

Choric Ode

on the OPENING of the

BANFF-WINDERMERE HIGHWAY



CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS
DEPARTMENT *of the* INTERIOR
OTTAWA

CHORIC ODE

ON THE OPENING OF THE BANFF-WINDERMERE HIGHWAY
ACROSS THE CENTRAL ROCKIES
JUNE 30, 1923

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Chronicler:

To him who dreams a noble dream,
Whose vision like a sunlight gleam
Strikes through the darkness of man's day
And shows afar a path that leads
To broader uses for men's lives,
To wider service for men's needs—
What though the way
He only carve with word and pen—

Chorus:

To him who dreams a noble dream
Honour and glory and the praise of men!

Chronicler:

Mater benigna—thou bounteous Earth!
Shaping with love and power
Through countless ages purposive
Beauty's immortal birth—
Beauty that lifts and frees the souls of men
Like a great wind of life;
That swells his petty hour
To godlike largeness;
How shall we give

To thee sufficient praise?
How hast thou builded here from ancient days
A shelter for man's heart
Within the shadows of thy templed shrines!
How shaped with patience long and mystic art
These shimmering towers all curtained o'er
With rhythmic clouds from heaven's floor!
Veiled with wild mists at pearly dawn
Or flushed with snow-fed fire
At twilight when the blue dusk falls,
Like radiant spikes of blossomed loveliness,
In vales where armies shadowy
Move to the music of aeolian winds.

From mud and slime where crawled the dinosaur,
And inland seas where moaned the lonely wave,
Thy sculpturing hand hath raised these mighty domes
In heaven's serene.
Thy bosom heaved with palpitating throes,
And like a giant breed there sprang
Stupendous mountains from thy quivering side
Which heavenward rose
Empurpled in the vaulted blue.

Clothing thee all about with verdant joy
Thou like a happy bride
Didst robe thy form with glacial scarves
Slow falling down the green skirts of the hills;
With starry meadows sown in asphodel
And set with sapphire lakes and silver rills;
Thou mad'st this joy by which men live—

Chorus:

Mater benigna—unto thee we give
Honour and glory and the praise of men!

Chronicler:

Hector of the Palliser
Stood by Vermilion's eastern gate
And scanned the valley winding like a dream,
Lonely and virginal; nor knew what fate
Lay westward. And when, at last,
After the toil of many days was past,
He touched the valley on the farther side,
Unto the Indian brave who stood beside,
"Brother," he said, "there is a way!
"From this sweet stream,
"Which leaps mad-hearted down between the hills,
"Along its deepening bed,
"Until its crescent music fills
"The canyon's walls with dread,
"There shall descend in other days
"A road whence men shall pass from sea to sea,
"And crest these mighty mountains till
"The western seas shall sound its praise."

E'en though he passed and left behind
Only the vision of his mind—
Shall we not name his name in honour once again?

Chorus:

To him who sees afar a way—
Honour and glory and the praise of men!

Chronicler:

"Oho! Oho! Oho!" What loudly echoing voice,
Raucous, triumphant, verberant,
Breaks now that ancient mountain peace.
That immemorial solitude where silence waits
Like cosmic thought made palpable,
Clamouring for passage on its sinuous way?

Herald of victory, thou; indomitable;
Imperious child of human thought and dream,
Cleaving the mountain barriers,
Opening the long-closed gates.
Child of the iron way,
New triumph of man's day,
A thousand valleys echo to thy call:
"Oho! Oho! Oho! from sea to sea!"
Dream, hope and toil. Praise for man's victory!

Chorus:

For victory won by toiling hand and brain—
Honour and glory and the praise of men!

Chronicler:

Child of the newer age, mobile and free
This day is celebrate in praise of thee.
New power is in thy throbbing heart,
New ways must open for thy pulsing feet.
For use and wont and triumphs hardly won
In days gone by thrill not the mind of youth,
Whose forward-looking eyes
Burn to the great unknown
And ever dream a brighter, better way.

In the beginning was the Thought
Logos aionios, eternal Mind,
Child of the newer day,
Thy quivering life
Out of creative Thought,
Cosmic and irresistible,
Wast fashioned for the needs of men.
For thee, our new imperious child,
We pave to-day a broad highway.
And where the eagle soared,

And mountain creatures through the immemorial years
Have scanned the silences in slumbering peace;
Through mountain passes and by valleys sweet,
And deep green forests where
The wily cougar hides her brood,
And on the breasts of the eternal hills
An highway shall be there.
And from the sunbaked street and prisoning marts
Where life grows dim and loveliness departs—
From the low levels where men strive and strain
With ills half-visionsed and with fears unseen,
They shall arise and seek a mountain way
Where magic splendours crown the dying day.

Chorus:

To him who toils and finds a way—
Honour and glory and the praise of men!

Chronicler:

Spirit of Beauty—thou immortal light!
Revealer, saviour, tune our song aright.

By these the secret laws of life,
Dim-visionsed by our mortal strife,
Shine forth before our trembling sight.

Spirit of Beauty—from exhaustless store
Enchanting riches thou dost pour;
And of thy largess only we are poor
Who in our blindness never seek thy door
And fret our souls in this world's maddening roar.

Soul of Creative Power—thy golden rays
Steal through the darkness of our ways;
And truths too white for mortal eyes
In rainbow lights thou dost devise
That hearts may throb and sing thy praise.

Spirit of Beauty—in thy lustrous glow,
Power that would crush our spirits low,
 And shame our weakness by its awesome might,
 Smiles on us in thy holy light,
Like sunset beams above the burnished snow.

Spirit of Beauty—shall not toil be sweet
That brings thy sons in worship to thy feet?
 Enchanting Spirit, cleanser of our hearts—
 Such wisdom thy pure effluence imparts
As man finds not in crowded mart and street.

Spirit of Beauty—love and praise be thine!
This way shall bring us to thy sacred shrine;
 And men shall find within thy bosoming hills,
 Surcease from frantic strife that wounds and kills,
And rapturous joys no memories may confine.

O mighty Mother, dumb, brown-breasted Earth!
Out of whose life our little lives had birth;
 Along this way the wandering feet of men
 May travel homeward back to thee again
And mid thy glories find their life's true worth.

Spirit of Beauty—tremble not to-day
At sound of tramping feet upon thy way.
 Lo, here shall men for ever bow to thee,
 And worship in thy holy sanctuary.
Keep thou their hearts in reverence always!