

**Robert Carruthers & Sons,
"Courier" Office, Inverness.**

IN AID OF THE SANATORIUM COMFORTS FUND

" The Great Venture "

OR

" Fort-Augustus in Verse "

By Dom ROMUALD ALEXANDER, O.S.B.

WITH A

FOREWORD by LADY LOVAT

oooooOOOooooo

Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots
Frae Maidenkirke to Johnie Groat's;
If there's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede you tent it;
A chiel's amang ye takin' notes,
And faith he'll prent it."

Burns.

DEDICATION

To my two kind friends and critics, in whose
house these verses had their humble beginnings,,
and were guided past certain pit-falls.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE Author of these verses owes apology to those whose names he has taken in vain and with whose solid virtues he has made free. A debt, we fear, he will never pay! Well, the Good Cause, as Lady Lovat says in her gracious Foreword, must hold him excused. Moreover, he is only too happy to seize his opportunity of expressing in his own way his affection for and admiration of those he has "immortalized!" If there is any exaggeration in what he has written, let it be put down to that elastic thing, "poetic licence"

But, "where there is smoke there must be fire!" There is indeed in this case. And the Cause, too, is such as may well excuse a little exuberance. "The Comforts Fund," started a few years ago by Lady Lovat, exists to provide the Matron and Staff with the means of supplying a few extra comforts to those whose lives have not abounded in comfort, and who have been smitten with a fell disease, too often in the very flower of their youth. It is a great comfort—that Fund—to the very devoted Staff of this little Outpost of Succour.

The Author would only add, "God bless the people of Gleann Mor (which Fr. Cyril says should **NOT** be spelt with an "h") and prosper all their works."

An "Index Libellorum" may be found at the end of the book.

ROMUALD ALEXANDER, O.S.B.

FOREWORD

THOSE who know Father Romuald's busy life as parish priest of Forti-Augustus, and the untiring energy with which he visits and helps the Sanatorium, may well be surprised that he has any time to spare for writing poetry. But he was writing poetry all the time behind our backs; and now, "gathering up the fragments that nothing be lost," he has determined to publish them in aid of the Sanatorium Fund. I feel confident that those who value these writings of his for their own sake will value them still more highly for the generosity which has devoted them to charity, and that even those whose names Father Romuald takes liberties with, when he is in lighter vein, will not mind appearing publicly in so good a cause. I hope that a large public will buy the book for the Sanatorium's sake, and read it for their own.

(Signed) LAURA LOVAT,

Chairman of the Inverness-
shire Sanatorium Committee.

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THE GREAT VENTURE

THE GREAT VENTURE.

Tho' pipes no more those pibrochs blow,
That hurl'd the clansmen on their foe,
And many a sweet and tuneful bell
Its tale of peace and concord tell;
Tho' love and hate no more combine
These mountain glens t' incardine,
The spirit of the days of old
Hath not outfl'd its native glen,
The home of brave and generous men,
And women, kind and true as gold.

When on the mountain wind there floats
Faint echo from far battle cry
Of that great venture's chivalry,
And visions pass, like fairy boats
Close reef'd beneath a windy sky;
Courage and faith and hope so high,
The flames that lit each beacon'd hill,
Those three bright flames are soaring still;
And Courage, Faith and Hope, we cry,
So help in God, shall never die.

FORT-AUGUSTUS IN VERSE.

"Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Short swallow flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears and skim away."

"In Memoriam."

THE GREAT VENTURE.

PART I—GENERAL.

1

There's a "wee toon" in Scotland's north-west
By the fairies belov'd and caress'd.

Where each sister and brother
They love one another,
Like so many doves in a nest.

Where the day is as sweet as it's long,
And no one does anything wrong;

But just for a hobby
We keep a "Big Bobby,"

Whose work, like his pay's, a mere song.

You may fancy I'm pitching it strong,
But we never do anything wrong;

'Tis just a mere hobby
That keeps a wee "bobby,"
Whose life's like a sweet Highland song.

2

There you'll meet with the wisdom of age.

And youth with its unwritten page,

Clever school-ma'ams and masters,

And Reverend Pastors;

But there's one thing that's ever the rage—

'Tis a word, let me say, rhymes with "gammon,"

Far, far more important than mammon;

For just open one ear

And I warrant you'll hear

The sacrosanct name of the Salmon!

Now dream not I'm giving you gammon,

It's the god we adore more than mammon;

For as Israel of old

Made a calf out of gold:

We have made a god out of a salmon!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

3

But seeing we've four bonnie kirks,
It is plain we're not quite heathen Turks;
 And think you our faith
 Is a phantom or wraith?
No, we don't hold with "faith without works."

What our "works" are you well may surmise,
In the season they chiefly comprise
 The transfer of fish
 From the loch to the dish.
And—telling the truth of their size.

4

Since the railway has come to this "toon,"
It no longer lives "up in the moon";
 I assure you, dear sirs,
 That the place fairly stirs
As the second train leaves about noon.

Our officials have no time for play;
Oh! they really should treble their pay.
 For when summer comes in—
 It's a scandalous sin—
We really have three trains a day!

Yes, we really have three trains a day,
When the weather is fine, that's to say;
 Ah, there's no cause to grin,
 For, when summer comes in.
We often have three trains a day.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

5

The romance of the old four-horse coaches
No more on our vision encroaches;
 But Romance is not dead,
 If it seem to have fled;
Here's a theme that my pen gaily broaches.
For our Jacks and our Forbes and Macleans
Desire their charabancs, Ford cars or trains,
 Well equipp'd to enhance
 Any page of romance
With their compound of courage and brains.

6

If you don't care to travel by train
Or by car, then there's Mister MacBrayne,
 Who will give you a trip
 On an old-fashioned ship;
But your hurry you'll have to restrain.
But, with great Captain John at the wheel
You will not make the fishes a meal;
 Then there's table-d'hote tea
 Which MacBrayne gives you free,
So you've no cause to grumble or squeal.

