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# **The Poetical Works of Mrs. Leprohon**

Mrs. (Rosanna Eleanor) Leprohon

# Imprint

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# THE POETICAL WORKS OF MRS. LEPROHON (Miss R. E. Mullins)

## INTRODUCTION.

When, in after ages, the literature of Canada comes to be written, it is to be hoped that among the mighty sons and daughters of genius now unknown, or as yet unborn, some room will be kept for the brave and loving pioneers who "gave the people of their best," and sang the songs of duty and patriotism and hope, ere life in our young land had ceased to be a struggle. With the growth of wealth and the spread of prosperity, will come leisure for more than material interests; and thus, in course of time, the author who has something to say will find an audience, prepared by culture and not too busy to listen to it. And, as supply is generally commensurate with demand, there will then be a literary class of corresponding merit. At least, something like this has been the rule in the progress of nations. But if those who come after, thus favored by circumstances, surpass their predecessors in literary skill or power, not less deserving are the latter who, with little prospect of reward, bore the burden and the heat of the day. This early stage in a nation's literature has, indeed, an interest and a value of its own, which only meet with due appreciation from a judicious and grateful posterity. If it has not the rich, warm splendor of the later morning, it has the welcome promise of the dawn, and a tender beauty of its own.

In this band of pioneers Mrs. Leprohon must be conceded a distinguished place. None of them has employed rare gifts of head and heart to better purpose; none of them had a wider range of sympathy; none of them did more willing service, with the purest motives, in all good causes. And, it may be added, none of them was more happy in attaining, during life, the admiration and friendship of a large though select circle of every creed and race among her compatriots. It is in order to place in the hands of those who thus loved and honored her a memorial of what she was at her best, intellectually and morally, that this little volume has been prepared. It contains the emotional record of a blameless and beautiful life, the out-

come of a mind that thought no evil of any one, but overflowed with loving kindness to all. Before pointing out, however, what we consider the salient qualities in Mrs. Leprohon's poetry, it may be well to give our readers a brief sketch of her too short career.

Rosanna Eleanor Mullins was born in the city of Montreal in the year 1832. It is almost unnecessary to state that she was educated at the Convent of the Congregation of Notre Dame, so numerous are her affectionate tributes to the memories of dear friends associated with that institution. Long before her education was completed, she had given evidence of no common literary ability. She was, indeed, only fourteen years old when she made her earliest essays in verse and prose. Before she had bid adieu to the years and scenes of girlhood, she had already won a reputation as a writer of considerable promise, and as long as Mr. John Lovell conducted the *Literary Garland*, Miss Mullins was one of his leading contributors. She continued to write for that excellent magazine until lack of financial success compelled its enterprising proprietor to suspend its publication. It was some time before another such opportunity was given to the Canadian votaries of the muses of reaching the cultivated public. In the meanwhile, however, the subject of our sketch—who had, in 1851, become the wife of Dr. J. L. Leprohon, a member of one of the most distinguished Canadian families—was far from being idle. Some of her productions she sent to the *Boston Pilot*, the faithful representative in the United States of the land and the creed to which Mrs. Leprohon was proud to belong. She was also a frequent and welcome contributor to several of the Montreal journals. It is a pleasing evidence of her gentle thoughtfulness for a class which many persons in her position regard with indifference that she wrote, year after year, the "News-boy's Address" for the *True Witness*, the *Daily News* and other newspapers. One of her most pathetic poems, "The Death of the Pauper Child" may also be mentioned as a striking instance of that sweet charity which comprehended in its sisterly range the poor, the desolate and the suffering. The *Journal of Education*, edited by the Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau, himself an honor to Canadian Literature; the *Canadian Illustrated News*, edited by Mr. John Lesperance, distinguished both as a poet and a novelist; the *Saturday Reader*, the *Hearthstone*, and other periodicals, both in Canada and elsewhere, were always glad to number Mrs. Leprohon's

