# Highways *of* Canadian Literature

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# Highways *of* Canadian Literature

*A Synoptic Introduction to the Literary History of Canada (English) from 1760 to 1924*

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TO
COLONEL WILLIAM ERNEST THOMPSON, LL.B.
District Officer Commanding Military District
No. 6 During the World War,

A GOVERNOR OF DALHOUSIE COLLEGE,

FOR
THE GIFT OF HIS LOYAL AND
INEXHAUSTIBLE FRIENDSHIP.

*There's nothing worth the wear of winning,*
*Save laughter and the love of friends.*
*—Hilaire Belloc.*

# Preface

*HIGHWAYS of Canadian Literature* provides teachers and students in educational institutions and readers in general with a complete history of the Canadian literature extant in the English language. In very recent years Canadian universities and colleges have added to their curricula systematic study of the verse and prose of the chief writers born in or resident in the Dominion. Also, teachers in Canadian academies and high schools, as occasion affords opportunity, inform their pupils about the lives and work of Canadian authors. Further: as expressive of the new and increasing interest in Canadian Literature, Literary Clubs, Reading Clubs, and Reading Circles have been formed, and constantly are being formed, to promote 'community' study of the writings of Canadian men and women of letters.

Hitherto, however, those who wished to be informed on the literary history of Canada and the status of Canadian Literature, had to depend on Anthologies, summary annalistic Sketches, and biographical Compendia. The earlier anthologies comprise verse either chronologically or topically arranged, but some of them contain, in an Appendix, biographical notes on the authors represented in the volumes. The later anthologies, as, for instance, Garvin's *Canadian Poets*, contain, besides the 'selections,' biographical and critical introductions. These anthologies, though comprehensive, informing and delightful 'source-books,' do not, by themselves, disclose the *development* of Canadian Literature. The annalistic sketches or compendia, on the other hand, are too sketchy, too annalistic. They do not tell the story of the development of Canadian Literature with any attempt at perspective or at disclosing its social and spiritual origins.

There was, therefore, pressing need for a comprehensive Synoptic History of Canadian Literature. Such a work would furnish the teacher, the student, and the general reader with a 'method' of reading Canadian Literature with philosophical insight or with historical and critical perspective. It would distinguish certain 'epochs' and 'movements' in the literary history of Canada, and make clear how Canadian poets and prose writers are related to one another and have influenced one another, and how, gradually, they expressed in literature the slowly emerging consciousness of a national spirit and a national destiny in the Dominion.

That is what *Highways of Canadian Literature* attempts to do. In scope it is a complete or comprehensive survey of literary 'epochs' and 'movements' in Canada, beginning with the Puritan Migration from the American Colonies in 1760 and closing at the end of the first quarter of the 20th century. In method it

is both historical and critical. It orientates the ‘backgrounds’ of Canadian Literature, traces the social and spiritual origins of that literature, remarks special ‘influences,’ demarcates several ‘epochs’ and ‘movements,’ discusses the importance of outstanding Canadian authors, and supplies critical estimates of Canadian prose and poetry.

It is designed for the use of teachers and students in universities, colleges, academies, seminaries, and high schools, and of general readers. Together with suitable anthologies or selections it will furnish teachers and students with adequate equipment for a systematic study of Canadian Literature, and general readers and members of literary clubs equally adequate equipment for ‘home’ or ‘club’ study of the development of Canadian Literature.

The Chapters on Post-Confederation Fiction (Chapters XVI and XVII—Novelists and Short Story Writers of the First Renaissance and Chapter XXI—Fiction Writers of the Second Renaissance) were written, expressly at my solicitation, by Mr. Donald G. French, whose wide and intimate knowledge of the forms, technics, and history of Canadian fiction is recognized throughout Canada. For many years he has been assiduous, as an essayist and lecturer, in reviewing and promoting the study of Canadian imaginative prose fiction, and his experience of many years as reviewer, and later as literary editor for a book publishing house, has given him special opportunities to study the history and observe the evolution of Canadian imaginative prose. Moreover, since Mr. French is also well versed in the forms, history, and technics of Canadian poetry, and since he has a temperamental patience, which engenders in him the ‘wise passiveness’ essential to the just critic, I engaged for the book as a whole his taste and judgment, in regard to treatment and style, and his knowledge of facts of Canadian literary history. The text of the book is therefore enhanced in treatment and style, as well as in critical justice, by Mr. French’s contribution, and by his critical revision of the whole work.

I wish, here, specially to remark my ideal and aim in writing *Highways of Canadian Literature*. It is, I believe, the duty of the literary historian and critic to respect his subject and to present it under its most significant and engaging aspects in order that he may win others to equal respect for his subject. Canadian Literature is important at least to Canadians; and, whatever be its comparative aesthetic and artistic dignity, it is an integral part or branch of English Literature. This book will justify itself if it compels Canadians to recognize the importance of their own literature, and wins other peoples to a decent respect for a literature which, while still in its adolescence, shows evidences of attaining to independent and vigorous adult estate—in the event of which Canadian literary creation, taste, and judgment will be based, not on the work of British or of American masters of poetry and imaginative prose, but on that of Canadian masters. Meanwhile, this book aims to disclose to

Canadians the social and spiritual importance of their own literature and to determine its place or distinction in English Literature—in short, to promote in Canada and abroad what may aptly be called ‘the higher study’ of Canadian Literature.

To Mr. Newton MacTavish, M.A., Editor of *The Canadian Magazine*, Mr. R. H. Hathaway, Mr. M. O. Hammond, Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott, Mr. John Murray Gibbon, Mr. S. Morgan-Powell, Literary Editor of *The Montreal Star*, Mr. John Garvin, B.A., Editor of *Canadian Poets*, *Canadian Poems of the Great War*, etc., Dr. Ray Palmer Baker, author of *A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation*, and Mr. T. G. Marquis, author of *English-Canadian Literature*, I am indebted for advice, criticism, and much practical aid in preparing the text. To Miss Annie Donohoe, Librarian of the Nova Scotia Legislative Library and Mrs. Mary Kinley Ingraham, M.A., Librarian of Acadia University, I am indebted for assistance in research; and to Miss Laura P. Carten, Editor of The Children’s Page, Halifax Herald, for reading the ‘galley proofs’ of the text. To Colonel William Ernest Thompson, LL.B., Honorary Secretary of the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University, my indebtedness is great and is acknowledged in the Dedication to this book.

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(1887-1924)

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*B. The New Genre*



*C. The Decadent Interim*



*D. The Second Renaissance*

# Preliminary Survey

To write properly a Synoptic History of Canadian Literature, the historian must first evaluate extant Canadian verse and prose from the point of view of the Whole. Secondly, he must treat Canadian Literature as a Whole in respect to its Genetic bases and relations. In presenting this synoptic history, Canadian Literature is considered not as a special, isolated, and chance product, but as the definitive outcome of racial, naturalistic, social, economic, and political conditions within the vast Dominion itself, and of other conditions brought into existence by racial affinities and social, political, economic, and spiritual relations with the people of the United States and the United Kingdom.

The general treatment proceeds on an *a priori* presumption and a critical principle. The *a priori* presumption is that in Canada where verse and prose which possess all degrees of worth have for more than a century and a half been produced in the English language and which had English poetry and prose for models, there must be a respectable residue of authentic literature written by native-born and resident *émigré* Canadian authors. In a phrase, the *fact* of a Canadian Literature is presumed. The critical principle employed in the treatment is this: that however insignificant, from the point of view of world literature, Canadian Literature may be, it is *important to Canadians themselves*. For however unimportant Canadian historical romances, Canadian humor, Canadian nature-poetry, Canadian poetic drama, Canadian realistic fiction, Canadian monodies may be when compared with the same *genres* in English Literature, they are the representatives of Canadian culture and of the Canadian creative spirit; if they were not extant there would be no Canadian Literature at all; and thus the Canadian people would be spiritually poorer and less significant not only to themselves but also to the world.

Some fair show of the fact of an authentic Canadian Literature may be evident from the following considerations. Let it be granted, as axiomatic, that verse and prose rise to the dignity of literature when they express and promote existence ideally—by delighting the aesthetic senses, by consoling the heart, by inspiring the moral imagination, by exalting or transporting the spirit. Judged by this four-fold test, the best Canadian poetry and imaginative prose will compare favorably with the admittedly authentic poetry and prose of many of the significant British and United States authors in the mid-Victorian era. In Canadian verse in English are genuine ‘gems’ of poetry, which, for vision, imagery, passion, lyrical eloquence, verbal music, and mastery of form and technique, are hardly, if at all, surpassed by the poetry of Coleridge, Shelley,

Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Swinburne.

