

The Cow Chase

Major John André, Deputy Adjutant General



To drive the kine one summer's morn,
The tanner took his way;
The calf shall rue that is unborn,
The jumbling of that day.

And Wayne descending steers shall know,
And tauntingly deride;
And call to mind in every low,
The tanning of his hide.

Yet Bergen cows still ruminate,
Unconscious in the stall,
What mighty means were used to get,
And loose them after all.

For many heroes bold and brave,
From Newbridge and Tappan,
And those that drink Passaic's wave,
And those who eat suppaun;

And sons of distant Delaware,
And still remoter Shannon,
And Major Lee with horses rare,
And Proctor with his cannon.

All wond'rous proud in arms they came,
What hero could refuse
To tread the rugged path to fame,
Who had a pair of shoes !

At six, the host with sweating buff,
Arrived at Freedom's pole;
When Wayne, who thought he'd time enough,
Thus speechified the whole.

O ye, who glory doth unite,
Who Freedom's cause espouse;
Whether the wing that's doom'd to fight,
Or that to drive the cows,

"Ere yet you tempt your further way,
Or into action come,
Hear, soldiers, what I have to say,
And take a pint of rum.

"Intemp'rate valor then will string
Each nervous arm the better;
So all the land shall I O sing,
And read the General's letter.

"Know that some paltry refugees,
Whom I've a mind to fight;
Are playing h__l amongst the trees
That grow on yonder height.

"Their fort and block-houses we'll level,
And deal a horrid slaughter;
We'll drive the scoundrels to the devil,
And ravish wife and daughter.

"I, under cover of attack,
Whilst you are all at blows,
From English neighb'rhood and Nyack,
Will drive away the cows;

"For well you know the latter is
The serious operation,
And fighting with the refugees
Is only demonstration."

His daring words, from all the crowd,
Such great applause did gain,
That every man declar'd aloud,
For serious work with Wayne.

Then from the cask of rum once more,
They took a heady gill;
When one and all, they loudly swore,
They'd fight upon the hill.

But here the muse hath not a strain
Befitting such great deeds;
Huzza ! they cried, huzza ! for Wayne,
And shouting _____ .

Near his meridian pomp, the sun
Had journey'd from the horizon;
When fierce the dusky tribe mov'd on,
Of heroes drunk as pison.

The sounds confus'd of boasting oaths,
Re-echo'd through the wood;
Some vow'd to sleep in dead men's clothes,
And some to swim in blood.

At Irving's nod 'twas fine to see,
The left prepare to fight;
The while, the drovers, Wayne and Lee,
Drew off upon the right

Which Irving 'twas, fame don't relate,
Nor can the muse assist her;
Whether 'twas he that cocks a hat,
Or he that gives a clyster

For greatly one was signaliz'd,
That fought on Chestnut Hill;
And Canada immortaliz'd
The vender of the pill,

Yet the attendance upon Proctor,
They both might have to boast of;
For there was business for the doctor,
And hats to be disposed of

Let none uncandidly infer,
That Stirling wanted spunk;
The self-made peer had sure been there,
But that the peer was drunk.

But turn we to the Hudson's banks,
Where stood the modest train;
With purpose firm, though slender ranks,
Nor car'd a pin for Wayne.

For them the unrelenting hand
Of rebel fury drove;
And tore from every genial band
Of friendship and of love.

And some within a dungeon's gloom,
By mock tribunals laid;
Had waited long a cruel doom
Impending o'er each head.

Here one bewails a brother's fate,
There one a sire demands,
Cut off, alas! before their date,
By ignominious hands.

And silver'd grandsires here appear'd
In deep distress serene,
Of reverent manners that declar'd
The better days they'd seen.

Oh, curs'd rebellion, these are thine,
Thine are these tales of woe;
Shall at thy dire insatiate shine,
Blood never cease to flow?

And now the foe began to lead
His forces to the attack;
Balls whistling unto balls succeed,
And make the block-house crack.

No shot could pass, if you will take
The General's word for true;
But 'tis a d---ble mistake,
For every shot went through.

The firmer as the rebels press'd,
The loyal heroes stand;
Virtue had nerv'd each honest breast,
And industry each hand.

In valor's frenzy, Hamilton,
Rode like a soldier big,
And secretary Harrison,
With pen stuck in his wig.

But lest their chieftain Washington,
Should mourn them in the mumps,
The fate of Withrington to shun,
They fought behind the stumps.