productions among their most attractive features. She had always a ready pen, the result of a full heart and far-reaching sympathies, and, therefore, was frequently asked to write on subjects of current interest. Among her "occasional" poems; several of which are in this volume, may be mentioned the touching stanzas on the "Monument to the Irish Emigrants," those on the "Old Towers" at the "Priest's Farm," those on the renewal of her vows by the Lady Abbess of the Congregation of Notre Dame, the poem on the "Recollet Church," and the address "To the Soldiers of Pius The Ninth." One of her most important efforts of this kind was her translation of the *Cantata* composed by M. Sempé on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada in 1860.

We have attempted such a classification of the poems as we thought would best show the range of Mrs. Leprohon's powers. Under every one of the headings which we have adopted the reader will find something to profit and delight. The lover of nature will find himself carried in fancy to the fairest or grandest of Canadian scenes; he who loves to indulge in reveries of the past can with her stand with Jacques Cartier on Mount Royal three centuries ago and survey the mighty expanse of forest, destined one day to be the home of a thriving people; those whose pleasure it is to read of heroic deeds will hear her sing of ennobling courage and fortitude that blenched not at death. But by many, we think, Mrs. Leprohon will be most cherished as she tells in sweet and simple rhyme of the tenderness of a mother's love, of a wife's devotion, a husband's loyal trust, of the pious offices of the domestic altar, of the parting by the death-bed that is not without hope, of the loved and lost that yet are "not lost but only gone before." To illustrate these varied characteristics by quotation would demand far more, than our allotted space. We can, therefore, only refer the reader to the book itself, confident that in its pages he will find all that we have indicated and much more.

Just a word as to Mrs. Leprohon's prose writings. Though in this sketch we have dwelt upon her work as a poet, it is as a writer of fiction that she has won her most marked popular successes, that she has reached the hearts of the two great communities of which this province is composed. For no less than four of her most elaborate tales have been translated into French; these are, *Ida Beresford*,

the *Manor House of Villerai*, *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, and *Armand Durand*. Besides these, she has written *Florence FitzHarding*, *Eva Huntingdon*, *Clarence FitzClarence* and *Eveleen O'Donnell*. In the *Manor House of Villerai* she has described with a skilful pen the manners and customs of the forefathers of the French Canadian people, such as they were at the period of the great contest which changed the destinies of Canada. In *Armand Durand* we have a courageous struggle with adverse fortune, which is at last crowned with success. The sad consequences of secret marriage, unblessed by parental consent, are unfolded in *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, one of the finest of Mrs. Leprohon's novels, and of which the French translation has lately been honored by a new edition. Of her merits as a novelist one of the ablest of French Canadian critics writes thus: "Gifted with a deep knowledge of the human heart, she finds in domestic life the subject of attractive pictures, full of delicacy and good taste, which she dramatizes with remarkable power. Her charm lies, not in any complication of intrigue or in problems hard to solve, but in a skilful working out of details, in incidents which fix the reader's attention, in the conception of her characters, in the painting of personal traits, in purity of thought, in sweetness of sentiment, in beauty of style, in the harmony of the parts, and in the most scrupulous regard for morality." This is high praise, and it comes from high authority. We will simply add that, with a few necessary changes, it may also be applied to Mrs. Leprohon's poems.

From this imperfect sketch of Mrs. Leprohon's literary life it will be seen that she was no sluggard. But we would leave a wrong impression if we gave it to be understood that all her time was passed in the writing of either poems or tales. Far from it. They constituted but one phase in a life nobly, yet unostentatiously, consecrated to the duties of home, of society, of charity and of religion. Mrs. Leprohon was much more than either a poet or a novelist—she was, also, in the highest sense, a woman, a lady. Had she never written a verse of poetry or a page of prose, she would still have been lovingly remembered for what she was as wife, as mother, as friend. It is, in a great part, because they are associated with her in these more endearing aspects, that they are the true mental and moral offspring of her very self, that those who knew her will find in them so much to prize. Alas! these and loving memories, that can scarce

be separated from them, are now all that is left of her. On the 20th of September, 1879, after a tedious illness, endured with Christian resignation, she passed away. She did not live to receive the reward that was her due on earth, but that which is above is hers, and her works live after her, and a memory that will not perish.