If this is doubted, in part or in whole, then apply this concrete pragmatic test:—For exquisite tenderness and simple pathos: with Tennyson's *Break, Break, Break*, compare Charles G. D. Roberts' sweetly sad lyric, *Grey Rocks and Greyer Sea*. For delicacy or for poignancy in expressing the passion and meaning of love: with Swinburne's *These Many Years*, compare Roberts' *O Red Rose of Life*, or with Browning's *Evelyn Hope*, compare Roberts' *A Nocturne of Consecration*. For power to visualize the ghostly and ghastly: with Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner* compare the vivid, uncanny pictures of a spectral ship and crew in Bliss Carman's *Nancy's Pride*. For beauty of descriptive imagery, verbal music, and expressive correspondence of emotion with the mood of the season in nature-poetry: with Keats' *Ode to Autumn*, compare Archibald Lampman's lovely lyric of earth, *September*. For dignity of thought and mastery of technic: with the finest sonnets of Wordsworth, compare Roberts' *The Sower*, or those noble sonnets by Lampman, beginning, 'Not to be conquered by these headlong days,' 'Come with thine unveiled worlds, O truth of Night,' and 'There is a beauty at the goal of life.' For dramatic power in sounding the depths of elemental passion and emotion: with Tennyson's *Rizpah*, compare Campbell's profound utterance of the heart of woman in *The Mother*, or with the more subtle of Browning's dramatic monologues compare Campbell's psychological revealments in *Unabsolved*, and in *The Confession of Tama the Wise*. For the dainty, piquant expression of all those experiences which delight and console us in our humaner moments of reflection and reverie, let these pure lyrics be a daily rosary:—F. G. Scott's *The Cripple*, *Van Risen*, and *A Reverie*; Campbell's *The Hills and the Sea*, *Vapor and Blue*, and *Lake Huron*; Lampman's *We, too, Shall Sleep*, *The Weaver* and *The Passing of Autumn*; Carman's *Spring Song*, commencing 'Make me over, mother April,' *The Ships of St. John*, and *The Grave Tree*; Roberts' *The Lone Wharf*, *Lake Aylesford*, *Afoot*, *Kinship*, and *Recessional*; Duncan Campbell Scott's *The End of the Day*, and *A Lover to His Lass*; and Pauline Johnson's *In the Shadows*. Consider, too, that the satiric humor and comic characterization of Thomas Chandler Haliburton are not only in some respects unsurpassed by the art of Cervantes, Dickens, Daudet, and Mark Twain, and that Haliburton's comic epigrams and moral maxims and certain of his comic characters have become part of the warp and woof of English literature. It is also indubitable that the two volumes of short stories of Duncan Campbell Scott—*In the Village of Viger* and *The Witching of Elspie*—are not excelled either in originality of conception or in technical artistry, and certainly not in spiritual beauty and pathos, by the short stories of Maupassant in France, of Stevenson or Hewlett in England, of Cable or Mary Wilkins Freeman in the United States.

In two other fields, the elegiac monody and poetic drama, Canadian poets have produced distinctive and impressive literature. It is admitted by British and United States critics that the threnodies of Campbell, Carman, Roberts, Duncan Campbell Scott, Marshall, and De Mille are distinctly noble in conception and imagery and artistically finished, and would be worthy of the genius even of Milton, Shelley, Keats, Arnold, and Emerson, and deserve to be placed in the company of the other fine threnodies written in the English language. It is also admitted by British and United States critics that the poetic dramas of Mair, Campbell, and Norwood, whether embodying Biblical, Arthurian, or Canadian legends and romantic characters, show authentic genius of dramatic conception and a notable distinction in technical structure and artistry while, to their credit, avoiding what Edmund Gosse has called the 'violences and verbosities' of the Elizabethan Tradition and of the Restoration and later poetic drama.

In England, at least as early as the 'nineties' of the last century, the fact of a respectable Canadian literature received a sort of spasmodic recognition. A genuine interest in it, or at least in Canadian poetry, was evoked in the United Kingdom by the visit of the late Pauline Johnson to London and her recitals there in 1894. As a matter of fact, Pauline Johnson's first volume of verse *The White Wampum* was published originally in London in 1895. Again: with the permanent residence of Sir Gilbert Parker, and other Canadian men and women of letters, as, for instance, Miss Jean McIlwraith and Miss Lily Dougall, in England, the interest in Canadian Literature, on the part of the British people and critics, was very considerably intensified.

When the World War caused, first, an intenser sense of the unity of the Motherland and Canada, and, secondly, a plethora of verse and prose, especially verse, by Canadians in the field in France and in Flanders, and by Canadians at home, there arose in England a definite and systematic movement to promote in the United Kingdom the recognition and study of the literary history and literature of Canada, or at least Canadian literature written in the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century. Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, who for some time during the late war was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, engaged in a serious and sympathetic study of the literature of Canada, and lectured on Canadian literature at the Colonial Institute, London, and elsewhere. Moreover, Sir Herbert Warren, then also President of the Poetry Society of London, had a by-law passed which stipulated that living Canadian authors should be recognized as non-resident members of the Poetry Society of London; and Canadian authors were invited to send copies of their published verse and prose to the Librarian of the Poetry Society, for cataloguing and exhibition in the reading room of the Society. Besides Sir Herbert Warren, two other British lecturers of

established reputation—Miss Louise Bagley and Miss Julie Huntsman—devoted themselves to systematic lecturing on Canadian literature, verse and prose, in certain notable educational institutions in London and in provincial centres in England. Moreover, since the late war the works of Canadian authors have been in increasing numbers either published in England simultaneously with their publication in other countries, or have been first published in England and later republished in Canada, and in the United States.

In these facts, therefore, we have a kind of empirical proof or pragmatic test that in the United Kingdom there has existed for a considerable time a genuinely respectful recognition of the fact of a Canadian literature in the English language.

For the purposes of a Synoptic History of Canadian Literature in the English language a significant year is that of 1760. For that year marks both the Fall of Montreal (following the Fall of Quebec in 1759) and the Puritan Migration from New England to Maugerville, on the St. John River, and to the valleys of western Nova Scotia, in 'Nova Scotia,' which at the time embraced the mainland of what is now Nova Scotia, as well as New Brunswick, and part of Maine.

The significance of this date for a History of Canadian Literature in English will be realized by reflecting that from 1760 onwards until Confederation in 1867,—that is, a period of one hundred years—the two pioneer Provinces of the later Dominion, Quebec and the original Nova Scotia, and, in due time, Ontario, came under the influence of a specific British and a specific New England and Loyalist civilization and culture which essentially determined the political, social, and spiritual ideas and ideals of the English-speaking people in Canada. These specifically pioneer and pre-Confederation ideas and ideals form the social and spiritual bases of Canadian Literature in English, from 1760 to 1867.

More particularly, it is important to note that the struggle of the British North American Provinces to realize the ideals of Responsible Government, which the Puritan settlers brought with them and which were effected in 1848 in three of the Provinces later confederated, caused the first awakening of the literary spirit, and the actual creation of the first nativistic literature, in Canada. This struggle for Responsible Government and of other higher spiritual interests and ideals before 1848 and afterwards, including the later struggle for political union (Confederation) of the Provinces, not only incited Canadian poets and prose writers to literary expression during the period, but also largely determined the form, substance, and mood or temper of that literature.

A distinction must be drawn between (1) the literature written in or about Canada by British authors, visiting or sojourning in the Canadas and the Maritime Provinces, as, for instance, Tom Moore's *Canadian Boat Song*

(1804) and much other verse and prose down to Louis Hémon's realistic romance of French-Canada, *Maria Chapdelaine* (1922), all of which will be noted but will be denominated the 'Incidental' Literature; and (2) the literature which was written by permanently resident *émigrés* and by native-born citizens in the *separate* (unconfederate) Provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Canadas, up to the year of Confederation, which will be designated the 'Nativistic' Literature; and (3) the literature, after Confederation, written by native-born Canadians, which will be called the 'Native and National' Literature of Canada. These literary distinctions themselves are demanded by an important demarcation in the social groups which, from the Fall of Montreal in 1760 and the Puritan Migration from New England in the same year up to the last Loyalist Migration, in 1786, from New England and the other revolutionary States, formed the social and cultural units of the Anglo-Saxon civilization in what, after the acknowledgment of American Independence and up to the Confederation of the Canadian Provinces, was known definitively as British North America.

Following 1760 and the British Occupation of Montreal and Quebec City, the civilization and culture of the social groups in these centres and, later, in the Loyalist centres in Ontario, were on another and lower level than the culture and civilization in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Moreover, the literature written by the groups of English-speaking people, sojourning or permanently resident in the Canadas, neither sprang from the social and spiritual necessities which created the literature of the Maritime Provinces in their Puritan and Loyalist period, nor possessed the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of the literature produced in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in the Puritan and Loyalist period of their history.

The Anglo-Saxon civilization and culture in Montreal and Quebec, after the British Occupation (1760), was highly military and practical; that is to say, materialistic. For the English-speaking people in Quebec were concerned wholly with the civil and military administration of Quebec City and Province, and the English-speaking people in Montreal were concerned chiefly with the development of trade, particularly the fur trade, under men who were adventurers much more than they were colonizers and civilizers. Naturally, therefore, Canadian Literature in English in the Province of Quebec chiefly consisted of chronicles, annals, and narratives (historical, or of adventure); and, secondly, whenever it happened to be pure literature, comprised verse and prose written by cultured visitors from the Motherland; and thus in all cases this 'Incidental' Pioneer Canadian Literature in English in the Province of Quebec was British in inspiration, form, and aim.

