

# TWO RIVERS

(THE TANTRAMAR AND THE SAINT JOHN)

SIR CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

Two rivers are there hold my heart  
And neither would I leave.  
When I would stay with one too long  
The other tugs my sleeve.

For both are in my blood and bone  
And will be till I die.  
Along my veins their argument  
Goes on incessantly.

The one, inconstant as the wind  
And fickle as the foam,  
Disturbs my soul with strange desires  
And pricks my feet to roam.

The other, a strong and tranquil flood  
With stars upon its breast  
Would win me back from wandering  
And snare desire with rest.

## II—THE TANTRAMAR

To you, my moon-led Tantramar,  
I turn, who taught my feet to range,—  
You and the vagrant moon conspiring,  
Twin arbiters of change,—

To you I turn, my Tantramar.  
A wide-eyed boy I played beside  
Your wastes of wind-swept green and chased  
Your ever-changing tide.

I watched your floods come tumbling in  
To fill your inland creeks remote,  
Assail your prisoning dykes, and set  
Your long marsh grass afloat.

I watched your venturing floods at full  
 Falter and halt, turn and retreat,  
 And race with laughter back to sea,  
 Mocking their own defeat.

Far up to Midgic's farms you flow  
 And there for a brief space rest your fill,  
 Then back past Sackville's studious halls  
 To Westcock on her hill.

Draining your vast red channels bare  
 To shine like copper in the sun  
 You tremble down the gleaming chasm  
 And whimper as you run;

But, soon repenting your dismay,  
 With challenging roar you surge again  
 To brim your dykes, and reassume  
 Your lordship of the plain.

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Across the estranging, changing years,  
 Blind puppet of my restless star,  
 In discontent content alone,  
 You urge and drive me, Tantramar.

### III—THE SAINT JOHN

To you I turn again, St. John,  
 Great river, constant tide,—return  
 With a full heart to you, beside  
 Whose green banks I was born.

A babe I left you, and a youth  
 Returned to you, ancestral stream,  
 Where sits my city, Fredericton,  
 A jewel in a dream.

Your broad tide sweeps her storied shores  
 Where loyalties and song were bred,  
 And that green hill where sleeps the dust  
 Of my beloved dead.

From many a distant source withdrawn  
 You drain your waters,—from the wash  
 Of Temiscouata's waves, and lone  
 Swamps of the Allegash,—

From many a far and nameless lake  
 Where rain-birds greet the showery noon  
 And dark moose pull the lily pads  
 Under an alien<sup>1</sup> moon.

Full-fed from many a confluent stream  
 Your fortunate waters dream toward sea,—  
 And reach the barrier heights that hold  
 Your calm estates in fee.

In that strait gate you stand on guard  
 While Fundy's floods, without surcease,  
 In giant wrath assault in vain  
 The portals of your peace.

Outside, reared on that iron rock  
 Where first the Ships of Freedom came,  
 Sits the proud city, foam begirt,  
 That bears your name and fame,—

Saint John, rock-bound, rock-ribbed, secure,  
 To her stern birthright constant still,  
 She fronts the huge o'er-mastering tides  
 And bends them to her will.

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Dear and great River, when my feet  
 Have wearied of the endless quest,  
 Heavy with sleep I will come back  
 To your calm shores for rest.

<sup>1</sup> The sources of The Saint John are in Maine.