In conclusion, we will just allow ourselves to point out that, in connection with her comparatively early death, there is a touching interest attached to some of her poems, such, especially, as "The Parting Soul to her Guardian Angel" and "The Voices of the Death Chamber." In the former she says:

"Thy soft-breathed hopes with magic might  
Have chased from my soul the shades of night.  
Console the dear ones I part from now,  
Who hang o'er my couch with pallid brow;  
Tell them, we'll meet in yon shining sky,  
And, Angel Guardian, I now can die."

And in the latter, which has all the vividness of an actual death-scene, as the husband and children from whom she must part are kneeling by the bed-side, the sufferer says:

"Oh! if earthly love could conquer  
The mighty power of death,  
*His* love would stay the current  
Of my failing strength and breath;  
And that voice whose loving fondness  
Has been my earthly stay  
Could half tempt me from the voices  
That are calling me away."

But at last they come nearer and sound louder, till they "drown all sounds of mortal birth," and "in their wild triumphal sweetness," lure her away from earth to Heaven.



## SACRED POEMS

### ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

The noontide sun streamed brightly down  
Moriah's mountain crest,  
The golden blaze of his vivid rays  
Tinged sacred Jordan's breast;  
While towering palms and flowerets sweet,  
Drooped low 'neath Syria's burning heat.

In the sunny glare of the sultry air  
Toiled up the mountain side  
The Patriarch sage in stately age,  
And a youth in health's gay pride,  
Bearing in eyes and in features fair  
The stamp of his mother's beauty rare.

She had not known when one rosy dawn,  
Ere they started on their way,  
She had smoothed with care his clustering hair,  
And knelt with him to pray,  
That his father's hand and will alike  
Were nerved at his young heart to strike.

The Heavenly Power that with such dower  
Of love fills a mother's heart,  
Ardent and pure, that can all endure,  
Of her life itself a part,  
Knew too well that love beyond all price  
To ask of *her* such a sacrifice.

Though the noble boy with laughing joy  
Had borne up the mountain road  
The altar wood, which in mournful mood  
His sire had helped to load,  
Type of Him who dragged up Calvary,  
The cross on which he was doomed to die.

The hot breath of noon began, full soon,  
On his youthful frame to tell;

On the ivory brow, flushed, wearied now,  
It laid its burning spell;  
And listless – languid – he journeyed on,  
The smiles from *his* lips and bright eyes gone.

Once did he say, on their toilsome way,  
“Father, no victim is near,”  
But with heavy sigh and tear-dimmed eye,  
In accents sad though clear,  
Abraham answered: “The Lord, our guide,  
A fitting sacrifice will provide.”

The altar made and the fuel laid,  
Lo! the victim stretched thereon  
Is Abraham’s son, his only one,  
Who at morning’s blushing dawn  
Had started with smiles that care defied  
To travel on at his father’s side.

With grief-struck brow the Patriarch now  
Bares the sharp and glittering knife;  
On that mournful pyre, oh hapless sire!  
Must he take his darling’s life?  
Will fails not, though his eyes are dim,  
God gave his boy – he belongs to him.

With anguish riven, he casts towards Heaven  
One look, imploring, wild,  
That doth mutely pray for strength to slay  
His own, his only child;  
When forth on the air swells a glad command,  
And an angel stays his trembling hand.

The offering done, the sire and son  
Come down Moriah’s steep,  
Joy gleaming now on Abraham’s brow,  
In his heart thanksgiving deep;  
While with love from His lofty and glorious Throne  
Heaven’s King hath smiled on sire and son.

