

THE

HEROES OF THE NORTH,

OR

THE BATTLES OF LAKE ERIE, AND CHAMPLAIN,

TWO POEMS.

BY BENJAMIN WHITMAN JR. ESQ.

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*from the
1866.*

HEROES OF THE NORTH.

187
TWO POEMS.

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THE LADIES

OF

OLIVER H. PERRY AND THOMAS MACDONOUGH,

THE FOLLOWING VERSES

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BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE,

A POEM.

HERO OF THE NORTH,

OR

BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE.

OH, know ye the land where the cliff and the mountain
O'er shadows the water's dark tremulous glow ;
Which flows from the north from its cold icy fountain,
And passes through Erie to OCEAN below.

That torrent is rough, as it bursts from the North,
But calmly extending across the broad lakes ;
From their silent expanse serene it goes forth,
Till it foams where the loud roaring cataract breaks.

There the roar of the fall with the wild Indian yell,
For ages together have mingled its sound ;
And often the yell of the savage would drown
The roar of the fall as it thundering fell.

The flood still is pouring,
The fall still is roaring,
And echoes each neighbouring shore ;

But the war-hoop no longer
 Sounds louder and stronger,
 While drowning the catara~~ct~~'s roar.

'Tis not by those yells and those screams I am fired—
 At the tales of the savage I droop and grow weary ;
 I now sing of HONOUR and GLORY acquired,
 Where our thunders were heard on the waters of ERIE.

The dark rolling waters of Erie had flowed
 For ages on ages in silence along ;
 And its bleak mountain-shore had never yet echoed
 The loud cannon's roar or the mariner's song.

But the Cross of Saint GEORGE o'er her bosom now floats
 And Columbia's brave EAGLE is streaming afar ;
 And the thunder that sleeps in their ships and their boats,
 Will shortly be roused in the tempest of war.

Where yonder beams of morning play,
 Through eastern portals comes the day ;
 And through the darksome, silent air,
 It spreads afar, its brilliant glare.
 With fluid gold it tinges now
 The welkin's space and mountain's brow ;
 Far in the East those clouds behold,
 Which seem in heavenly flame enroll'd :
 There blessed angels love to lie,
 And look abroad through earth and sky ;
 As from the vigils of the night,
 They leave the earth for realms of light ;
 And gazing round, below, above,

They read unutterable love.

On that calm and glorious morn,
 The lake reflected back the dawn,
 To waken'd warfours, roused in time
 To meet approaching war and crime.
 No longer now does silence reign,
 But seamen's shout and cheerful strain,
 And hoisted sails, and moving oar,
 Proclaim our warriors "sleep no more."
 Proud o'er the lake, (a gallant throng !)
 Old Albion's squadron sweeps along,
 Like frame that moves upon the wave ;
 White pennons floating o'er the brave,
 Are seen afar through mist and cloud ;
 And now is seen each mast and shroud ;
 And as the morning breezes blow,
 Nearer and nearer comes the foe.

Those thunders sleep which soon will wake
 Their first rude notes upon the lake ;
 Upon whose bosom ne'er before,
 Relentless Death his victims bore.

Solemn and slow the adverse squadrons move,
 While the bright orb of day rolls on above.
 O ! 'tis a glorious sight to see them sweep,
 Like clouds in air upon that gentle deep ;
 Their sails all set, their pennons streaming high ;
 While there the Cross—while here the EAGLES fly,
 With all things smiling in the Autumn-sky,
 And clouds of amber gently sailing by ;
 While just below, the lake is heaving bright,
 And swells of tumid vapour catch the light.

As, from some black and silent cloud,
 That moves upon the face of day,
 The flashing lightnings sudden play,
 And muttering thunders roar'd aloud ;
 While darting on the mountain's side,
 They spread destruction far and wide—
 So, on that calm and gentle wave,
 Where all was silent as the grave,
 The reign of peace is o'er ;
 And to the cannon's dreadful roar,
 Echo's the mountains, rocks and shore—
 As first the British thunders pour
 Destruction round, behind, before ;
 And the dark LAKE receives the gore
 Of man who falls to rise no more.