7

Our tourists need feel no alarms
Lest we ply them with "pussy-foot balms";
 Tho' we never carouse,
 We have one licensed house—
Our comfy, well-kept Lovat Arms.
In the best law there's always a kink,
And it's never so bad as you'd chink;
 And, I'm sure, if you beg her,
 Kind Mistress Macgregor
Will give you some "limejuice" to drink.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

8

Of our merchants we justly are proud,
And they're never aggressive or loud,
 Tho' quite ready to sell us,
 They constantly tell us,
Anything from a plaid to a shroud.

And, if you don't find what you seek,
There's no reason for chagrin or pique,
 For by boat or by train
 Or the first aeroplane,
They are certain to have it "next week."

9

Just how good children really can be,
You must go to Kilcumein to see,
 For our bairns are the nicest
 All-sugar-and-spicest
Bairns in the world you'll agree.

There is Alastair, Angus and Donnie,
And Ian and Ewen and Ronnie,
 Wully Andrew and Robbie,
 Kenny, Hughie and Bobbie,
And Jenny and Jessie and Johnnie;

Katrionas, Cathies and Maries,
Little girls who can sing like canaries,
 Whose soft Gaelic songs
 Sound like echoing gongs
From the hills of the Brownies and Fairies.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

10

Fort-Augustus is famous for midges
And for young men who stand about bridges,
While the roads we ride on,
Thanks to "Oenigan's John,"
Are almost without holes or ridges.

Oh, would they but give him a chance,
On his roads you might hold a good dance;
But when he cries "Tar!"
They just beam and say "Ah!"
And get on with their trips to South France.

Or if only they'd spare him a roller,
To his soul that would be a consoler,
For his roads then, I ween,
Would be smooth as the green
That emblossoms the dreams of a bowler.

11

New Tennis and Badminton courts
Betoken our passion for sports;
But that "Down went McGinty's,"
Our motto for shinty's
Just one of our cynic's reports.

Soon, soon in the happy "to be"
A champion golf course we'll see;
Meanwhile a blue cloud
Overhangs like a shroud
Each indignant but keen devotee.

14

THE GREAT VENTURE.

12

If you visit our yearly Flow'r Shows,
You may see every blossom that blows,
 Each conceivable hue
 Prom bright pink to deep blue
Makes a Drill-Hail to 'bloom like the rose.

For our gardeners take off their coats,
While there's one who on culture so gloats
 That he cultivates swine
 Fat as Pharaoh's fat kine,
And a breed of the real Guernsey goats.

13

Tourists! come to this modern Utopia,
Our northern complete Cornucopia;
 Oh, waste not your hoard
 On vain rambles abroad.
Is it Europe? Well, we are Europier.

And then rambles in Europe are risky,
Moreover you seldom get frisky
 When drinking that wine,
 Which is all very fine,
But is not like our good Highland whisky.

14

Our climate is surely unique,
Why, we've rain every day in the week;
 But that's far from all,
 If you love "the White Squall,"
Well, you really won't have far to seek.

15

THE GREAT VENTURE.

When our West wind blows soft it is balm,
Only hark! it is chanting a psalm
Of melodious numbers
That woo you to slumbers
Most soothingly, restfully, calm.

Then the East wind turns balm into crystal,
And the sun—if he's there—will have kist all
The deep purple mountains
And waterfall fountains,
Sweet music's soft notes—they enlist all.

It's the truth, with the sun in the sky
Your heart it will leap up on high;
And when 'tis combined
With our free mountain wind,
You will realise heaven is high.

. 15

Here are virtues that gold cannot buy,
Things that grow 'neath this grey cloudy sky;
Tho' my words may seem proud,
We're a wonderful crowd:
"Here's tae us! Wha's like us"? we cry.

But it is not our custom to boast.
Except when proposing a toast;
Still we hold the Great Glen
Breeds the finest of men
As compared with "puir folks" on the coast!

PART II—PERSONAL.

16

So our citizens' virtues I'd trace.
In a word—they're the flower of their race:
Grants, Chisholms and Frasers,
Their numbers amaze us,
And Macdonalds all over the place!

THE GREAT VENTURE

What tales the rapt bard might forth-tell
Of Macgillivray, Grant, Macdonell,
MacAskill and Kennedy,
Pibroch or threnody,
Plaintive and sweet as a bell.

MacIennan, Macleod and Macneil,
Maclean and Macraes of Glenshiel,
Macvarish, Mactavish,
A host that could ravish
The Glen to the March of Lochia.

Macphersons, Mackenzies, Macphees,
Maclarens from over the seas,
Macintyres and Macdougalls,
These names are like bugles
That call in the fresh mountain breeze.

Making common names sound as mere bosh,
Smith, Jones, Brown and Robinson, losh,
They're more like a grimace
Side by side with the grace
Of our regal Bunoich Mackintosh!

Macgregors with Campbells rub noses,
And all love the fair Stewart Roses,
For old-time disputes
Are pull'd up by the roots,
And none to re-plant 'em proposes.

The clans are at one in the Glen,
And there's no "one" who thinks himself "*tea*,"*
And the Matheson sees,
Without bending of knees,
The March of the Cameron Men.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

17

First, the Abbot, whom everyone knows,
Like the lightning he comes and he goes!
 Bubbling over with fun,
 He is aye on the run,
With the sparks flying out of his toes.

There's no doubt but one day he'll be Pope;
We will call it "the Highlanders' hope!"

 Then the Highlands will hum,
 And the Golden Age come,
But the poets will have to elope.
 Ay, things will fair hum,
 And the good days will come,
And the poets—they'll all get the rope!

18

Oh, the magic that lurks in a name
Writ large on the annals of fame!

 Too tall for this story,
 The high Lovat glory
That soars to the sky like a flame.

But the Frasers who swarm in the Glen,
Like their Chieftain are true noble-men,
 And if called, as of old,
 Would work wonders untold,
And each hero comport him as ten.

The Deil will not get OUR Exciseman,
If he did he would get a surprise-man.

 Only just let him try,
 And our Dicky would cry—
"Hoots—or hopit—awa' with your lies, man."

