With force that makes the bowlders shiver,
Is Nature's mightiest art displayed ;
Here has the master skill of Time
Wrought architecture most sublime.
These cliffs were fashioned by the wave,
That still, at times, when floods are brave,
Inscrites its name upon the land
In scattered drifts and heaps of sand.

And while the torrents flash and gleam,
Note what huge bowlders choke the stream !
These once were adamantine walls,
High cliffs that graced a peaceful tide,
And falling thence, they made these falls,
And raised the waters far and wide ;
So high that where once forests stood
Above the rapids rolls the flood.
Floating above that lucent wave,
We saw those forests in their grave ;
As Time from age to age has flown,
The prisoned wood has changed to stone.

Not far above the rapids' rush
The river flows with tranquil hush,
Like some fair lake, embosomed deep,
On which the mountain shadows fall,
Where spell-bound islands calmly sleep,
While echo hovers within call.
Isles of deep emerald floating there
Show wilderness of leaf and bloom,
And echoes wait these to declare
Their presence in the mystic gloom.
Their light canoe can track the flow
From sun-up till the sun is low ;
And while you drift watch well the shore,
Where mountain streams come winding through ;
For if those openings you explore,
The snowy peaks will come in view—
Amid the ranges southward, Hood ;
Mount Adams, northward, through the wood ;
Each frowns on each in distance gray,
Miles and miles and miles away.

Grandly outlined, white alway
Since the first primeval day,
And if my muse can poorly tell
The eylvan grace and woven spell
By wood and wave and mountain made,
Where grandest heights in shadow dwell,
And startling vistas are displayed
Above the cataracts' fearful play,
How can it catch the rare surprise
That sweeps the lower stream by day,
And makes it, 'neath the moon's full ray,
A scene that will forever be
Linked with the joys of memory ?
Now launch we on the lower stream,
And leave the cataracts' roar behind.
The day will reach the sun's last beam,
And faint will blow the evening wind,
Ere gliding past each bold rampart
And colonades unknown to art,
Or listening to the tanelful spray
Of waterfalls not far away,
We see the mountain walls recede,
And human dwellings dot the shore,
Where orchards glad the eye once more,
And fields grow red with ripening seed.

Our sails we set to catch the breeze ;
Our paddles helped the sluggish wind ;
We swept past shores of inland seas,
And left the western sea behind.
One evening, ere the day was o'er,
We stood upon the cataract's shore.
We saw, where rapids wildly sweep,
A rock that bravely stood the flood ;
We saw the salmon past it leap,
While on its brow a fisher stood ;
Sometimes arrow spear he threw ;
Sometimes scooping net he drew.

Firm set amid the dizzy swirl,
Graceful poised, he threw the spear ;
Or beside the mud pool's whirl.

As he saw swift fins appear,
While the waves his brown feet wet,
He drew the salmon in his net.

He stood there naked to the waist,
And his bare feet trod the rock ;
No look, no motion, tokened haste,
Save when springing to the shock,
Fierce light glittering in his eyes,
With barb or net he won his prize.

When his muscles weary grew,
Coming from the dripping rock,
Down the net and spear he threw,
And stood beside his waiting flock ;
Salmon, children, squaw and he
Made a tableau you should see !

I spoke him in the Chinook tongue,
And said to him, " O, tillicum,*
To me it has been said and sung
That from your fathers there has come
The legend of the grand Cascade,
And how the rapids first were made.
" I've seen you swing the net and spear,
And win great salmon from the flood,
And I have said, ' He knows no fear,
And is a brave Siwash, † and good,
And I should like to hear him, well,
The Legend of the Cascades tell.' "

* Friend. † Indian.