## THE STABLE OF BETHLEHEM.

'Twas not a palace proud and fair  
He chose for His first home;  
No dazz'ling pile of grandeur rare,  
With pillar'd hall and dome;  
Oh no! a stable, rude and poor,  
Received Him at His birth;  
And thus was born, unknown, obscure,  
The Lord of Heaven and Earth.

No band of anxious menials there,  
To tend the new-born child,  
Joseph alone and Mary fair  
Upon the infant smiled;  
No brodered linens fine had they  
Those little limbs to fold,  
No baby garments rich and gay,  
No tissues wrought with gold.

Come to your Saviour's lowly bed,  
Ye vain and proud of heart!  
And learn with bowed and humbled head  
The lesson 'twill impart;  
'Twill teach you not to prize too high  
The riches vain of earth —  
But to lay up in God's bright sky  
Treasures of truer worth.

And you, poor stricken sons of grief,  
Sad outcasts of this life,  
Come, too, and seek a sure relief  
For your heart's bitter strife;  
Enter that village stable door,  
And view that lowly cot —  
Will it not teach you to endure,  
And even bless your lot?

## **VIRGIN OF BETHLEHEM.**

Virgin of Bethlehem! spouse of the Holy One!  
Star of the pilgrim on life's stormy sea!  
Humbler thy lot was than this world's most lowly one,  
List to the prayers that we offer to thee!

Not for the joys that this false earth bestoweth,  
Empty and fleeting as April sunshine,  
But for the grace that from holiness floweth,  
Grace, purest Mother, that always was thine.

Charity ardent, and zeal that abounded,  
Thine was the will of thy Father above,  
Thus thy life's fervor so strangely confounded  
Cold hearts that mocked at religion's pure love.

Meekness in suffering, patience excelling,  
Bowed thee, unmutm'ring, beneath sorrow's rod;  
Spirit of purity ever indwelling  
Made thee the Temple and Mother of God.

These are the gifts that thy children implore,  
With hearts warmly beating, and low bended knee;  
Oh! ask of thy Son, whom we humbly adore,  
To grant us the prayers that we whisper to thee.

## **THE PURIFICATION.**

Softly the sunbeams gleamed athwart the Temple proud and high—  
Built up by Israel's wisest to the Lord of earth and sky—  
Lighting its gorgeous fretted roof, and every sacred fold  
Of mystic veil—from gaze profane that hid the ark of old.

Ne'er could man's gaze have rested on a scene more rich and bright:  
Agate and porphyry—precious gems—cedar and ivory white,  
Marbles of perfect sheen and hue, sculptures and tintings rare,  
With sandal wood and frankincense perfuming all the air.

But see, how steals up yonder aisle, with rows of columns high,  
A female form, with timid step and downcast modest eye;—

A girl she seems by the fresh bloom that decks her lovely face—  
With locks of gold and vestal brow, and form of childish grace.

Yet, no! those soft, slight arms enfold a helpless new-born child,  
Late entered on this world of woe—still pure and undefiled;  
While two white doves she humbly lays before the altar there  
Tell that, despite her girlish years, she knows a matron's care.

No fairer sight could heart have asked than that which met the  
view,  
E'en had He been the child of sin—and she a sinner, too;  
But how must heavenly hosts have looked in breathless rapture on,  
Knowing Him, as the Temple's Lord—the Word—th'Eternal Son!

While *she* was that Maid Mother rare—fairest of Adam's race,  
Whom Heaven's Archangel, bending low, had hailed as full of  
grace,—  
The Mother of that infant God close clasped unto her breast—  
the Mary humble, meek and pure, above all women *blessed*.

## OUR SAVIOUR'S BOYHOOD.

With what a flood of wondrous thoughts  
Each Christian breast must swell  
When, wandering back through ages past,  
With simple faith they dwell  
On quiet Nazareth's sacred sod,  
Where the Child Saviour's footsteps trod.