But ah, Thaddeus Posset, why
Should thy poor soul elope ?
And why should Titus Hooper die,
Ay, die - without a rope ?

Apostate Murphy, thou to whom
Fair Shela ne'er was cruel,
In death shalt hear her mourn thy doom,
"Och ! would you die, my jewel ?"

Thee, Nathan Pumpkin, I lament,
Of melancholy fate;
The gray goose stolen as he went,
In his heart's blood was wet.

Now, as the fight was further fought,
And balls began to thicken,
The fray assum'd, the generals thought,
The color of a lickin'.

Yet undismay'd the chiefs command,
And to redeem the day;
Cry, Soldiers, charge ! they hear, they stand,
They turn and run away.

Not all delights the bloody spear,
Or horrid din of battle;
There are, I'm sure, who'd like to hear
A word about the cattle.

The chief whom we beheld of late,
Near Schralenburg haranguing,
At Yan Van Poop's unconscious sat
Of Irving's hearty banging.

Whilst valiant Lee, with courage wild,
Most bravely did oppose
The tears of woman and of child,
Who begg'd he'd leave the cows.

But Wayne, of sympathizing heart,
Required a relief;
Not all the blessings could impart
Of battle or of beef.

For now a prey to female charms,
His soul took more delight in
A lovely hamadryad's arms,
Than cow-driving or fighting.

A nymph the refugees had drove
Far from her native tree,
Just happen'd to be on the move,
When up came Wayne and Lee.

She, in mad Anthony's fierce eye,
The hero saw portray'd,
And all in tears she took him by
- The bridle of his jade.

"Hear," said the nymph, "O, great commander !
No human lamentations;
The trees you see them cutting yonder,
Are all my near relations.

And I, forlorn, implore thine aid,
To free the sacred grove;
So shall thy prowess be repaid
With an immortal's love.

Now some, to prove she was a goddess,
Said this enchanting fair
Had late retirèd from the bodies
In all the pomp of war.

The drums and merry fifes had play'd
To honor her retreat;
And Cunningham himself convey'd
The lady through the street.

Great Wayne, by soft compassion sway'd,
To no inquiry stoops,
But takes the fair afflicted maid
Right into Yan Van Poop's.

So Roman Anthony, they say,
Disgrac'd the imperial banner,
And for a gypsy lost a day,
Like Anthony the tanner.

The hamadryad had but half
Receiv'd address from Wayne,
When drums and colors, cow and calf,
Came down the road amain.

And in a cloud of dust was seen
The sheep, the horse, the goat,
The gentle heifer, ass obscene,
The yearling and the shoat.

And pack-horses with fowls came by,
Befeather'd on each side;
Like Pegasus, the horse that I
And other poets ride.

Sublime upon his stirrups rose
The mighty Lee behind,
And drove the terror-smitten cows
Like chaff before the wind.

But sudden see the woods above,
Pour down another corps,
All helter-skelter in a drove,
Like that I sung before.

Irving and terror in the van,
Came, flying all abroad;
And cannon, colors, horse, and man,
Ran tumbling to the road.

Still as he fled, 'twas Irving's cry,
And his example too,
"Run on, my merry men - For why?
The shot will not go through."

As when two kennels in the street,
Swell'd with a recent rain,
In gushing streams together meet,
And seek the neighboring drain;

So met these dung-born tribes in one,
As swift in their career,
And so to Newbridge they ran on
But all the cows got clear.

Poor Parson Caldwell, all in wonder,
Saw the returning train,
And mourn'd to Wayne the lack of plunder
For them to steal again.

For 'twas his right to steal the spoil, and
To share with each commander,
As he had done at Staten Island
With frost-bit Alexander.

In his dismay, the frantic priest,
Began to grow prophetic;
You'd swore, to see his laboring breast,
Held taken an emetic.

"I view a future day," said he,
"Brighter than this day dark is;
And you shall see what you shall see,
Ha ! ha ! my pretty Marquis !

"And he shall come to Paulus Hook
And great achievements think on;
And make a bow and take a look,
Like Satan over Lincoln.

"And every one around shall glory
To see the Frenchman caper;
And pretty Susan tell the story
In the next Chatham paper."

This solemn prophecy, of course,
Gave all much consolation,
Except to Wayne, who lost his horse,
Upon that great occasion.

His horse that carried all his prog,
His military speeches;
His corn-stock whiskey for his grog,
Blue stockings and brown breeches.

And now I've clos'd my epic strain,
I tremble as I show it,
Lest this same warrior-drover, Wayne,
Should ever catch the poet.