Silent and slow our vessels glide,
 While ruin pours on every side ;
 But now, our port-holes gaping wide.

Our fires begin to glow ;
 And forth the awful thunders broke,
 And ruin went with every stroke,
 And death with every blow.

But see our strong and gallant bark,
 Where stands the Hero of the Lake,
 She slowly moves, the only mark,
 On which the opposing torrents break.
 Each "brace and bowline" shot away,
 She moves a perfect wreck :
 She meets the wind like waving trees,
 She's tossed like clouds upon the breeze,
 And ruin crowds her deck.
 Oh ! yonder see the HERO sail,
 While balls as thick as Autumn's hail,
 Around the little vessel pour ;

Secure she sails 'mid fire and smoke,
 As did of yore that gallant boat,
 Which fearless CESAR bore.
 In triumph now *another* deck
 Receives the warrior from the wreck,
 In safety and in glory ;
 And now more strong the breezes blow,
 And drives him nearer to the foe,
 And wafts him on to victory.
 Now fierce amid the foe they dash,
 Their masts and spars while falling crash,
 Their ships are driv'n a'thraft ;
 From larboard and from starboard side,
 Our dreadful port-holes gaping wide,
 Send tenfold thunders o'er the tide,
 And rakes them fore and aft.

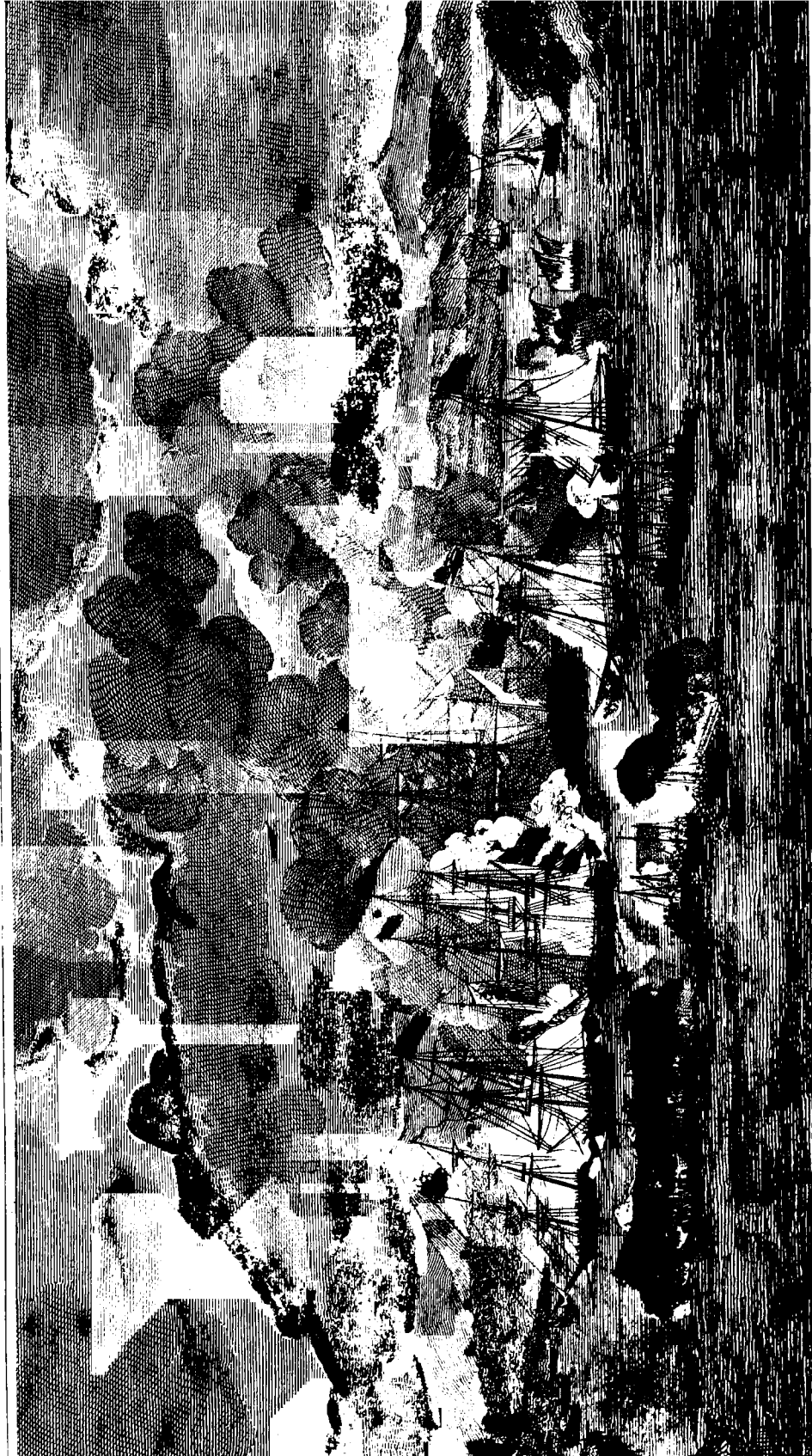
“ *Down*, down your flags, or not a foe
 Shall live to tell this tale of woe ;
 Down, down your flags, or not a boat
 Above this blood-red stream shall float !”
 And down they come—the strife is o'er—
 Borne on the gale is heard no more
 The groan, the shriek, or cannon's roar ;
 And die the thunders on the distant shore.