On the other hand, the Puritan and Loyalist migrations to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, particularly Nova Scotia, from 1760 to 1783 and later,

comprised groups of English-speaking people who were intellectually cultured and spiritually-minded. The literature, verse and prose, which they produced was the urgent expression of political, social, and spiritual needs; and, being for the most part satiric, was modelled on the pre-revolutionary literature of their relatives in New England and the other Atlantic States, which, in its time, had been modelled on the satiric neo-classical verse and the polemic and satiric prose of the eighteenth century in England.

So that the genius of the literature written in the Province of Quebec from the British Occupation of Montreal to the triumph of Responsible Government in 1848, and somewhat later, was pragmatic rather than literary; whereas the genius of the literature produced in the same period in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, particularly in Nova Scotia, was definitively literary in spirit and form.

The civilization and culture of the Loyalist centres in Ontario, brought in by the Loyalist Migrations, 1783-1786, and later by the settlements of British-born *émigrés*, chiefly discharged soldiers, officials, and mechanics, after the close of the Napoleonic wars, 1815, were essentially practical and materialistic. On the whole the literature produced in Ontario, particularly up to the triumph of Responsible Government was, as in Quebec Province, a literature of annals and chronicles and narratives. However, during this period and onwards to Confederation, particularly after the war of 1812 and during the rebellion of 1837, there appeared in the Canadas some genuinely aesthetic verse and prose, written by British-born sojourners or permanent *émigrés* and by native authors.

There were, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, several other migrations of small groups of English-speaking people to Nova Scotia and the Canadas, notably a group of Scots. The English Migration in 1749, under Cornwallis, to Halifax was of no significance in the literary history of Canada; nor were the Swiss and German Migrations to Nova Scotia of literary significance. On the other hand, the Scots Migration to Pictou, Nova Scotia, 1773, had a most decided *intellectual* influence not only on Nova Scotia, but also on the whole of what is now known as Canada. It had, however, no influence on specific *literary* culture and literary creation, save Journalism, in Canada as a whole.

Meanwhile, it must be observed that in literary culture and the production of literature in the English language in Canada from 1760 to Confederation, taking these merely as convenient dates, Nova Scotia (including New Brunswick) during the Puritan and Loyalist period and up to the triumph of Responsible Government, and even still later, not only produced the most significant and authentic literature, but also Nova Scotia is to be regarded as the first home of an originally ‘Nativistic’ Literature produced in Canada.

Up to Confederation there could not be, as there was not, any innate and natural sentiment of Canadian nationality in the hearts of the people. The motive of Confederation was not based on sentiment but on practical political vision and expediency. The ideal of Confederation, before it was achieved, was wholly an intellectual concept. If, therefore, the Canadian Confederacy were to endure, it was imperative that the intellectual ideal, for the factual realization of it, should become powerful over the hearts and imagination of the Canadian people after the fact of Confederation in 1867—that there should develop, or be developed, in the souls of the Canadian people a definitive sentiment of nationality.

This meant that following the consummation of Confederation the people of Canada should find themselves pledged to and engaged in a distinctly new and novel political and social program. This program was chiefly one of political and social consolidation and of industrial and commercial expansion. It was most astutely and effectively, though slowly, carried out. With the ever-increasing political and social unification of the people and the intellectual and commercial expansion of the country, a genuine sentiment of Canadian nationality gradually developed, until by the time of the Great World War, 1914-1918, and largely in consequence of Canada's part in that war, the sentiment of Canadian nationality suddenly acquired a pervasive intensity and evolved into a definite and profound sense of distinct nationhood.

Now, with this development in political and social consolidation, and territorial, industrial, and commercial expansion, and the evolution of a sentiment of nationality and, later, nationhood, it was inevitable that there should be not only a change in the literary ideals, inspiration, and aims of Canadian men and women of letters, but also that, with this change in aesthetic and artistic conscience, the literature produced in Canada, after Confederation, should be different in substance, form, and technical artistry or craftsmanship from the literature produced prior to Confederation. It was also inevitable that immediately upon Confederation, when, naturally, political and social consolidation and the sentiment of nationality were virtually at zero point or at least were inchoate, the literary ideals of Canadian men and women of letters should be, in substance and form, for a decade or so, traditional and derivative, not indigenous and originally Canadian. It was indeed so: for at least a decade there was hardly any independent or original native Canadian literature, or in it even a simmering of the sentiment of Canadian nationality, though there was a considerable quantity of 'journalistic' and imaginative poetry and prose which possessed distinctive and even engaging aesthetic and artistic qualities, written both by permanently resident *émigrés* and by native-born Canadians.

In 1868, for instance, Charles Mair, a native-born Canadian, published his *Dreamland and Other Poems*; and in 1870 John Reade, an Irishman long

resident in Canada, published a volume of verse, *The Prophecy of Merlin and Other Poems*: but while Mair's poems contained Canadian sentiment and color they were the sentiment and color of *objective* Nature in Canada; and while John Reade's volume was written in Canada and though the poet really felt and was in sympathy with all the political, social, and spiritual aspirations of Canada, Reade's poems themselves were based chiefly upon Arthurian legend and were written in a derivative English romantic manner of form, music, and color.

Mair and Reade and others were having an influence, however, in holding up the ideal of authentic literary creation in Canada while during that decade and the following decade a group of young native-born Canadians were growing into manhood, and were having engendered in their hearts and imagination a distinct innate sentiment of Canadian nationality and were to become the first native-born group of *systematic* poets and prose writers in Canada. Their work, in poetry and prose, may fairly be signalized as the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

This group, for the purposes of literary history, we have denominated the Systematic School of Canadian poets and prose writers. For with the publication of Chas. G. D. Roberts' *Orion and Other Poems* in 1880, a native-born leader for native-born men and women of letters appeared in Canada; and with the publication of Roberts' *In Divers Tones* in 1887 in Canada (in U. S. 1886), there appeared at length the first 'Voice' of the Spirit of Canada, expressed in poetic literature, artistic in structure and noble in inspiration. The authentic beginning of strictly so-called Canadian Literature in English must, therefore, be dated from 1887. Roberts and his colleagues, Lampman, Carman, Campbell, D. C. Scott, F. G. Scott, Pauline Johnson, Gilbert Parker and Marshall Saunders are designated the Systematic School of Canadian poets and prose writers.

The First Renaissance in Canadian Native and National Literature may be said to close either with the publication of Pauline Johnson's last volume of poems, *Canadian Born*, in 1903, or with the publication of Robert Service's first volume of verse, *Songs of a Sourdough* (1907). By this is not meant that after twenty years of leadership and influence the first Systematic Group had not continued to hold up the ideal to the younger or later Canadian poets and prose writers or that there were no Canadian poets and prose writers who were continuing the older ideal and tradition. As a matter of fact, the creative and artistic ideals of the first group of systematic poets and prose writers had become engendered in the aesthetic and artistic conscience of the younger or later men and women of letters in Canada; and the poetry and prose produced by the younger or later Canadian men and women of letters were notably refined in sentiment, beautiful in structure and imagery, and noble in spiritual

substance and appeal. They continued, and still continue, as do also Roberts, Carman, Duncan Campbell Scott and the other living members of the original Systematic Group, the tradition of aesthetic and artistic verse and prose.

But in 1907 another singing voice was heard; and there developed a group of poetasters and picaresque fictionists whose leader was Robert Service. Their special literary *métier* was verse, though Service and his literary *confrères* also essayed fiction. This group we call the Vaudeville School of Canadian Poetry. Its vogue lasted for an insignificant period of five years, or from 1908 up to the beginning of the Great World War.

In 1913 appeared a new group of younger Canadian poets and prose writers, who may be regarded as having begun the Second Renaissance in Canadian literature. They inaugurated, as it were, a Restoration Period in Canadian literature, inasmuch as, with some changes in ideals of form and craftsmanship, they essentially 'restored' the literary principles and aims of the First Renaissance Group. All these distinctions in nomenclature and dates are, of course, only used for expository or pedagogical purposes. Accordingly, it is convenient to mark the beginning of the Second Renaissance, or the Restoration Period, in Canadian Literature with the publication of Marjorie Pickthall's first volume of verse, *Drift of Pinions*, in 1913.

This period in Canadian Literature in English is still in process. It is showing definitive originality in several ways, including original developments in modernity of theme and moral substance, in formal novelty, and in fresh expression of neglected or hitherto unessayed literary *genres*, such as, for instance, poetic and stage drama, and essays strictly in *belles-lettres*.

Contemporary with the poets of this period is a group of fictionists, who have produced and are producing novels, romances, and tales which are Canadian in theme, in social background, and in color. This group may be distinguished as the Realistic School of Canadian Fiction.

These distinctions thus determine the scope of the present work as a Synoptic History of Canadian Literature. The literature considered or treated comprises—(I) Pre-Confederation Literature (1760-1887); and (II) Post-Confederation Literature (1887——?). The Pre-Confederation Literature, which, for purposes of exposition or treatment, is viewed as running over into two decades beyond 1867, will be considered under three rubrics—(1) Incidental Pioneer Literature; (2) Emigré Literature and (3) Nativistic Literature. Post-Confederation Literature will be treated under a single rubric —Native and National Literature of Canada; and this indigenous Canadian literature will, for expository and pedagogical purposes, be considered under five Schools (or Periods)—(1) the Systematic School and Period (First Renaissance); (2) the Vaudeville School and Period (Decadent Interim); (3) the Restoration School and Period (Second Renaissance); (4) the Realistic School

and Period of Fiction; and (5) the Rise of Realistic Native or National Drama. But these formal divisions cannot be kept mathematically rigid and there will necessarily be overlappings and special consideration of both imaginative and aesthetic Canadian literature, such as poetic drama, *belles-lettres*, hymnody and literary criticism, journalism, and the literature of travel, exploration, history, and biography.