"To tackle a Fraser with lies, man,
Is not the recourse of a wise man,
 So my good Deil, whatever,
 A good deal more clever
You'd be with a better disguise, man!"

THE GREAT VENTURE.

19

Hark! the sound of a Pibroch I hear,
The Campbell's a-coming, 'tis clear,
 In his Royal Stuart tartan
 The saddest he'd hearten,
While his chanter enchanteth each ear.

The days of clan feuds are long past,
The King's Piper, long years may he last;
 May his pipes never burst,
 May his throat never thirst,
Nor his wee home be wreck'd by his blast.

20

There's our Banker, whom all must admire,
A sterling, financic, live wire;
 Then there's big ruddy Mac,
 With his jolly broad back,
And our Plumber whom frosts set on fire.

Our Pat's just the king of all plumbers,
With his Mate he could take on all comers;
 Tho' they do say he's fat,
 He's as spry as a cat,
And as gay as a band with its drummers.

21

With two Doctors we wholly rely on,
The marvel is how we still die on!
 For our Nurse too's the best
 You could find in the west;
A disorder that she claps her eye on
Just utters a groan and collapses,
For she will not put up with "perhapses,"
 And at sight of her bike,
 With her fierce little "tyke,"
It spreads its foul wings and "out-flapses."

THE GREAT VENTURE

22

Now a word let me say of our Baker,
The Doctors must think him a Fakir,
For his buns and his cakes
Have abolish'd all aches,
Which is rough on the Cabinet-maker!

But he's made a new stick for the King,
Which will make that Royal Monarch to sing,
And will cast such a glamour on
The name of Rob Cameron
That the world with his praises will ring.

23

There is one who has kept that great name
Ninety years, if not more, without blame;
Oh, the kindness and grace
In our Old Shepherd's face!—
They are brighter than any bright flame.

Then there's one whom we long to acclaim,
But wild horses won't draw forth her name.
Wit and wisdom of age
All writ down in one page!
Compared to such souls, what is' fame?

For these are the Flow'rs o' the Glen;
Their beauty outsoars the Great Ben.
We may boast "They are ours,
And our favourite flowers,"
Brave women and gentlest of men.

24

We, of course, know the tale of the pieman
Who was fool'd by the cute Simple Simon;
Well, our Simon, we'll GRANT you,
Can charm and enchant you,
For his tongue's not the tongue of a shyman.

20

THE GREAT VENTURE.

A most popular man is our Simon,
Tho' not tall, I would say he's a high man;
And he's jolly and strong,
And as broad as he's long,
And a regular "never-say-die-man."
He can joke and tell stories uproariously,
But never untruthfully, curiously,
And he's really like Jehu
That Great Monarch, he who
Was said by his friends to drive furiously.
And now that he drives a Rolls-Royce,
He has silenced each critical voice.
As the milestones fly past
We just gulp, "Will he last?"
But we always alight and rejoice.

25

We've a dear old crony named Sandy,
With an Old Scotch contempt for French Brandy;
In his raincoat of white
He's a wonderful sight,
But for blushes, we'd call him a Dandy.
But there's one who outshines all our cronies;
She is one of those "all-skin-and-bone-ies,"
But her soul it is fine,
And her humour like wine,
And her heart is as free as the coney's.
She is said to be—well, rather deaf,
So we talk to her in the bass clef;
Very canny and wise,
She can wink with both eyes,
And at cooking she's simply a chef.
Then there's Robert, whose talk is a "scream,"
And "Whang," who could write you a ream,
And our gentle Lock-keepers,
Kilcumein's Seven Sleepers,
Who twist capstan-bars in a dream!

THE GREAT VENTURE

26

If you've got too much wool on your head,
And poetic ideals have fled,
 Go to Paterson's shop
 For "a bit off the top,"
 And your love-locks you quickly will shed.
The cut that he gives is the smartest;
He's a suave "please-which-side-do-you-part-ist."
 There is not in Lochaber
 So clever a barber—
A real Tonsorial Artist.

27

Fort-Augustus is full of young "nuts,"
Dress'd in clothes of most fashionable cuts,
 For our Tailor's the smartest
 Sartorial Artist:
I hail him as one of my butts.
One fine day he shall make me a kilt,
And, if I can manage to flirt,
 You'll see this same Ronald,
 Like Captain Macdonald—
A Hielandman up to the hilt.

28

The west wind doth blow soft as silk,
Which is good for the cows and the milk;
 And as the rains hammer on,
 They seem to cry "Cameron,"
And at Auchterawe he of that ilk
Says "No more need I pray for the rain,
For my prayers have been heard it is plain."
 Then he rattles each can—
 A well-satisfied man—
And drives off in his cart down the lane.

THE GREAT VENTURE

29

Which reminds me our Dairy's changed hands,
And will shortly supply our demands:
 All its plant up-to-date,
 It will really be great,
So at least this old Bard understands.

No more need to drink whisky and beer,
For soon, very soon, it is clear,
 Tho' it sounds like a dream,
 We shall drink mugs of cream,
Flowing fresh from Culachy's own Weir.

30

On our Farmers I'd take up my text:
Stout fellows, but sadly perplex'd
 When they see hay and sheaves
 Floating off like the leaves,
And one harvest is merg'd in the next.

Then those Shepherds whose ewes and whose rams
Share a nook in their hearts with the lambs
 Who are frequently lost
 In the snow and the frost;
But they leave all complaints to their dams.

And those Stalwarts who "keep" the red deer,
Quick to "spot" them before they appear,
 Who construct monster bags
 Full of grouse and great stags
For those sportsmen who sport once a year.

These may all have their faults, but they're men;
I salute them with heart in my pen;
 Weather-worn and robust,
 They are souls you may trust
With the name and the fame of our Glen.

23

THE GREAT VENTURE.

31

The great Caledonian Canal
Is our life-long familiar pal;
 But of views and of vistas
 Its "capstan-bar-twisters"
Are a long way its best views of all.
They are constant as Nature's own clocks,
Blithe of soul and as cheery as cocks,
 For they put all their "blues"
 In the dungaree trews,
Which are part of these primitive locks.