Awe-struck we picture to ourselves  
That brow serene and fair,  
That gentle face, the long rich curls  
Of wavy golden hair,  
And those deep wondrous, star-like eyes,  
Holy and calm as midnight skies.

We see Him in the work-shop shed  
With Joseph, wise and good,  
Obedient to His guardian's word,  
Docile and meek of mood;

The Mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth  
Toiling like one of lowly birth.

Or else, with His young Mother fair —  
That sinless, spotless one,  
Who watched with fond and reverent care,  
Her high and glorious Son,  
Knowing a matron's joy and pride,  
And yet a Virgin pure beside.

All marvelled at the strange, shy grace  
Of Mary's gentle Son;  
Young mothers envied her the Boy  
Who love from all hearts won;  
And, gazing on that face so mild,  
Prayed low to Heaven for such a child.

Though with the boys of Nazareth  
He never joined in mirth,  
Yet young and old felt strangely drawn  
Towards His modest worth;  
E'en though that quiet, wondrous Child,  
Had never laughed nor even smiled.\*

For even then prophetic rose  
Before His spirit's gaze  
The cruel Cross, the griefs reserved  
For manhood's coming days,  
And, worse than all, the countless host  
That, spite His pangs, might yet be lost.

Silent and calm, He held His way  
From morn till evening still;  
His thoughts intent on working out  
His Mighty Father's will;  
While Heaven bent in ecstasy,  
O'er the Boy-God of Galilee.

\* An old tradition avers that our Saviour was never seen to laugh during His mortal life.

## OUR SAVIOUR AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL.

Close beside the crystal waters of Jacob's far-famed well,  
Whose dewy coolness gratefully upon the parched air fell,  
Reflecting back the bright hot heavens within its waveless breast,  
Jesus, foot-sore and weary, had sat Him down to rest.

Alone was He – His followers had gone to Sichar near,  
Whose roofs and spires rose sharply against the heavens clear,  
For food which Nature craveth, whate'er each hope or care,  
And which, though Lord of Nature, He disdained not to share.

While thus He calmly waited, came a woman to the well,  
With water vase poised gracefully, and step that lightly fell,  
One of Samaria's daughters, most fair, alas! but frail,  
Her dark locks bound with flowers instead of modest, shelt'ring veil.

No thought of scornful anger within *His* bosom burned,  
Nor, with abhorrent gesture, His face from her He turned;  
But as His gaze of purity dwelt on her, searching, meek,  
Her bright eyes fell, and blushes hot burned on her brow and cheek.

He told her with a gentleness, by God-like pity nursed,  
Of wond'rous living fountains at which to slake her thirst;  
That those whose lips, thrice blessed, should a draught from them  
obtain,  
Despite earth's toils and troubles, would ne'er know thirst again.

He spoke, too, of the frailties which her womanhood had marred,  
That priceless crown which, she, alas! had sadly failed to guard,  
No word of bold denial did that woman dare to plan –  
She felt that He who spoke with her was more than mortal man.

And when the twelve disciples returned, their errand done,  
They wondered at His converse with that lost and erring one,  
But still they asked no question, while she, with thoughtful mien,  
Returned to tell her friends at home of all that she had seen.

Not only for that daughter of Samaria's hot clime –  
Child of an ancient people, of a by-gone faith and time –

Was meant the exhortation that from His lips then fell,  
But for His Christian children, for us, to-day, as well.

For us, still pure and sparkling, those living waters flow  
Of which He told Samaria's child long centuries ago:  
Forgetting thoughts of earthly pride, and hopes of worldly gain,  
Seek we but once of them to drink — we'll never thirst again.

## **THE TEN LEPERS.**

'Neath the olives of Samaria, in far-famed Galilee,  
Where dark green vines are mirrored in a placid silver sea,  
'Mid scenes of tranquil beauty, glowing sun-sets, rosy dawn,  
The Master and disciples to the city journeyed on.