The method of treatment and criticism employed in the present work is also Synoptic or Philosophical. The synoptic method adopts the point of view of Canadian literary history and literature as a spiritual Whole. It has distinct and desirable advantages over the other critical and pedagogical methods. For the synoptic method assists the imagination to view Canadian authors and their literature in an inclusive historical perspective, and thus to discover in Canadian Literature the evolution of a people's social and spiritual ideals, their national and world conceptions, and how and what each individual poet or prose writer, or each group or school of poets and prose writers, has contributed to the vision of the people's social and spiritual ideals and to the evolution of them in the people's social conscience. Further: the synoptic method disengages and discriminates the essential excellences of the poetry and prose of particular individuals and groups, and enables the critic or historian rightly to estimate the social and spiritual significance and value of Canadian authors ideas on Nature, Society, human Existence, and Endeavor.

# Part I

## Pre-Confederation Literature
## 1760-1887.

CHAPTER I

# Social *and* Spiritual Bases

THE SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL BASES OF CANADIAN LITERATURE—THE PURITAN AND LOYALIST MIGRATIONS—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCOTS MIGRATION—THE PRIMACY OF NOVA SCOTIA IN THE CREATIVE LITERATURE OF CANADA—LITERARY SPECIES IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC.

CREATIVE literature in the Provinces which now form the Dominion of Canada, really or most significantly began in Nova Scotia. The social bases of this Nova Scotian pioneer literature, its literary forms, and even its inspiration were of New England origin. It is highly important clearly to understand all this. In 1760, or two years after the proclamation of Governor Lawrence and the establishment of a Legislative Assembly in Nova Scotia, seven thousand Puritans emigrated from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut to Maugerville on the St. John River, and to the valleys of western Nova Scotia. The expulsion of the Acadians had left the fertile farms of western Nova Scotia deserted. These lands were naturally attractive to the people of New England, inasmuch as the soil was not only fertile, but the country itself was, at the time, part of British North America, as was New England itself. As soon as the Acadians had been expelled, the Governor of Nova Scotia set up military control and government. Moreover, the Anglican Church was the dominant creed. In New England civil and religious liberty were regarded as absolutely necessary to the life of the people. When, then, in 1758, Governor Lawrence brought about the formation of a Legislative Assembly and proclaimed civil and religious liberty for Nova Scotia, the New England Puritans felt free to come to Nova Scotia, which promised them an acceptable new home, both for the obtaining of material possessions and the free expression of their spiritual ideals.

In 1763 other groups of New Englanders, with their characteristic ideals, came to Nova Scotia. In 1783, 1785 and 1786, following the War of American Independence, thirty thousand United Empire Loyalists emigrated from the Atlantic States and settled in Nova Scotia; ten thousand settled in Lower Canada (Quebec); and twenty thousand settled in the district which later became the Province of Ontario. So that, in a period of twenty-five years, about one hundred thousand *émigrés* from the United States coast had become permanent residents of the Maritime Provinces and the Canadas. That is to say, the bases of Canadian civilization and culture, following the Fall of Montreal and beginning with the first Puritan Migration, were definitively the social,

political, intellectual, and literary ideals of New England.

In 1749 there was a migration of English from the Motherland to Halifax. They founded the City of Halifax. These English *émigrés*, however, found conditions of life at Halifax so forbidding by way of hardships and so socially unsettling that many of them removed to Boston and to New York. Subsequently their descendants came from New England and New York to Halifax. It was they, not their fathers, who really founded the City of Halifax and did most for the development of commerce and culture in that community. Later, when Halifax became a British Military and Naval Station, it took on an English 'air.' But essentially its culture and commerce were of New England Puritan origin.

In 1773 occurred the Scots migration to Pictou, on the North shore of Nova Scotia. These colonists were but a little band of two hundred; yet they brought with them two ideals which eventually pervaded the civilization and culture of Canada.

Viewed, then, synoptically, the civilization and culture of the Dominion of Canada, as we conceive and appreciate the significance of Canada to-day, had their origins in Puritanism and Calvinism—in the ideals brought into Nova Scotia and the Canadas by the New England and the Scots Migrations in the 18th century. Specifically, the New England colonists, especially the Loyalists, brought, with them the literary ideals which were to become the creative principles of the first native-born poets and prose writers of Nova Scotia and the Canadas. Specifically, the Scots colonists brought into Nova Scotia two ideals of spiritual import; namely, the ideal of the supreme worth of the individual human spirit and its salvation, and the ideal of sound intellectual education as the basis of the life of the spirit both for this world and the world to come.

To appreciate critically the results of the Loyalist ideals on the creative literary spirit in Nova Scotia, we must hark back to pre-Revolutionary times in New England and the other Atlantic Colonies and to the social conditions and spiritual problems of the people of Nova Scotia following the Loyalist Migrations. In pre-revolutionary days in the New England and the other Atlantic Colonies, the weapon used both by those who were for separation from England and those who were loyal to the British Crown was a literary weapon—prose and poetry. Naturally pre-revolutionary literature in the American Colonies was modelled on the mood and form of the satiric verse and pamphlets of the 18th century poets and prosemen of England. The American colonies became alive especially with poetic satirists. When, therefore, the Loyalists settled in Nova Scotia and the Canadas, and when, in due course, they themselves had to face the discussion and solution of new social and political problems, inevitably they adopted the 18th century forms

of literary expression.

But what of the Puritan settlers in Nova Scotia? They were in the land for at least a decade before the coming of the Loyalists. They had social and religious problems for discussion and solution. Did not these problems of the Puritan *émigrés* issue in a literature? They did. But the Puritan literature in Nova Scotia was not in mood, aim, form, or result at all significant, or as genuinely creative as the Loyalist literature, and may be shortly noticed and dismissed. The Puritans were Congregationalists, and brought with them the old New England ideals of the 'Town Meeting'—Responsible Civic Government and Religious Liberty. They were political and religious Democrats. But Church interests were paramount. Congregationalism, though essentially a democratic form of Church government, developed all the formalism, of an aristocratically conducted religion. The inevitable happened. There were 'fundamentalists' and 'modernists' in those days as in ours. Under Whitefield a schism occurred in Congregationalism. The leader of the schism in Nova Scotia was Rev. Henry Alline (1748-84). Under Whitefield in the American Colonies and Henry Alline, 'the Whitefield of Province' of Nova Scotia, the 'New Lights' (as they were called) triumphed over the Orthodox or Formalistic Congregationalists in America. But, oddly, this religious schism also resulted in a political schism. It resulted, in short, in a separation of the Puritans in Nova Scotia from the Puritans in the New England Colonies. So that the Puritan colony in Nova Scotia became a community apart, with a new and distinct sentiment of British connection. They retained, however, their New England ideals of responsible municipal government and absolute religious liberty. Nova Scotia thus became the home of a new experiment in Political and Religious Democracy.

But since, with the Puritans, Church or Spiritual interests were paramount, and since the separation between the Nova Scotia Puritans and the New England Puritans was merely sentimental and followed the religious schism, the Puritan literature of the period in Nova Scotia was wholly religious and theological. On the theological side, it took the form of controversial and polemical literature for the promotion of the 'New Lights' schism. On the religious and creative sides, it took the form of homilies, sermons, devotional works, prayers, and hymns.

The chief creative writer of the Puritan period was Henry Alline. During the conflict between the Orthodox Congregationalists and the 'New Lights' Henry Alline published a polemical pamphlet, *The Anti-Traditionist*, and five books of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. After his death his *Life and Journal* was published. It is interesting only to students of religious psychology and the varieties of religious experience.

But Alline's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* is a genuinely creative work. It

contrasts admirably with the too often spiritually inept and doggerelized hymns and evangelical songs that have found a place in the hymnody of the Churches. Alline's hymns and spiritual songs disclose on his part an authentic lyrical faculty, a sure sense of rhythm and of decent rhyme, and a respect for dignified diction and imagery. Though Alline's work in prose and verse has no significance in the evolution of Canadian Literature, inasmuch as he did not even 'influence' Canadian hymnography, yet the literary historian must give him the distinction of being the first of the Pioneer Hymn Writers of Canada. The Puritan period in Nova Scotia had, however, no importance in the development of Canadian Literature.

The literature produced by the Loyalists in Nova Scotia, on the other hand, was fundamental in the evolution of Canadian Literature. For the most part, the Loyalists were members of the cultured Tory or aristocratic families of New England and the other Atlantic Colonies, and were highly cultured themselves. Many of them were teachers, clergymen, lawyers, jurists and officials—all graduates of Harvard, Yale, and other leading educational institutions in the lost colonies. The Loyalists brought with them their social and cultural ideals; and many of them were practised in literary expression, after the manner of the 18th century prose and verse. They were thus fitted by education and powers of literary expression to reconstruct, as they did, the civilization and culture of Nova Scotia, and to produce, as they did, the first Nativistic Literature of Canada. How they accomplished these creative results is an instructive study by itself.