32

When we leave this rough world and its noise,
And have laid down our trinkets and toys,
 Then the forest win wave
 O'er each one's little grave:
That's the work of our Forestry Boys,
Who work hard in the mud and the slush,
With a zeal that should cause us to blush,
 That the musical breeze
 May play chords in their trees
For the songs of the blackbird and thrush.

33

There are some whom we seldom remember,
Save perhaps at the end of December,
 At it hard all the year
 In a job that must cheer,
One would think, like the fog in November.
Our Post-Office ladies—that labour-
Must jolt one like tossing the caber.
 Let us hope they don't mind it,
 But hard they must find it
All the day to be loving their neighbour!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

Here we have the "Macalpine tradition,"
And how, in that thankless position,
 A worthy successor
 Of one who, God bless her,
Toil'd a life-time without intermission—

And to help keep that lofty tradition
In an even more thankless position,
 The most cheerful successor
 Of her—the gods bless her—
Who's embark'd on a still nobler mission!

'Twill be long ere the name of Macalpine
Is forgot in the Glen, and we all pin
 Our faith to the fact
 Of her kindness and tact,
But if not, then we all deserve scalpin\

3 4

Let me show you Glenmoriston's Bishop,
And indeed I could easily fish up
 Quite a number whose claim
 To that high-sounding name
Is also sound, for the stuff that they dish up!

Our belov'd Alan Cameron, sure,
In Episcopal state will endure,
 Like "My Lord of Glengarry,"
 His crozier he'll carry
Till he grounds it within Heaven's door!

35

Time fails me to sing of the others,
The pride of their fathers and mothers.
 But I'd forfeit my fame
 If I left out the name
Of our justly-renowned "Speedy Brothers."

THE GREAT VENTURE

You should hear Jimmy mimic his brother;
It's so good that the which from the tother
 You really can't tell,
 For he does it so well,
It would take in their father or mother.

But Alec can play on the pipes;
He is one of the best Highland types;
 So it's clear the one brother
 Can "silence" the other;
All scores he thus loudly outwipes.

36

Ah, that gay gallant Highlander type!
Prone to fight or to dance and to pipe,
 Now shy and "umbrageous,"
 Now wild and outrageous,
Then merry and mellow and ripe.

Not to-day would he leave just your stump
With its head stuck on top of a pump,
 For he's more ways than one
 Of providing you fun
When attacked by the doldrums or hump.

Often mov'd in the old Highland manner
To brandish his "monkey-wrench" spanner,
 Your clansman, so brave,
 Is as gentle and suave,
And the lamb might be blaz'd on his banner.

True, a spanner's not like a claymore,
When you'd "gralloch" the Sassenach's gore,
 But the sword there's a tax on,
 And so the poor Saxon
Is safer to-day than of yore.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

Ourselves, we are English and proud of it,
But we don't, in these parts, talk too loud of it,
And we cultivate manners
(In fear of those spanners),
Lest we happen to make our last shroud of it.

37

Then here's to each lad and each lassie,
I could do with a pint in a tassie,
To drink to each one
Full of innocent fun,
So comely and gay and un-blassée.

For we're proud of our boys and our girls,
And we hold them as diamonds and pearls;
But while owning a passion
For each modern fashion,
We've a fancy for long-flowing curls.

38

Time was when men wrangled and jangled,
And in each others' nets got entangled,
When religion, all hate,
Molten fury in spate,
Left their souls all distorted and mangled.

Far from us be such dismal distortions,
And all such "religious abortions"
Who wrangle and tangle
And jangle and mangle
May eat with the Furies their portion.

Then all silly old feuds let us bury,
And be brotherly, breezy and merry,
For it can't be so long
Ere we sing our last song
And cross over the stream in the ferry.

27

THE GREAT VENTURE

And, even since singing this ditty,
The bells of Death's Mystical City,
 How many sad times
 Have their soft muffled chimes
Filled our hearts, and the Angel of Pity
Hath borne to the Land o' the Leal,
That land of all lands the most real,
 The ones whom above
 All things earthly we love
With that love which alone is ideal.
But it's time that I ended my story,
Which I think you'll allow is Glen Mor-ey;
 In fair or foul weather
 We'll all hold together,
And together we'll all go to Glory.

ENCORE.

As recited at the concert, in aid of the Comforts Fund
of the Sanatorium, in the Drill Hall, Fort-
Augustus, on February 10th, 1928.

If you're out for a good holiday,
And would really be merry and gay,
 Aye and clever and canny,
 Go and visit the "Sanny,"
And, if you're not drown'd on the way,
You'll be happy to find yourselves there,
Where there's any amount of fresh air,
 While each Nurse and the Matron,
 You'll find her the patron
Of everything spicey and rare.
They're the objects, as all of you know,
Of this Concert Variety Show;
 All our musical rockets
 Are to fill up their pockets
And make their high spirits to flow.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

To be thrifty I know you'll be scorning,
And deaf to economy's warning,
So give them a chance
And stay on for the dance,
And go home, with the milk, in the morning.

SUNSHINE.

[To the Matron and Staff of the Sanatorium.]

"Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing
it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

Ecclesiastes,

If the day is long and toilsome,
There is happiness and fun
When the longsome day is over,
And the hardest work is done;
For there's joy beneath the surface
If you only try to find it,
And however black the cloud
There's the golden sun behind it.
If the night is sad and lonely
And the darkness inky black,
You will soon forget your sadness
When the cheery sun comes back;
And there's light with every shadow
If you only look to find it,
For, however black the cloud,
There's the golden sun behind it.
There is sorrow on the surface,
But there's comfort deeper down,
And the Cross that looms so largely
Hides the splendour of a Crown.
So we look beneath the surface
For the joy of life, and find it,
And love the very cloud
For the golden sun behind it.

The Sanatorium, 1925.

R. A.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

"GOOD NIGHT."

**[To the Patients of the Sanatorium and all on the
threshold of Heaven.]**

**"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark,
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark."**

Tennyson.