And, as they neared a valley where a sheltered hamlet lay,  
A strange, portentous wailing made them pause upon their way —  
Voices fraught with anguish, telling of aching heart and brow,  
Which kept moaning: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us now!"

Softly raised the gentle Saviour His eyes like midnight star,  
And His mournful gaze soon rested on ten lepers, who, afar,  
Stood motionless and suppliant, in sackcloth rudely clothed,  
Poor Pariahs! by their nearest, their dearest, shunned and loathed.

Not unto Him prayed vainly those sore afflicted ten,  
No! He yearned too fondly over the erring sons of men,  
Even sharing in their sorrows, though He joined not in their  
feasts, —  
So He kindly told the Lepers: "Show yourselves unto the priests."

When, miracle of mercy! as they turned them to obey,  
And towards the Holy Temple quickly took their hopeful way,  
Lo! the hideous scales fell off them, health's fountains were unsealed,  
Their skin grew soft as infant's — their leprosy was healed.

O man! so oft an ingrate, to thy thankless nature true,  
Thyself see in those Lepers, who did as thou dost do;  
Nine went their way rejoicing, healed in body — glad in soul —  
Nor once thought of returning thanks to Him who made them whole.

One only, a Samaritan, a stranger to God's word,  
Felt his joyous, panting bosom, with gratitude deep stirred,  
And without delay he hastened, in the dust, at Jesus' feet,  
To cast himself in worship, in thanksgiving, warm and meet.

Slowly questioned him the Saviour, with majesty divine: —  
"Ten were cleansed from their leprosy — where are the other nine?  
Is there none but this one stranger — unlearned in Gods ways,  
His name and mighty power, to give word of thanks or praise?"

The sunbeams' quivering glories softly touched that God-like head,  
The olives blooming round Him sweet shade and fragrance shed,  
While o'er His sacred features a tender sadness stole:  
"Rise, go thy way," He murmured, "thy faith hath made thee whole!"

### **THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO.**

He sat by the dusty way-side,  
With weary, hopeless mien,  
On his furrowed brow the traces  
Of care and want were seen;  
With outstretched hand and with bowed-down head  
He asked the passers-by for bread.

The palm-tree's feathery foliage  
Around him thickly grew,  
And the smiling sky above him  
Wore Syria's sun-bright hue;  
But dark alike to that helpless one  
Was murky midnight or noon-tide sun.

But voices breaking the silence  
Are heard, fast drawing nigh,  
And falls on his ear the clamor  
Of vast crowds moving by:  
"What is it?" he asks, with panting breath;  
They answer: "Jesus of Nazareth."

What a spell lay in that title,  
Linked with such mem'ries high

Of miracles of mercy,  
Wrought 'neath Judaea's sky!  
Loud calls he, with pleading voice and brow,  
"Oh! Jesus, on me have mercy now!"

How often had he listened  
To wond'rous tales of love —  
Of the Galilean's mercy,  
Of power from above,  
To none other given of mortal birth  
To heal the afflicted sons of earth.

With faith that never wavered  
Still louder rose his cry,  
Despite the stern rebuking  
Of many standing nigh,  
Who bade him stifle his grief or joy,  
Nor "the Master rudely thus annoy."

But, soon that voice imploring  
Struck on the Saviour's ear,  
He stopped, and to His followers  
He said "Go bring him here!"  
And, turning towards him that God like brow,  
He asked the suppliant, "What wouldest thou?"

Though with awe and hope all trembling,  
Yet courage gaineth he,  
And imploringly he murmurs:  
"Oh Lord! I fain would see!"  
The Saviour says in accents low:  
"Thy faith hath saved thee — be it so!"

Then on those darkened eye-balls  
A wondrous radiance beamed,  
And they drank in the glorious beauty  
That through all nature gleamed;  
But the fairest sight they rested on  
Was the Saviour, David's royal Son.

O rapture past all telling!  
The bliss that vision brought!