During the American Revolution the Loyalists were aristocratic families with an ardent British sentiment. They wished to retain British connection and to promote their own institutions, with New World modifications, modelled upon British institutions. The persecutions they endured during the whole of the Revolutionary times and their forced exile to Nova Scotia did but intensify their sentiment for British connection in their new home in Nova Scotia. Yet the love for their old homeland remained, and became with them a rather poignant nostalgia. It was, however, the old *homeland* they loved; but for the *people* of the United States they had no sentiment save scorn and hate.

All the while, therefore, they retained in their minds and hearts the so-called 'United Empire' ideal. But at length this became a problem which took the form of an inner debate as to whether they should cast aside all thoughts of bringing about a re-union of British North America (that is, the Canadas and the Maritime Provinces) and the United States, or whether they should promote a *new* United Empire in the land over the border from the United States. It must be admitted, however, that on the side of ardency of sentiment the Loyalists in Nova Scotia really felt more a nostalgia for their old homeland than they felt a love for Great Britain and the establishment of a great British

nation in the lands north of the United States.

It is this nostalgia which first finds expression in the Loyalist literature produced in Nova Scotia; and it finds its fullest expression in verse. Several names—Jacob Bailey, Jonathan Sewell, Joseph Stansbury, Jonathan O'Dell, Adam Allen, James Moody, Mather Byles, Walter Bates—are noted by literary historians as paramount in the early Loyalist literature. There is, however, nothing of genuine literary merit in their poetry, prose narratives, and diaries. Of these early Loyalist writers Jonathan O'Dell is somewhat significant. He introduced into Nova Scotia the verse forms and temper of the 18th century poetic satirists, Dryden and Pope.

Time, at length, wrought changes in the hearts of the Loyalists, and they began to look away from the United States and to take a pride in their new home; to look with affection upon Nova Scotia and to express a decent regard for England, the Motherland. As it were, the grapes in the United States had soured, and the Loyalists in Nova Scotia began to look on the Revolutionists as their inferiors in birth, culture and civilization. The true ideals, in their view, were in the aristocratic culture and the political system of the new Provinces and England. Once this spirit of contempt for United States culture and civilization became thoroughly engendered, the separation of the Loyalist community in Nova Scotia from all United States connection was complete. Whereupon the Loyalists felt that the only right course to pursue was for them to unite with the Puritan settlers who had preceded them to Nova Scotia, and to develop a civilization and culture all their own.

This they proceeded to do by laying the foundations of Journalism in Nova Scotia. The first journalistic ventures in Nova Scotia happen also to be the first in Canada. The first newspaper had been founded at Halifax in 1752: that is, eight years before the Puritan Migration; but it was a government organ and not a real newspaper. But on March 17th, 1776, when the British troops evacuated Boston, John Howe, Loyalist and printer, also left Boston and with him went the press of the Boston *News-Letter*. Eventually it reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the *News-Letter* was amalgamated with the Halifax *Gazette*. In 1789 *The Nova Scotia Magazine* was founded, printed, and edited by John Howe. This was the first literary magazine published in British North America. Thus, under Loyalist auspices and literary traditions, journalism began in Nova Scotia, that is, in Canada.

Further: Loyalist newspapers and Loyalist magazines, founded at Halifax, and later at St. John, that is, Loyalist Journalism, laid the foundations of literary expression and literary creation in Canada. It is beside the point to animadvert upon the aesthetic values of the substance and form of the original prose and verse which appeared in the Loyalist newspapers and magazines. For, up till the time of Joseph Howe's becoming sole owner and editor of *The*

*Novascotian*, in 1828, all the literary work that had preceded was but a preparatory school of journalism and literature. When *The Novascotian* was founded by Joseph Howe, and when Thomas Chandler Haliburton, with Howe himself and others, began to contribute to it, journalism itself became literature, and the first Nativistic Literature of Canada was created.

The Loyalists, we must remember, though they came from a country in which the social and political ideals were democratic, were themselves aristocratic. When, therefore, they bethought themselves of founding a college, their ideal was that of a college which would preserve the curriculum of Colleges open only to those who were well to do. The University of King's College was begun as an Academy at Windsor, Nova Scotia in 1787, was granted a Collegiate Charter in 1789, and was formally opened as a College in 1790. It was indeed open to all the Province—to all those who could *afford* to attend. But in 1802 this policy of seeming democratic inclusiveness was abrogated by an Imperial Government Act which limited the privilege of matriculation to members of the Church of England. Since seventy-five per cent. of the population of Nova Scotia were members of other communions, the great majority of possible students were shut out from King's College. When, therefore, the Scots *émigrés* who settled at Pictou in 1773, found their children debarred from education at King's College, they established in 1819 a new College. Education at Pictou Academy, as it has always been called, was open to students of all creeds, races, and color, as it is to this day. From that Academy went forth men and women who held up to the people of their own country and the rest of Canada the two ideals of the supreme worth of the individual human spirit and of sound elementary education as the basis of constructive good citizenship. From Pictou Academy went forth men and women who became leaders in thought and practical endeavor in Canada—superior teachers and presidents of Colleges, eloquent preachers, distinguished scientists, men of practical vision and achievement in the professions, in government and statesmanship, and in industry and commerce. Their influence, however, was intellectual and practical. Save in the field of journalism, they had no influence on literature and literary creation in Canada.

In Lower Canada and in the district that became Upper Canada, or Ontario, the earlier Loyalist Migrations brought with them a lower level of culture than that which was brought into the Maritime Provinces by the Loyalists who had migrated to Nova Scotia, which at the time included the territory that in 1784 became the Province of New Brunswick. This is not a matter of opinion or prejudice; it is a matter of fact. For the Loyalists who migrated to Nova Scotia were from the most cultured families in the Old Colonies, and even the men of the Loyalist Regiments were of a superior order of character and mind. So that the Loyalists who settled in Nova Scotia formed, as Dr. Baker phrases it, 'an

educated class seldom found in a pioneer community—a homogeneous community unique in origin, with a local pride not found in other sections.'

The so-called Overland Loyalists, on the other hand, who moved into the Niagara Peninsula and into Quebec were on the whole of humbler social status—agricultural workers, artisans, and a considerable number of irresponsible adventurers, who joined the Migrations in the hope of obtaining cheap lands and something for nothing. They were led, of course, by men of parts, but even these men had neither literary culture nor literary interests. Their interests were material, and they 'headed' a Loyalist motley so as to have the means and labor necessary to occupy the lands and clear them for their own materialistic ends. And so it happened that while in Quebec and in the settlements in the district which was to become Ontario there were literary activities, and even newspapers and magazines, the Overland Loyalists did not contribute constructively to the literary spirit and the creative literature of Canada.

The first genuine Nativistic Literature of Canada was created in Nova Scotia—in the Satiric Comedy or Humor of Haliburton, in the Sketches, Essays, Legislative Reviews, Speeches and Public Letters and the Poetry of Joseph Howe, and in the Poetry of Oliver Goldsmith, 2nd, a great-nephew of the author of *The Deserted Village*. Still, this pre-eminence given to Nova Scotia is, in a way, based on a half-truth. It is true that, to put it colloquially, Nova Scotia had her creative literary 'innings' early in the game. It lasted from the publication of Joseph Howe's *Western Rambles*, in 1828, or from the publication of Haliburton's *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, in 1829, to Haliburton's last volume, *The Season Ticket*, published anonymously in 1859—that is, a period of thirty years.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were again to have an 'innings' when Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, and Marshall Saunders, of the Systematic School of native poets and prose writers, began publishing in the late 'eighties' of the 19th century. The Maritime Provinces, as a whole, by the addition of Lucy M. Montgomery to the native prose writers and William E. Marshall and Robert Norwood to the native poets, had a still further short 'innings.' But, it must be recalled, contemporaneously with Haliburton and Howe in Nova Scotia, certain writers in Ontario and Quebec, namely, first, John Richardson, Rosanna Mullins, and William Kirby, produced historical romances, or a 'nativistic' literature in prose, and, later, through the poetry of Sangster and Mair, Ontario produced Nativistic Literature in verse. Since the rise of the Systematic School, the centre of literary creation in Canada has shifted from Nova Scotia to Ontario and Western Canada.

CHAPTER II

# Incidental Pioneer Literature

THE INCIDENTAL PRE-CONFEDERATION LITERATURE OF CANADA—ALEXANDER HENRY'S TRAVELS—MRS. BROOKE'S NOVELS—MRS. JAMESON'S NATURE-STUDIES—THE ÉMIGRÉ PRE-CONFEDERATION LITERATURE OF CANADA—MRS. SUSANNA MOODIE—ADAM KIDD—JOHN READE—GEORGE MURRAY—ALEXANDER M^C^LACHLAN—WILLIAM WYE SMITH—ISABELLA V. CRAWFORD.

BROADLY taken, the Incidental Pioneer Literature of Canada was produced by the wits and *bon vivants* amongst the officers of the British army and navy during or after the taking of Louisburg and Quebec, and by certain 'birds of passage,' British-born men and women, who were sojourning in the Canadas. It was considerable in quantity, embracing verse, narratives, social and nature studies and sketches, and even fiction. But it did not affect the life and ideals of the people. It was simply literature produced in the Canadas—incidentally.