**The sun has set and soon it will be dark,
The animals are all inside the ark,
And we must quit these shores of song and laughter,
'Tis time to say "Farewell," and to embark.**

**The night is here, and so " Goodbye " to play
In the bright sunshine 'midst the scented hay;
Down with our toys and things and up to dreamland,
Like every dog, we've had our little day.**

**A jolly day it was, and full of fun,
So short, it seems as if 'twere but begun;
We were just children, laughing at each other,
Shouting and romping, revelling in the sun.**

**Still let us laugh together in our sleep,
While the clear stars come out and at us peep;
And if in dreams, perchance, we roam or ramble,
Our Ramblers' Union always will we keep.**

**" Twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark,"
As the Victorian poet aptly doth remark.
Let us dream peacefully o' the day that's over,
And not disturb the others in the; ark.**

R. A.

July, 1928.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

L'ENVOI.

**Birds of Paradise! All my day
I would hear you round me flying,
And, when near to death I'm lying,
Birds of Paradise, with me stay,
Brightly-plumaged as the ray
Of that golden sun now dying
In the west, and voices crying
Out of the moon and over the bay.**

**Children of the heavenly mountains,
Angels of the dew's bright fountains,
Bear my soul to lands of light;
Gentle-handed, softly winging,
Comfort me with your sweet singing,
Birds of Paradise, all my night.**

R. A.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

MERCHANDISE.

**"Of our Merchants we justly are proud;
They are never aggressive or loud!"
May I claim your attention
While briefly I mention
The deeds of this wonderful crowd.**

**For here's a whole tribe of "great ventures,"
Who merit far more than "debentures,"
And they who won't raise
Loud paeans of praise
Deserve the most practical censures.**

IMRAY'S.

**If "Shoes and ships and sealing-wax
And cabbages and kings"
Are proper things to talk about,
Well, here's the shop to walk about
And see those very things,
Or most of those same things.
Come, one and all, to Imray's Store,
Most Curious shop in all Gleann Mor,
Where all the people meet together
To hear the news and "bless" the weather,
While Shetland wool and Harris tweed
Supply the very things they need.
And "Winkie" in the window keeps
Her woollen watch, and never sleeps.
Here, tho' each rival's furious,
We satisfy the curious.**

THE GREAT VENTURE

MACDONALD'S STORES.

The very aspect of this Store
Must make you want to buy a score
Of articles of every kind
Attractive to the healthy mind.
We stock all that is seasonable
At prices quite unreasonable!
Unreasonably cheap, we mean,
Risking the charge of being "green,"
And "ever-green" indeed are we,
And all we say is "Come and see!,"
N.B.—We trust we need not mention
We'll give you our MOST PROMPT attention.

CHISHOLM'S TEA-SHOP.

If you want something nice in the tea-line,
You had better at once make a bee-line
To Chisholm's shop 'cross the Canal.
You will notice a sign saying "Tea-Room,"
The question is "Will there still be room?"
Because it's the Mecca of all.
At Chisholm's you'll speedily know what I meant
When I said "A good tea there is money well spent."
And after you've had two or three of those ICES
You'll gasp, "My! the quality's more than the price's."

CAMERON'S WALKING-STICK DEPOT.

We all know "The March of the Cameron Men,"
And have sung it ourselves, maybe, climbing a ben;
But though climbing Ben Nevis, you'd never be sick
If you took the precaution of buying a stick
At Cameron's Shop, where a King once did stop
And started that fashion, for when
Our Edward the King did that sensible thing
He was crown'd King of "Cameron's Men,"
Who can climb any mountain or ben.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

LESLIE'S STORES.

The bridge across the River Oich
Is not "The Bridge of Sighs,"
For Leslie's Shop is at one end,
And he who enters buys
The very best of everything
Until his heart begins to sing,
And "sighs and shadows" shrink
Like thirst doth shrink, for here indeed
Are things to eat AND DRINK.

THE MALVERN TEA-ROOMS (Macdonald.)

If such good things as tea and cakes
Can make a soul good-humoured,
This house such an impression makes,
As it is more than rumoured
That it must have a deal to do
With making hungry people view
Life through bright-coloured glasses.
For you will find it's very true
The tea and cakes it serves to you
All such-like food surpasses.

N.B.—Its famous home-made scones
Will cheer the marrow of your bones!

CAMPBELL'S "CALEDONIA" TEA-ROOMS.

"The Campbell's are coming." What ho! they have
come,
And coming yourselves you will find them at home.
And you very soon, nay, "instanter" will be
Snug and cosy inside after ten cups of tea!

THE LOVAT ARMS HOTEL.

"The comfy," well-kept "Lovat Arms"
Is the place to allay all alarms,
For "All's quite of the best
In this sumptuous nest,"
Sing the gnuts in continuous psalms.

THE GREAT VENTURE

The tasteful cuisine and the wines,
The lounge and the hall—all combines;
But what we would mention
Is the courteous attention
That gilds, so to say, and refines
This hospice that's called an hotel.

THE CALEDONIAN HOTEL.

"The Caledonian" is a phrase
To stir one's very marrow,
For it recalls heroic lays
And makes one think of spacious days
When folks were not so narrow.
Mistress Macgregor, too, enthrones
The graces of the perfect host;
Her homely comfort, too, will toast
Your own most human marrow-bones.
Indeed, I say it not for self:
She is a Hostess in Herself!

MUNRO, TAILOR.

"It's not the coat nor yet the vest
That make the gentleman,"
So the old adage doth attest,
And, as for me, I give it best,
I don't suppose they can.
But this I know, and you can prove it,
It's bed-rock truth, and nought can move it -
Here is an artist, he who can
Make a man look—well, like a man.
And as for ladies, when they view
Themselves in looking-glass that's true,
They'll think—"We LOOK like ladies too."

THE GREAT VENTURE

GRANT'S EMPORIUM.

The engine says " I think I can, I think I can, I think
I can
The engine says " I think I can "
When climbing up a hill;
The weakling wails " I know I can't, I know I cant,
I know I can't";
The weakling wails "I know I can't,"
For he is weak until—
Until he's been to Simon Grant's. Ah! then you'll
hear no more "I cant's,"
But now, a fully-furnished man, he'll cry—" I can, I
know I can!"

