

The Old Blacksmith Shop

It was in full blast some twenty five years ago- that old blacksmith shop at the head of James Street on the mountain brow...The setting of tyres was a grand carnival at the old blacksmith shop, for the juveniles of the neighbourhood at least. They were then given the envied privilege of making themselves useful by gathering chips for the fire, but though they might gather them, no hand but the blacksmith's own must set them round the tyres, they must be placed at an angle that no eye but his own could detect. When the fires had brought the tyres to the requisite degree of expansion, the blacksmith's hat was thrown aside, the vest followed, the leather suspenders were girded over the top of the leather apron, and amid that uprising steam and smoke he bounded like an antelope, from hammer to tongs, his teeth firmly clenched and the perspiration coursing down the furrows of his cheeks. At such times he became to be the youthful imagination a veritable Tubal Cain – a man of might.

The last time we saw the blacksmith he was riding sorrowfully from the funeral of one of his brothers. "I am the only one left now," said he, "of a family of as fine boys as ever left Ireland," and a manly emotion struggled up from the depths of his heart and overspread a countenance not given to the melting mood. He was not long the last, for he, too, was soon gathered to his fathers. No vestige of the old blacksmith shop is left. It is gone with much that was contemporaneous with it, but as well as things of more picturesque aspect it serves as a rallying point for old memories, and struggles to the surface "in the silent resurrection of buried thoughts."

Sources: *The Hamilton Spectator* (July 31, 1871); "Quotation re: Blacksmith," in *A Culture of Conflict*, ed. Bryan Palmer (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press) 18–19. Reprinted with permission of McGill-Queen's University Press.