From Louisburg to Quebec and Montreal the poets in the British navy and army exhibited a special preoccupation with a species of war poetry. In 1759, for instance, when the British frigate's guns were breaching the walls of the French stronghold, Louisburg, Valentine Neville penned his poem *The Reduction of Louisburgh*. In 1760, George Cockings produced another war poem for the delight of London—*The Conquest of Canada*, or *The Siege of Quebec: A Tragedy*. In this species of literature, the most remarkable performance was Henry Murphy's *The Conquest of Quebec: An Epic Poem in Eight Books*. It was published at Dublin in 1790 and runs to the amazing length of eight thousand lines. Quantity, not literary quality, was the only distinguishing mark of these early Canadian poems of heroism in war.

A really remarkable book, with genuine literary quality was the elder Alexander Henry's narrative of his experience as a traveller and explorer, published in 1809 under the title *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories*. In point of publication it was anticipated by narratives dating as early as 1736, when John Gyles wrote his memoirs of *Odd Adventures*, an account of his experience while exploring the region through which runs the St. John River. There were many volumes of narratives, but the most of them lacked literary style and are of interest chiefly to the antiquarian.

Two women, however, deserve special notice as contributors to the Incidental Literature of Canada. These were Mrs. Frances Brooke, who was the wife of a chaplain of the forces at Quebec in the last quarter of the 18th

century; and Mrs. Anna Brownell Jameson. While a resident of the Province of Quebec, Mrs. Brooke wrote what has been called ‘the first Canadian novel,’ *The History of Emily Montague*. Published in 1769, it ran into several editions. Mrs. Jameson possessed a rare pictorial sense of beauty in nature; and while visiting the Canadas she wrote *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*. Published in three volumes at London in 1838, this work remains to this day the finest example of ‘color writing’ in the whole range of Canadian Literature.

With the exception of Mrs. Brooke and Mrs. Jameson, the writers of the Incidental Pioneer Literature of Canada merely took a passing view of what had interested them and put it into literary form decent enough for publication. It was the substance of what they wrote, not the style or literary art in their books, that interested their public in the Canadas, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The only faculty these books satisfied or delighted was the faculty of curiosity; and the only delights they really gave readers were vicarious thrills of adventure and wonder.

The Incidental Literature of Canada, therefore, must be merely noted as fact. In nowise, whether it be literature or not, had it any real influence in developing a Canadian sentiment or in awakening a Canadian literary spirit. Mrs. Brooke wrote her novel, *The History of Emily Montague*, strictly in imitation of the first English novelist, Samuel Richardson. But Canadian fiction, in any real sense, did not begin with Mrs. Brooke. It began with a native-born Canadian, John Richardson, who wrote historical romance, notably *Wacousta*, after the manner of, though not in imitation of, Fenimore Cooper.

By the Emigré Literature of Canada we mean in general the poetry and prose written in Canada by permanent residents who were not born in any of the British North American Provinces. It is a moot question whether the literary historian should class the poetry of Isabella Valancy Crawford and of William Henry Drummond under the category of Emigré Canadian Literature. They were born outside of Canada; but they came to Canada at an age when their minds were young and unformed and readily susceptible to Canadian influences, naturalistic, social, and spiritual. Poets like Heavysege and John Reade came to Canada when their minds were mature and their attitudes to life were fixed. It is certain that Valancy Crawford and W. H. Drummond did write from the Canadian point of view and did influence Canadian literature, as well as contribute, somewhat uniquely, to its quantity and quality. It is equally certain that several of the maturely minded *émigré* writers influenced, by their presence and example, the development of Canadian Literature.

From the point of view of influence, both of production and example, we include in the one category of Emigré Literature the poetry and prose of the permanent residents who came to Canada when mature in mind and of those

who came in childhood. With the exception of the poetry of Miss Crawford and W. H. Drummond the Emigré Literature of Canada is derivative in form and substance. In Miss Crawford's case we discover a considerable element of Canadian theme and a form of her own. In the case of Drummond we come upon what Louis Fréchette has called a 'Pathfinder'—a poet with a new substance and a new form absolutely and uniquely indigenous to Canada.

Though Confederation in 1867 sounded the death knell of the Emigré Literature of Canada, actual production of it continued for a decade or two past Confederation. It may be said to have lasted for about a hundred years; or from the Fall of Montreal in 1760 till the publication of Charles G. D. Roberts' *In Divers Tones* (1887) twenty years after Confederation.

In the first form, it was strictly pioneer literature, and naturally had the crudity of thought and structure which belong to literature composed under unsettled conditions. Gradually it came to have better aesthetic substance and artistic form. This growth in it from crudity to decent literary form evolved according to the social and spiritual development of Canada in the Pioneer and the later Pre-Confederation periods. As existence in Canada became more and more settled, and education and culture became more and more distributed and appreciated, the literature produced in the country was written more and more to appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities and the artistic conscience. The reason for this is that when an *émigré* writer, such as Mrs. Susanna Moodie, undertook to write social and nature sketches, the substance counted for everything, and the form and movement were free, unhampered by traditional laws of expression. It was speech transcribed on paper. But the *émigré* poets were bound by English models according to which they must write, or not write at all. In *émigré* verse, therefore, rather than in *émigré* prose, we observe evidences of an evolution in substance and artistic structure.

John Fleming came to Montreal early in the 19th century. Suddenly his imagination grew poetic wings, and forthwith he produced *An Ode of the Birthday of King George III*. He made his poem as intellectualized and stilted with imitative poetic phrases as he possibly could. There was nothing Canadian about it. In 1830 Adam Kidd, who came to Canada from Ireland, produced a volume of poetry, *The Huron Chief and Other Poems*, which is definitively Canadian in theme and is remarkable for really engaging descriptions of Canadian scenery. It is in a traditional English form, but from the point of view of its substance it may be regarded as the first example of a genuinely Canadian poem by an *émigré* writer, as distinguished from a 'nativistic' writer, as, for instance, Oliver Goldsmith, 2nd, who was born in Nova Scotia and published *The Rising Village* in 1825.

The names and work of the *émigré* versifiers might be extended so as to include several significant poets, such as Charles D. Shanly, James McCarroll,

Alexander McLachlan, William Wye Smith, Thomas D'Arcy McGee and others down to John Reade, who published *The Prophecy of Merlin and Other Poems* in 1870. In their verse we note a constantly increasing regard for aesthetic substance and artistic craftsmanship. The name and work, however, of one *émigré* poet deserves special notice, more particularly because he is constantly being classified as a Canadian poetic dramatist. This was Charles Heavysege.

Heavysege was thirty-seven years of age when he arrived in Canada. The accident of his having remained in Canada and of having published at Montreal his *Saul*, which, as a matter of fact, had been conceived in England, does not give him as much right, if any at all, to be considered a Canadian *émigré* poet as attaches to Kidd or Mrs. Moodie.

*Saul* was published in 1857. As a poetic drama there is no other poem which was written in Canada that is so much in the grand manner. Its theme is Biblical, and it is really treated with epic grandeur and romantic intensity. But with all its excellences, it had no influence, by way of example, on subsequent Canadian poetic dramatists, such as Charles Mair, Wilfred Campbell, or Robert Norwood. The first Canadian poetic dramatist, native-born, was Charles Mair. Though the theme of his *Tecumseh* is not so sublimated as Heavysege's *Saul*, it is Canadian; and though its style is not so altiloquent as that of *Saul*, Mair's *Tecumseh* is an original and notable contribution to the 'nativistic' literature of Canada.

It was really, however, the later *émigré* men of letters, particularly John Reade and George Murray, who by their own work in verse and in literary criticism held up the ideal of native production of worthy poetry in Canada. They were active in the first and second decade after Confederation. They did much to awaken the literary spirit in Canada and to correct the literary or artistic conscience of native-born writers. But when they had done this, their work for Canadian Literature was at an end.

Archibald McLachlan came to Canada in his twenties and he followed, in much of his writing, the themes, the dialect, and even the stanza-forms of Robert Burns. Both poets were intensely patriotic, both sang the gospel of the brotherhood of man. To both life was very much a mystery, a mystery tinged with pathos. The work of McLachlan which may be regarded as purely Canadian in tone and subject is found chiefly in the depiction of scenes of pioneer life, treated objectively: *The Fire in the Woods*, *The Old Hoss*, *The Backwood's Philosopher*; and in *The Emigrant* he projected a pioneer epic, which opens with an apostrophe to Canada and traces the progress of the emigrant from the old land to his arrival and settlement in the new. The cutting of the first tree, the building of the log-cabin and the Indian battle are successive incidents of the poem. The style of the poem is rather formal, and

recalls Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, but is without so much life or color. The poet loved the spirit of freedom and independence which he found in the new land and voiced this love in some stirring patriotic lyrics, such as *Hurrah for the New Dominion*.

Although William Wye Smith left Scotland in his infancy and was for almost four score years a Canadian by adoption, almost all his writings show the influence of the language, the literature, the history, the religious and philosophic spirit of his homeland. A deep spiritual note is present in many of his lyrics. Yet he did on occasion enter fully into the Canadian spirit and show an appreciative understanding of Canadian conditions, the beauties of Canadian landscape, historic themes and national aspirations. Some of his best known poems are: *The Second Concession of Deer*, *The Sheep-washing*, *Ridgeway*, *The Burial of Brock*, *Here's to the Land!*, *Canadians on the Nile*.