ALEX. MACDONALD, BOOT AND SHOE DOCTOR.

There is a merry Cobbler Boy
Sings by the riverside,
And you will all be merry too
When once his skill you've tried.
The boot that's felt his magic touch
Renews its very sole,
And you who wear his boots will sing
And dance about like anything,
As gay as Old King Cole.

W. WILLIAMSON, FANCY GOODS, ETC.

At Williamson's Variety Shop
You buy at will a "topping" top,
A walking-stick, a picture-frame,
A lovely doll or jolly game,
A briar pipe and best tobacco,
A monkey up a stick, named " Jacko,"
Or truly almost everything
To make a song about AND SING.
And to sing songs I've got the mind
In this wee shop, so SWEET and kind,
Because—Oh, well, I'm not QUITE blind!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

ALEX. MACKENZIE, BUTCHER.

The Zulu word "Sebenze"
Denotes what we call "work,"
Now Mr A. Mackenzie
Would get into a frenzy
If called a Jew or Turk;
Just call and see and hear him talk,
And you will find he sells good pork
As well as every kind of meat,
Such as the highly tasteful eat.
Fed up" by him your strength will grow,
And you will then begin to know
The possibilities that lurk
Within that thing which we call "work."

RICHMOND HOUSE (Aitchison Bros.)

To Richmond House the Quality
Go flocking by the score,
And—this is what impresses me,
And with surprise possesses me—
There's always room for more!
So here you have them, don't you see,
Both Quality and Quantity;
And all I know agree—
The quality of all the food
To put it mildly's very good.
It has just flown into my head—
Like Bethlehem, it may be said
To be in truth "The House of Bread!"
For it is run by a great baker.
Also, of course, a first-class caker.
Let's sum it up in three words—guess!—
A QUITE UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS!

THE GREAT VENTURE

CAMERON'S FRUIT SHOP.

A Kodak is a kind of fruit
Which, so the poet sings,
Grows in this "bijou" fruit-shop,
'Midst other pretty things
(e.g., engagement rings)!
I wish I knew a rhyme for "kodak."
The nearest I can get is "go back."
But that's enough for you and me,
For when you've entered, say, to see
Things to put on a Christmas tree,
This little Fairies' Paradise,
Which fills you with its glad surprise,
YOU Will "GO BACK" AGAIN
As certain as the rain.

MACVARISH ACTIVITIES:

Stationmaster — Boarding Accommodation.

Now, with Miss or with Mr Macvarish,
We expect nothing gaudy or garish,
Whether Master of Stations
Or Mistress of Rations,
They are—well, they're the Pride of the Parish.

I'd say "best," but then Mr Macvarish
Would say that WAS gaudy or garish;
And others might cry—
"That's a Boarding-House Lie!"
And I can't have a war in my Parish.

This house—it is one of the best;
It's the acme of comfort and rest;
I could write a large tome
On this snug little home
And the way they consider each guest.

THE GREAT VENTURE

D. J. MACDOUGALL, FLESHER.

Unless you are a vegetarian
Or else a very crude barbarian,
You will appreciate a sweet
And tender cut or joint of meat;
That so, and if you would refresh her,
Call in and see this noted flesher,
Who, in her shop so cool and fresh,
Retails some really first-class flesh.
Then will you know that her renown
For selling " the best meat in town "
Is not a myth or idle fable,
But a great fact, secure and stable.
And if your house-keeping be frugal
You'll bless the name of THE MACDOUGALL.

**Mr H. MACRAILD, Tailor, at the Well of the
Heads, Glengarry.**

God save you lest you lose your head
In such a way as that,
And sport for all eternity
For every tourist's eye to see
A head without a hat,
And made of stone at that!
But if you really have a head
Upon your either shoulder,
You'll chuckle, when you think of it
Some day when you are older,
Because your common-sense prevail'd,
And you look'd in on H. MacRaild,
Whom Father Curwen once confess'd
THE CLEVEREST TAILOR IN THE WEST!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

S. JOSEPH'S COTTAGE, MARKET HILL.

" On Richmond Hill there lives a lass "
Of deathless lyric glory;
On Market Hill we may surpass
The charm of that sweet story:
For here are, dear inquisitor,
A bedroom and a parlour
Which must delight the visitor,
Be he or she a snarler!
The scones, the cakes and other food,
I speak with knowledge—they are good;
As for the view, look out at seven,
And you will think—"Why, this is heaven!"
And Mrs Forbes, yes, you can safely trust us,
Is the best pastry-cook in Fort-Augustus!

INVERMORISTON SHOP (Chisholm).

Shell Spirit, etc., for Cars — General Merchant.

This little Corner Shop,
Where all the 'busses stop,
Has many things to sell you,
And I may safely tell you,
If you've a little cash
And would " do nothing rash,"
You really might do worse
Than open your wee purse
And spend a pound or two
On just what meets your view
In the little Corner Shop,
Where all the 'busses stop.

N.B. — I've failed to tell
That the Red Pump with its " Shell,"
If your petrol's running dry,
Will refresh and vivify.

THE GREAT VENTURE

Mr J. GRANT and Miss M. GRANT, Shoemaker and
Confectioner, Invergarry.

If you're on tour in fair Glengarry,
And have a lot of weight to carry,
You'll probably be sore of foot,
There's some'at wrang wi' your old boot!
Well, thank your stars which guided you

To this most favoured place,
Where lives a man who'll see you through,
And do a rapid job for you,

And do it with a grace
That marks him one of Nature's Kings;
Hark, how his merry humour rings!
Jokes old and new for you he'll dish-up—
Our dear old quaint shoemaker-Bishop!

N.B.—A bike's above his porch,

On which wee Johnnie used to scorch!

And then if you are wise and wary,
You'll see his daughter, Mistress Mary,
For wise, wise and wary is she,
Wise is our Mary.

The pastry-cooks of Glengaree
Canna' compare wi' Mary.

And since she's opened a wee shop,
The travellers, each and all, must stop
And take their cakes and ginger-pop
Frae oot the hands o' Mary.

