

## A BALLAD FOR BONFIRE BUILDERS

ON THE 22ND OF JUNE, 1897.

TRADITION tells how, long ago,  
We lived in fear of many a foe,  
Who crossed the Border, sword in hand,  
And scattered death throughout the land ;  
Or cruised from Scandinavian viks,  
And gave us many savage kicks ;  
Or sallied out from France and Spain,  
To deck the land with heaps of slain.  
Romans, Normans, Danes, and Dutch,  
They vexed our ancestors so much,  
Well may we wot that these poor men  
Thought life was not worth living then.

In circumstances such as these  
Our sires were often ill at ease,  
With neither telegraph nor post  
To tell of an invading host,  
Nor special correspondents glib  
To furnish articles ad lib.  
Upon the movements of the foe,  
Where he would land and whither go.

Though minus Morse and Semaphore,  
One art they had in days of yore—  
The art of signalling full well,  
Across the land from fell to fell.  
The warning sped from north to south,  
From eye to eye and mouth to mouth,  
Whene'er the beacons blazed on high  
They knew the foe was hovering by.

But now we live in happier days,  
And warlike fires no longer blaze ;  
We lay us down and safely rest,  
With Pax Britannica we're blest,  
The subjects of a gracious Queen,  
Whose foes are few and far between.  
When fires now blaze from hill to hill  
They scatter beams of warm goodwill,  
Their flames light up a happy land,  
With peace and plenty hand in hand.

Then let them flare from fell to fell,  
That Britain's sons may live to tell  
To children's children what we mean  
By blessing our illustrious Queen,  
And lighting up the sixtieth page  
Of our thrice-blest Victorian Age.

But beacon-building, how to start  
This ancient all but vanished art,  
Has puzzled lots of learned folk  
Whose work begins and ends in smoke.  
We think ourselves too civilised  
To study arts that once were prized  
By ancestors with painted skins  
And many other wicked sins.

Perchance some savages still live  
Who could a few instructions give  
How to produce a brilliant blaze,  
With little reek and dazzling rays—  
Bonfires of diverse shapes and styles,  
Sprinkled across the British Isles,  
From wild Land's End to John o' Groats.  
Hark, Britons! to my savage notes!

To build a bonfire beacon good,  
Beg, buy, or borrow heaps of wood.  
If you're a man of any soul,  
Don't think of using lumps of coal.  
That fuel, far too civilised,  
Should be for bonfires quite despised.  
For why? It burns with too much smoke,  
More heat than light, and lots of coke.  
A fire that only glows and smokes  
Is not a bonfire, but a hoax.

Well-creasoted sleepers old  
By railway companies are sold  
At fifteen shillings for the ton;  
When split for fuel, they're AL  
Old tar, flour, oil, or rosin casks  
Should be given free to him who asks  
By public-minded Gasworks Boards,  
Or manufacturers from their hoards.  
Rejected timber, boards, and beams,  
Crates, and creels, crammed full with reams  
Of bright prospectuses of mines,  
Produce a fuel that combines

Windy combustion cheap and strong  
With brilliance bright but not too long.  
Where towns and railways don't exist  
Pray, never let the chance be missed  
Of foraging the nearest wood  
For dry, old timber no more good,  
And branches needing to be lopped,  
Or hedges rooted out or cropped.  
The farmers in the month of June  
(Unless hay harvest comes too soon)  
Count this the slackest time of year,  
And thus their horse and carts are clear  
To fetch the fuel we have got,  
And take it to the very spot.

In upland districts, bare and bold  
With nought but peat and heather old,  
Where Caledonia's loyal sons  
Are standing ready to their guns,  
To serve their Queen in war or peace,  
Let them strip off the mountain fleece,  
Shear the long heather, cast the peat,  
Lay it to dry in bundles neat.  
Let peats be cut in pieces long,  
And heather bunched in faggots strong.  
If weather should the process mar,  
A keg or two of liquid tar,  
Thin sprinkled o'er the dampest part,  
Will help the blaze to make a start.

When thus the fuel is prepared,  
At hand, well dried, and amply aired,  
It's now our duty to reflect  
How best our bonfire to erect,  
So that it will upon Queen's night  
Produce least smoke and greatest light,  
For two whole hours its brilliance keep,  
Then die down to a listless heap  
That won't make sparks, cause fear or harm  
To house or heather, wood, or farm.  
Select a spot of solid ground,  
And draw a circle twelve yards round.  
Get three poles of sufficient strength,  
Fifteen or twenty feet in length,  
The smallest ends together tie,  
Then stand them up, the tips on high,  
And feet apart a yard or more.  
This tripod forms the hollow core,

The heart and skeleton combined  
In bonfires properly designed.

Now, take the heaviest of the wood  
Lay it around like cart wheel rude,  
With spokes that run from nave to rim  
And slits between like portholes grim  
To let the air draw in below.  
The next course round and round should go  
Across the first like broken felloes  
So that the ports will act like bellows,  
Produce a steady inward draught  
And clear combustion fore and aft.  
And so mount upwards to the top,  
Build on materials till they stop.  
Aim high if you would hit the mark,  
Keep soaring skywards, like the lark.  
If empty barrels are at hand  
Just set them on their ends to stand ;  
Knock out their bottoms with an axe,  
They'll blaze like unswept chimney stacks.  
Should wood be scarce but peat galore,  
You still should have a hollow core,  
With heather faggots round and round,  
And radial trenches in the ground,  
To let air in and upwards climb  
As in a kiln for burning lime.  
With faggots dry and bricks of peat  
Such fires make plenty flames and heat.  
If rightly built they'll brightly glow,  
And to the last their colours show.  
When stores of stronger fuel stop,  
Pile brushwood on the very top.  
Ere leaving off put in a wisp  
Of straw or shavings thin and crisp,  
So that the fire won't fail to catch  
When time arrives to strike the match.

And now I'm nearly done my lilt.  
Mind, every bonfire must be built  
By Tuesday, 22nd June.  
Begin at once, you're not too soon.  
But, hark ! At last you'll make a botch  
Unless you set a man to watch.  
It's happened oft in days of yore  
With beacons built some days before  
That bold bad bipeds struck a light,  
And set them off the previous night,

So that all the preparation  
 Ended up in hot vexation.

When all is ready, not till then—  
 TEN THIRTY, SCOTLAND; ENGLAND  
 TEN!—

Strike up the anthem loud and grand,  
 And strike the matches o'er the land,  
 Light all the bonfires near the top,  
 They'll blaze like torches till they stop,  
 Consume their smoke, make grand display,  
 And all the trouble well repay.

Thus Britain's face will sparkle o'er  
 With brilliancy unknown before  
 As if the spangled sky drew near  
 And sweetly kissed our country dear,  
 Leaving some diamonds glittering still  
 As marks of peace and warm goodwill.  
 Then let them blaze from fell to fell,  
 That all who see may live to tell  
 To children's children what we mean  
 Whene'er we sing

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

HENRY M. CADELL.