There was one *émigré* poet who deserves detailed appreciation as a creative interpreter of Western *chevalerie* and as a lyrist with an exquisite fancy and delicate artistry. This was Isabella Valancy Crawford. Born in Ireland in 1850, she came to Canada when but a child of eight years, her family settling in Ontario, and, later, moving to the Kawartha Lakes. Her father was a physician and it must be presumed that the daughter came under cultural influences in her home. More important is the fact she lived in Canadian districts which must have peculiarly affected her young, impressionable, and receptive mind. Undeniably she was born a poet; that is to say, she was born with a genius for seeing spiritual beauty and meaning in all common things, natural and human. Thus gifted and thus left free to be impressed by Canadian Nature and life around her, and also by Nature and life in the Western prairie regions, of which she had read, Valancy Crawford set about imaginatively to interpret and express in verse her appreciation of Nature and life in Canada.

Whether it was her sheer genius that created her sympathy with pioneer and cowboy life in Western Canada, or whether it was her imaginative sympathy with that life that fired her poetic faculty, is a question in literary psychology that does not here require discussion. The outstanding fact is that Miss Crawford's most notable faculty was a profound sympathy with and a clear vision of the elemental dignity of the heart of men and women whose lot was cast in rude and unspiritualizing circumstances. It was out of this sympathy that she was able to handle her themes of Western *chevalerie* with a subtle, veracious, and genuinely human but not coarse humor. Miss Crawford saw, as no one in Canada before her or since has seen, the poetry and the poetic or religious significance of life and *chevalerie* in the early days in Western Canada. She took the rude material and sublimated it, not with rhetoric, but rather with verisimilitude of diction and phrase and imagery, to the dignity and beauty of authentic poetry.

We may summarize the qualities of her poetry of Western *chevalerie*, as in her *Old Spookses' Pass*, under four distinctions. It is noted for dramatic (not melodramatic) force, rugged but characteristic humor, graphic character-drawing, and power of conveying to us the sense of the war of the elements which is felt by the wild creatures, such as cattle herds, who become the 'playthings' of those elements. The extraordinary fact is that, though all these qualities were, on her part, sheer imaginative invention, yet they are truer to the facts than if they had been written by an actual eye-witness. In short, Miss Crawford, as a poet of Western *chevalerie*, stands out as gifted with sheer and intense imaginative power and as an authentic imaginative creator.

Nevertheless, her art is all authentic realism, totally free from crass and hectic melodrama. Moreover, Miss Crawford achieved, not solely because she had imagination and a true sense of realistic values, but also because she saw that *style* in poetry was the only antiseptic for picaresque realism and hectic melodrama. She had genius, not merely a tale to tell.

Certainly Lowell, Bret Harte, John Hay, and others of their school, writing in dialect, did no better work than did Miss Crawford in *Old Spookses' Pass*; and most certainly Robert Service did nothing so elementally human and so spiritualizing with his material from rude or picaresque life in Canada.

We shall not wait to detail the qualities of Miss Crawford's art in other species of verse. We observe, however, that her long poem *Malcolm's Katie* is specially remarkable for fine imagery, colorful descriptive passages, and for a glowing impressionism which is taken directly from Canadian Nature. Moreover, it is notable for its lyrical interludes, which as lyrics, are as dainty and as delicately constructed, as full of fancy and imagination in small form, as any one of the kind in English literature. Miss Crawford's lyrical interlude, beginning 'O, Love builds on the azure sea,' is beyond criticism, and is 'the gem' of several Canadian anthologies. We quote the whole lyric:—

O, Love builds on the azure sea,
    And Love builds on the golden sand;
And Love builds on the rose-winged cloud,
    And sometimes Love builds on the land!

O, if Love build on sparkling sea,
    And if Love build on golden strand,
And if Love build on rosy cloud,
    To Love these are the solid land!

O, Love will build his lily walls,
    And Love his pearly roof will rear
On cloud, or land, or mist, or sea—
    Love's solid land is everywhere!

As an outstanding example of Miss Crawford's genius and art in lyrical impressionism, Canadian Literature contains nothing more colorful and

musical than her ‘Lily-Song’ from *Malcolm’s Katie*:—

While, Lady of the silvered lakes—
Chaste goddess of the sweet, still shrine
The jocund river fitful makes
By sudden, deep gloomed brakes—
Close sheltered by close warp and woof of vine,
Spilling a shadow gloomy—rich as wine
Into the silver throne where thou dost sit,
Thy silken leaves all dusky round thee knit!

Mild Soul of the unsalted wave,
White bosom holding golden fire,
Deep as some ocean-hidden cave
Are fixed the roots of thy desire,
Thro’ limpid currents stealing up.
And rounding to the pearly cup.
Thou dost desire,
With all thy trembling heart of sinless fire,
But to be filled
With dew distilled
From clear, fond skies that in their gloom
Hold, floating high, thy sister moon,
Pale chalice of a sweet perfume,
Whiter-breasted than a dove,
To thee the dew is—love!

When, in 1884, Isabella Valancy Crawford’s unpretentious little volume of poems appeared, it won high praise from the critics of the London *Athenaeum*, *The Spectator*, *The Graphic*, and *The Illustrated London News*. They all noted that she had an excess of riches in fancy and in imagination, and a poetic style of her own which was distinguished both by beauty and exquisite artistry. In 1905 her poems were collected and edited by John W. Garvin, B.A., and published with a critical Introduction by Miss Ethelwyn Wetherald. This remains the definitive edition of the poetry of Isabella Valancy Crawford, whom Miss Wetherald describes as ‘a brilliant and fadeless figure in the annals of Canadian literary history.’

The Canadian Emigré writers in the Pre-Confederation period, are, then, to be appreciated by the literary historian as men and women who, first, drew attention to the fact that Canadian life and culture needed expression and, next, awoke in native-born sons and daughters of the Dominion the ambition to undertake this expression in verse and prose. We must, therefore, honor the earlier and later *émigré* poets and prose writers of Canada, not for the intrinsic merit of their work, but for the fact that they engendered in the native-born the ideal of expressing the consciousness of a Canadian homeland and spirit in literature which should possess originality in substance, and beauty in form and in technical artistry.

The quotations from Isabella Valancy Crawford's work in this chapter are from *The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford*, edited by John W. Garvin, B.A., (Ryerson Press: Toronto).

CHAPTER III

# Joseph Howe

THE NATIVISTIC LITERATURE OF CANADA—JOSEPH HOWE AS FOUNDER OF THE INDEPENDENT PROSE, CREATIVE JOURNALISM, POLITICAL LITERATURE, LITERARY AND FORENSIC ORATORY—AS PATRIOTIC, DESCRIPTIVE, AND HUMOROUS POET—AND AS THE DISCOVERER AND SPONSOR OF THOMAS CHANDLER HALIBURTON.

THE epithet nativistic as applied to Canadian Literature marks a two-fold contrast. On one side, it distinguishes the literature written by natives of any of the Maritime Provinces and the Canadas (Ontario and Quebec) from the earlier Incidental or Émigré Literature. On the other side, it distinguishes the literature written by native-born men and women *before* Confederation from the Native and National Literature written by native-born poets and prosemen *after* Confederation. Nativistic Literature is 'native' only in the sense of being the indigenous product of the Unconfederated Provinces; but it is neither 'native' nor 'national' in the sense of being the product of the Confederated Provinces which form the Dominion of Canada. But since this Nativistic Literature was written by native-born sons and daughters of the Provinces in a period when these Provinces were, so to put it, 'on the way' to political union, and since it has permanent significance, it is classified retroactively as part of the genuine literature of Canada. Thus Richardson's romances (written and set in Ontario), Haliburton's satiric comedy (written and set in Nova Scotia), Sangster's and Mair's poetry (written and set in Ontario) belong to the Nativistic Literature of Canada. But the poetry of Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Campbell, D. C. Scott, Sir Gilbert Parker, and Pauline Johnson, and the prose fiction of Miss Marshall Saunders, Roberts, Parker, and Scott, as well as the verse and prose of later native-born writers, belong to the Native and National Literature of Canada. Yet both the Nativistic and the Native and National Literature are equally *Canadian*, inasmuch as each expresses with beauty or truth the spirit and life of the people and the physiognomy and moods of Nature in her seasons in Canada.