I know 'tis true you love to read
 Of noble knights of former day ;
 I know you sigh o'er martial deed,
 And grieve those times have passed away.

'Tis true those knights no more will fight,
 The days of chivalry are o'er;—
 And those who fought for BRUCE's right,
 Are Scotia's valiant sons no more.

But did high-heart and spirit free,
 Perish with BRUCE and WALLACE brave?
 And with the flow'r of chivalry,
 Did worth and courage find their grave?

O, come to the land of a GREENE and a PERRY,
 O, look to the warriors of Eutaw and Erie;
 And see where encircled in glory's bright ray,
 Heroes have fought in *our* land and *our* day.
 Old Rome and old Greece, in the temple of fame,
 A long list of heroes with triumph can claim;
 And round on the tablets, in letters of gold,
 Each nation may see its own heroes enrolled,
 And round as you gaze both with wonder and pride,
 On the names of those warriors who've conquered and died,
 On yonder *bright tablet*, Columbia, behold,
 The names of your GREENE and your PERRY enrolled.



THE

VICTORY ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN,

A POEM.

VICTORY ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

Oh wild is the land, where the yell and the cry
Bid the traveller flee for the savage is near ;
Where the Great Spirit moves in the clouds of the sky,
Arrayed in the robes of his terror and fear.

Oh wild is the land, where the forests and lakes
And all things around are majestick and grand ;
Where nature her palace triumphantly makes
On the hills everlasting that rise from the land.

There the wild men, while swiftly their game they pursue,
Stop in their course, with enchantment are bound,
And bless the Great Spirit, as gazing they view
The waters, and earth, and heavens around.

'Tis the land of the west! where but lately were seen
The wild tribes of Indians that wandered afar ;
And where too was heard the wild yell and the scream,
That roused in the savage the spirit of war.

I sing now of war, of conquest and blood,
 Of warriors whose laurels now bloom o'er their grave ;—
 Of deeds done where once was the Indians' abode,
 I sing of MACDONOUGH the brave.—

The lowering clouds grew dark on high,
 And spread their curtains round the sky,
 And caught the flood of light
 Which poured from stars, which now above,
 The clouds that dark and silent move
 Break not the gloom of night.