Now, tourists, bear my words in mind,
And never leave her wares behind
Until ye've tasted every kind,
But kinder still is Mary.

Sae kind, kind, BUT CANNY is she,
Kind is our Mary;
The finest lass you'll ever see
Canna' compare wi' Mary!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

The Deil is aye upon her track.
An' gies her mony a hefty thwack
Trying to get her in his sack,
But he'll get "the sack" from Mary.

"Clack, clack, clackety clack,"
Hark at the Deil and Mary!
The toughest nut you'll ever crack
Is soft compared wi' Mary!

FOWLIS COTTAGE (Mrs Munro.)

If you've heard of "the snare of the fowler,"
And ever been hailed as "an owl,"
Or have had much to do with a "growler,"
And sometimes yourself "done a growl."
When Dame Fortune has guided your feet to this spot,
All such nightmares and epithets you'll have forgot,
For this is a house
Where you're snug as a mouse
In its own little cot.

INVERGARRY HOTEL (Mr and Mrs Buchan).

This Paradise of Fishermen,
By far-famed River Garry,
To which they all come back again,
And longer love to tarry.
No need for me to chant its praises;
I won't, lest you cry— "Go to blazes!"
But I would sing a little song
About this fine Hotel;
Indeed, indeed I won't be long;
Oh, don't cry "Go to----" well,
No need to name that nasty name,
Mr and Mrs Buchan's fame
Upon me casts its spell,
And I am dumb, but come, O come
To this Hotel!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

THE INVERGARRY STORES.

This is the Glen's Emporium,
A better word than Store,
For here we never "story 'em"—
I mean deceive—but "glory 'em"
With measure running o'er.
This is the Crematorium
Of profiteering lore.
We understand and can provide
The things you really need
At prices very close allied
To profit-maker's suicide:
As "he who runs may read,"
And deals with us in deed.

TOMDOWN HOTEL (Mr and Mrs Grant).

Tom Doon is "up in the moon/
Well on the way to heaven,
So you will think as your tea you drink
On a summer morn at seven.
Tom is a wizard, sure enough.
And knows the ways of wooing;
He's merry and bright and up to snuff.
And knows just what he's doing—
Wooing you all to Fairyland,
And fairy board and bedding;
And after a day or so with him
You'd dream of a Highland wedding.
Sighing to dwell in that fairyland
On a fairy farm or steading.
And they who understand so well
The way to run this snug Hotel
Will expedite the wedding.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

**THE MAIL SERVICE, INVERGARRY.
James Macphee—Motor Cars—"Helen the Post."**

All those who bring my mail,
By rail,
Or sail,
Or trail,
On horse or foot, o'er hill and dale,
Who never fail
Whate'er it doth entail,
Year in, year out, and know not rest,
Such ones I hail
With zest!

All those who bring my letters,
I hail them as my betters:
Nay, rather, "Give them best!"

Thus Mr James Macphee
Hath a high claim on me;
He doth deserve to be
Hailed as a benefactor,
Together with his tractor.
But when it comes to walking, losh,
No one can touch our Helen Mackintosh.
Shell traverse glen or ben
With strength of any ten;
Nor fears she deils or men,
Aye, nor lion in its den!

DUNCAN KENNEDY, Blacksmith, Piper, Invergarry.

When Duncan plays upon his pipes
You'll hear what music ought to be.
No base, degraded, modern types
For such a man as he.
None of your wretched "rag-time";
Nor dreary, droning "drag-time,"
But true soul-stirring melody—
That is the stuff for him—and me!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

But when you hear his surging bellows roar,
You think him still more wondrous than before,
And cry,
"The Smith a mighty man is he!"
And why?
The roughest work he'll never shirk,
And yet is he
Forger of skirling, high-soul'd minstrelsy.

CMACHAN KENNELS (Scotch Terrier for Sale).

The little rough-haired Terrier
Which Douglas Brown, of high renown,
Will sell to-day, if you will pay,
Well, let us say ten pounds, or five at least,
Is bound to make life merrier.
For 'tis a dog that's all a-gog
For fun or sport of any sort.
And every little merry, virile beast
On this wee Kennel Farm
Can boast a wondrous pedigree,
Which all may see, and you'll agree
At once with me,
Is longer than your arm.

THE FRIGATE BIRD.

Macintyre's Motor 'Bus Service, Fort-William.

The Macintyre 'Bus is a beautiful thing;
Like a great Frigate Bird, it is swift on the wing.
It has link'd up the Forts and forbye either sea
In the closest of bonds and a real unity.
Fort-William at 9; Fort-Augustus 11,
And if sometimes we fear it will land us in heaven,
How vain is that fear! there'll be no requiem,
For its driver—Young Macintyre—'s simply a gem,
And we safely arrive Inverness 1 p.m.
The pace that it travels annihilates midges:
But why, gentle sirs, don't you strengthen the bridges?

THE GREAT VENTURE.

CLUANIE INN (Mr and Mrs J. Macdonald).

Quoth the Piper—"I mind it and when
It was naught but a wee 'butt an' ben,"

And now, as you see,
It's well worthy to be

The resort of sportswomen and men!

If splendid mountain scenery,
Which to ignore were sin;

If gracious summer's greenery
And autumn's wistful "gleanery"

Can woo the heart and win,
Then come to Cluanie Inn.

If lochs and rivers full of fish,
And sport of every kind;

If joys that echo, every wish,
And Mrs M's most dainty dish

Can captivate the mind,
Then here you surely find

What must indeed be next of kin
To Paradise—Sweet Cluanie Inn!

INVERMORISTON HOTEL (Mr and Mrs Kydd).

The brave "Men of Glenmoriston"

Are famous men in history,
And it will be no mystery
If only you will list a wee;

The Men of Invermoriston

In council or consistery,
In rough work or artistry,
Alike excel, as facts will spell,
If you but come and see.

Two reasons are the cause of it,
Or you may say the laws of it;
Two things—just two there be—

Their St Columba's Well
And this Superb Hotel.