No thunders roar in this still scene,
 Along the heavens, no meteors gleam
 To light the darksome hour ;
 The forest, lake, and wave is hushed,
 And now the wind which by them rushed
 Suspends its mighty power.—

Upon yon lake the billow's glow
 Sparkles around, no rushing prow,
 But all is smooth and calm ;
 And warriors too, who soon may die,
 Now slumbering on their hammocks lie,
 Nor dream approaching harm.

The orb of day at morrow's dawn
 Will light the holy Sunday's morn,
 The sabbath of the Lord.

The labour of the week is done,
 And all will at the rising sun
 Sing anthems to their God.

But, now, o'er rock, vale, delve and steep,
 All Nature silent, seems to sleep
 Enveloped close in gloom ;
 And, save yon breeze that drives away
 The clouds before the face of day,
 Nature appears in dark array,
 An universal tomb.

Morn now the orient gates have riven,
 And far and wide the purple heaven
 Foretells a bloody day.—
 Each cloud appears a bloody screen,
 Reflecting on each lower scene,
 Save where the mountains intervene
 The glorious morning ray.

From yonder ship the signal gun
 Arouses with the rising sun
 The seamen from their slumber ;—
 Some shall with wreaths adorn their head,
 Some shall be counted with the dead,
 And *proudly swell their number !*

The cannon echoes far and wide
 Along the shore and mountain's side,
 And wakes the tuneful lark :—

The wild birds raise their matin notes,
And through the barges, ships and boats
The slumbering seamen start.—

What muttering sound is that which strikes the ear ?
What sails seem floating through yon misty air ?
And with the breeze are now advancing fast—
With flags far waving from each lofty mast ?
See them, Macdonough cries, there streaming high,
By heavens the Cross, the British pendants fly—
They fly above your foe, who now prepare
To taint this holy morn with deeds of war !
Display our Eagle, place our guns for fight,
And they are ours, or else we die ere night.
Now, o'er the lake the royal vessels sweep,
And swiftly move along the misty deep ;
They come more near, and now abreast they lay.
“ The wind of heaven too, gently dies away.”
Our men on valour place their strong reliance,
And forthwith raise a shout of loud defiance.

Then, as the sun's resplendent car
Throws back the twilight clouds afar—
And o'er the gloomy realms of air
Scatters abroad his silent glare—
So from each gallant vessel's side,
Our dreadful port-holes gaping wide,
Through fire and smoke
The thunders broke
And muttering spoke
By every stroke
Destruction to the foe !

'Mid blood and fire each vessel rides,
 And down their smoke-enveloped sides
 A torrent red of life-blood glides
 Into the lake below.

Their shrouds, masts, yards, while falling crack,
 And every vessel seems a wreck,
 As death and ruin crowd each deck
 With trophies of their deeds.
 Ours! work and fight as nothing fearing,
 They now another flag are rearing,
 And yonder vessel disappearing
 Their fire and valour feeds.

One ship is sunk! one flag is down,
 And adverse thunders rarely sound,
 Opposing seamen bleed around,
 And fall among their guns.
 Each ship a moving hearse goes on,
 Crowded with men whose souls are gone,
 Who now above the billows borne,
 No more are Albion's sons.

The strife has ceased—Champlain no more
 Is troubled with the cannon's roar,
 No thunders break from yonder shore—
 The victor is MACDONOUGH:
 The clouds disperse, the sky serene
 Has not a cloud to intervene,
 And silence reigns through every scene,
 The forest and the billow.

As the Spartan of old, when he travelled afar,
 O'er scenes where his forefathers bled in the war,
 At Thermopylæ's straits, where Leonidas's band
 Could the millions of Persia, with glory withstand ;
 On the scene as he gazed, and was roused by the sight,
 And long'd to encounter some foe in the fight—
 So the American youth, when he wanders along
 The scene of those deeds that you've heard in my song,
 Will gaze at Champlain, and go over in thought
 The deeds of that day, when his countrymen fought ;
 Will cry as the wave, on the lake he may follow,
 There fought the brave and gallant MACDONOUGH !

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