THE GREAT VENTURE

LAGGAN LOCKS

W. & C. Fraser, Wholesale Merchants).

At Laggan Locks the "steamer
In summer loves to linger,
As tho' it were some dreamer
Pointing admiring finger
At mountain's towering ben
And lovely Highland glen.
Yet man doth aye remember,
Naturally in November,
And even in September,
That he is but a man
Built on material plan,
And simply has to think
Of stuff to eat and drink.
Then Fraser's shop he spies,
And with a glad surprise
He runs inside—and buys—
That is if he is wise!

MACRAE & DICK.

Motor 'Bus Service, etc., Inverness.
Macrae & Dick are my two chums—
A very noble pair, sir;
Their syren screams, their engine hums,
There's always time to spare, sir.
When you're with them, and safe and sound
Are they as well as swift, sir.
Lor' lumme! how the wheels go round,
And how they do "mop up" the ground!
A ride with them's a gift, sir;
A quick but not "short shrift," sir.
Now, as you know, of course,
The horse
Has yielded place to motor car,
So there you are.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

THE GARAGE, PIER HEAD, INVERMORISTON
Cars on Hire — Pratt's Spirit — Licensed to Sell Beer.
(Macdonald Brothers).

Ronald and Donald are men of good cheer
(Both of them "lads" without any fads).
Good spirit, high spirits, and jolly good beer
(Which a licence allows 'em to sell on the Pier).
They deal with alike, and your car will just jump
After taking a drink from the bright Golden Pump.
Now these three things they mix, so at least I should
say,
Which accounts for the highly remarkable way
Your car shows of doing a side-step or sway.
'Tis no wonder, I say, if it's merry and gay,
For you'll catch a man's spirits from five minutes'
chat,
And Beer is good cheer, and Pratt makes you fat.
Look at Ronald and Donald and cry "That is that! '*

INVERMORISTON SMITHY

(D. & D. Macdonald Bros.)

"Under a spreading chestnut tree
The Village Smithy stands."
In point of fact they're two of them,
With hard and grimy hands.
Just come and take a view of them,
And see the iron bands
Upon each brawny arm of them,
And you will think no harm of them,
For what can be the hurt,
When horses all day long you shoe,
And all those "blacksmith" wonders" do
(And they are first-rate dancers too!)
What, say I, is the hurt
Of a bit of honest dirt?

THE GREAT VENTURE.

RHU POULTRY FARM, Pier Head, Invermoriston*

White Wyandottes, Flowers, etc.

From Orient the Savant sails
On friendly philanthropic gales,
Intent to set us on our legs
By means of poultry and fresh eggs.
But he, Lieutenant-Colonel Lane,
Late of the Indian Army,
Is not, I hasten to explain,
Made by his learning "balmy";
For though he wrote a book upon
"The Bounding Buck of Babylon,"
It did not, as you might expect,
Have on his mind a bad effect.
No, No, his Wyandottes, pure white,
Cackle that he is e-Rhu-dite,
For he can, with his learned pen,
Soon educate an average hen,
Who, fed with excerpts from old tome.
Repeats the lays of Ancient Rome!
Not quantity alone but quality
His eggs derive from Persian Polity.
How can he but brace up our legs
With stuff like that in all his eggs?
The Colonel and his winsome Dame
Were Amateurs when here they came
(A very few short years ago!)
But, at the Horticultural Show,
Each was proclaimed a full-fledg'd pro!
Ho! Ho!!

THE GREAT VENTURE.

SPEAN BRIDGE HOTEL (Mr and Mrs Macdonell.)

If the Bridge across the Spean
From your heart extracts a paeon,
When you get to this Hotel
It will turn into a yell
Which your very soul produces
In contempt of all the sluices
And the forces that control
Your too long enduring soul.
There's Ben Nevis in mid-distance,
But the line of least resistance
Is your line, sit down and rest.
Give Old Ben "a breezy best!"
For he's just a rough old mountain,
And there's no Ben Nevis Fountain
On his summit as of old.
When the land was full of gold.
Sit you tight in this Hotel,
Where Hamish Macdonell—
A villain whom I know—
Will take you well in tow,
And you'll have, ere you've said "knife,"
Just the time of your old life.
What a life, and what a night!
In the heavens—what a light!
There's the moon above Ben Nevis,
Glimpse of heaven through a crevice.
Oh, the Spean how it flows!
How it thunders as it goes!
Said the Prior, and he knows,
"It is lacking in repose!"
Sure, the Bridge across the Spean
In your soul will raise a paeon,
But the Spean Bridge Hotel,
AND Mrs Macdonell—
Oh, well . . . !

THE GREAT VENTURE.

TO OUR VISITORS

(In Aid of the Comforts Fund of the Sanatorium).

To you who come to us for sport
And love of purple heather,
I give this verse, not to extort,
But woo your kind and rich support
For those to whom Life's weather
Has not been quite so kind,
Nor tempered its rough wind.

Ere that you leave the moor and glen
And seek the clearer-sky lands,
And cry farewell to towering Ben,
With views that point the distant ken
To far-off Western Islands—
Think of those lives that spend
Their strength so fast, and lend

Your gracious aid, which may entail
Kind transference o'er Mountain
That slopes so sudden to the vale
Of the dark shade, to those that fail
And faint, ere yet the Fountain
Of the New Life flash bright
And day dispels the night.

Farewell to Heath and Blue-bell Glen,
To distant-pencil'd Islands;
Farewell to rugged, misty Ben,
To gentle, kindest-mannered men;
Farewell to Loch-bound Highlands,
Dower'd by the gods to bless
With comforts numberless.

ROMUALD ALEXANDER, O.S.B.

" CIAD MILE BEANNACH LEIBH."

THE GREAT VENTURE.

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| 24 | Simple Simon. | 36 | Highlanders and Sas-senachs. |
| 25 | Cronies, etc. | 37 | Lads and Lassies. |
| 26 | A Tonsorial Artist. | 38 | The Land o' the Leal.
A Concluding Hope. |
| 27 | A Sartorial Ditto. | | Encore Verses. |

Appendix.

Merchandise (Advts.)