The most significant writer, at least by versatility of genius and variety of achievement, in the history of the Nativistic Literature of Canada, was Joseph Howe, born at Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1804. Solely as a man of letters, Howe must be regarded as having been, from the point of view of Nova Scotia and of Canada, a man of superior creative genius. He, along with Haliburton, inaugurated the Epoch of the Independent Prose Literature of Canada. He laid

the foundations of Canadian Creative Journalism and Canadian Political Literature. He was the ‘father’ of Canadian Literary and Forensic Oratory. He gave fresh life and novel humorous quality to the Familiar Sketch or Light Essay, after the manner but not in imitation of Addison and Goldsmith. He was the first writer in British North America to attempt the Short Story of Mystery, and with engaging success. He was a Poet of greater authentic genius than many other Canadian poets who have a wider reputation. For he wrote poetry of Nature and the Commonplace with the beauty and distinction of Goldsmith and Burns. He infused into the Patriotic Song a new music and what may be regarded as the first expression of the National spirit in verse of that species. He gave to the Convivial Song a fresh Western ‘tang’ of breeziness and genial humanity. He revitalized, with novel originality and piquancy, the Poetry of Humor, so originally indeed as to make his humorous poetry almost a species by itself. Finally, he discovered the genius of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, trained him, sponsored him, and introduced him to the world as the first systematic humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

In 1704, or just one hundred years before the birth of Joseph Howe, the Boston *News-Letter*, the first New England newspaper, was established. On March 17th, 1776, or seventy-two years after the founding of the *News-Letter*, the press of that journal departed from Boston for Halifax, *via* Newport, R.I., in the care of John Howe, father of Joseph Howe; and was set up in the office of the Halifax *Gazette*, founded in 1752, the first newspaper published in any of the Provinces which later became the Dominion of Canada. The *News-Letter* was amalgamated with *The Gazette*. The latter, however, was not a genuine newspaper; it was a governmental organ which published chiefly military and official intelligence. The *News-Letter* was, in our sense of the word, a genuine newspaper. On the face of the fact, the amalgamation of the New England and the Nova Scotia newspapers appears as a simple, unmeaningful *business* matter. Really, however, it was an important factor in the evolution of Canadian literature.

John Howe was a printer, and a cultured Loyalist. He brought to Nova Scotia two ideals. These were, first, the ideal of the free and democratic expression of the spirit in word and deed; and, secondly, the ideal of the expression of thought in strictly literary form. When, therefore, the Boston *News-Letter* was amalgamated with the Halifax *Gazette*, Loyalist culture and journalistic ideals and practice infected and enhanced Nova Scotian (that is, Canadian) journalism. The amalgamation changed the scope and quality of Canadian journalism. For in 1828 Joseph Howe became sole owner and editor of *The Novascotian*, and proceeded systematically, and with better effect, to put into practice the social, journalistic, and literary ideals of his father.

When Joseph Howe assumed absolute control of *The Novascotian*, in the

same year (1828) he also brought together the band of Nova Scotia writers known as 'The Club.' In the twenty years from 1828, when Howe became active in creative journalism, to 1847, when the struggle for Responsible Government in Nova Scotia ended and Howe retired from *The Novascotian*, Howe raised journalism to the dignity of literature. He achieved this in two ways: first, by publishing in *The Novascotian* his own and Haliburton's original 'Club' prose sketches, Haliburton's first series of *The Clockmaker*, and the prose and verse of other contemporary Nova Scotia writers; and, secondly, by establishing, in his own narrative and descriptive sketches, essays, legislative reviews, reported legislative speeches, pamphlets, and public letters, a *new standard of literary prose*. Those twenty years—1828 to 1848—may be called the Epoch of the Independent Prose Literature of Canada.

The epithet, 'independent,' as applied to the literature of that period in Nova Scotia means that Howe, along with Haliburton, set up standards of prose which in substance and style broke away from English traditions and models. Howe's and Haliburton's writings were not only an indigenous product of Nova Scotia, a *native* literature, but also a *new* literature, absolutely independent of other literatures—in matter, form, and style. Moreover, *The Novascotian*, in which were published the skits, sketches, essays, and letters of 'The Club,' the sketches and essays of Howe, the first of the *Sam Slick* humorous sketches, and, later, the texts of Howe's literary and forensic orations and public letters, circulated not only in the Maritime Provinces and the Canadas but also in the United States and Great Britain. *The Novascotian* thus introduced Howe and Haliburton, as creative prose writers, to the literary world. We may, therefore, mark the twenty years from 1828 to 1848 as the Epoch of the First Nativistic Literature of Canada.

Howe's own creative literary work by itself deserves particular notice, inasmuch as it was a distinct contribution to the genuine Nativistic Literature of Canada. In 1828 Howe himself began a series of narrative and descriptive writings, intimate, gossipy 'genre' and 'color' sketches, which he published in *The Novascotian* and which he named *Western Rambles*. In 1830 he followed these with a similar series which he named *Eastern Rambles*. In 1838 and in 1839, while he and Haliburton were in Europe, Howe published in *The Novascotian* two series of essay-like sketches, *The Nova Scotian Afloat* and *The Nova Scotian in England*, in which it appeared that Howe was developing for himself a new literary style. For though these sketches are somewhat in the manner of Goldsmith they have a merely outward essay-like formality, but are distinguished by an originality of their own, an inward spirit of fresh humor and a humanity, almost urbanity, which are wholly Howe's own creation.

In another department Howe added creatively to the prose literature of

Canada. He laid the foundations of a political literature, which was not journalism, but authentic literature. He did this, first, by his inimitable so-called *Legislative Reviews*, when, in 1830, he began what is admitted by all critics to be in literary form and style a brilliant series of discussions of public affairs. Again: Howe enhanced the political literature of Canada by his pamphlets, public letters and his speeches and addresses, which were all published in the press.

It is not, however, by his legislative reviews, pamphlets, essays, sketches and public letters that Howe must be given a unique status in Canadian creative prose literature. He wins his unique status by virtue of his Speeches and Orations. They are really 'great'—noble in thought, beautiful in literary style and finish, extraordinarily fine examples of a Western reincarnation of the rhetorical and literary gifts of such consummate parliamentarians and statesmen as Edmund Burke, John Bright, and William Ewart Gladstone.

Finally: Howe contributed to the Nativistic creative literature of Canada considerable journalistic verse which, in virtue of its humanity, and sincerity, its imaginative beauties, pleasing conceits and sentiments, and flowing rhythms (though it lacks somewhat in original verbal music) is quite on the plane of the journalistic verse of the 18th century neo-classical school, especially the verse of Goldsmith, upon which most of the verse of Howe was modelled. Howe wrote inspiriting Imperial verse, as, for instance, his *Flag of Old England*, a really fine example of patriotic poetry. He wrote colorful and musical descriptive verse, as, for instance, his long unfinished poem *Acadia* (in the 18th century rhymed couplet). He wrote infectious humorous poetry, as, for instance, *The Blue Nose*, *To Mary*, *A Toast* (to Haliburton), which is as near poetry as that species of verse ever reaches.

If Johnson and Goldsmith raised journalistic verse to the plane of poetry, so did Joseph Howe. Or, concretely, if Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* is authentic poetry, so is Howe's *Acadia*. Consider this excerpt from Howe's *Acadia*:—

> Pearl of the West!—since first my soul awoke
> And on my eyes thy sylvan beauties broke,
> Since the warm current of my youthful blood
> Flowed on, thy charms, of mountain, mead, and flood
> Have been to me most dear. Each winning grace
> E'en in my childish hours I loved to trace,
> And, as in boyhood, o'er thy hills I strode,
> Or on thy foaming billows proudly rode,
> At ev'ry varied scene my heart would thrill,
> For, storm or sunshine, 'twas my Country still,
> And now, in riper years, as I behold
> Each passing hour some fairer charm unfold,
> In ev'ry thought, in ev'ry wish I own,
> In ev'ry prayer I breathe to Heaven's high throne,

My Country's welfare blends—and could my hand
Bestow one floweret on my native land,
Could I but light one Beacon fire, to guide
The steps of those who yet may be her pride,
Could I but wake one never dying strain
Which Patriot hearts might echo back again,
I'd ask no meed—no wreath of glory crave—
If her approving smile my own Acadia gave!

Are those lines any less true, human, sincere, winning poetry than the opening apostrophe of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*?—

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain;
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,
Where smiling Spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting Summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm. . . .

and so on. 'Pearl of the West!'—in just as short, apt, and felicitous poetic phrase as Goldsmith's apostrophe 'Sweet Auburn!' Howe signalizes Nova Scotia, her natural beauty and magic, her 'homeland' thrall over the heart and imagination of her native sons, a thrall of mountain, mead, and wood, and flood, of kinship with nature and of pride in her resources on land and sea. His *Acadia* is all authentic poetry.

As a lyrist of the beauty and pathos of the Commonplace, after the manner of Burns, Howe ranks well, as in his lyrics of this species, *To The Linnet*, *The Deserted Nest*, and *To the Mayflower* (trailing arbutus). It is, however, as a Poet of Humor that Howe must be regarded as somewhat unique in the literary history of Canada. For in his humorous verse Howe does not indulge in the ludicrous or in sheer absurdity, as did George T. Lanigan. Rather Howe employs an unconventional method of dignifying the human spirit, as in his playful manner of signalizing the heart qualities of the Nova Scotian in his poem *The Blue Nose* and in *A Toast* (to Haliburton). Seldom did Howe use satire in humorous verse. But whenever he did so, he employed the manner of Burns, and in the form of epigram, as in *To Ann* and in this smart epigram, *To a Lady (whose Eyes were Remarkably Small)*:—

Your little eyes, with which, fair maid,
  Strict watch on me you're keeping,
Were never made to *look*; I'm 'fraid
  They're only fit for *peeping*.

Joseph Howe was a 'poet frustrate.' Had he been able to devote himself wholly to verse, there is no doubt that he would have left a considerable body of authentic poetry. The bad in his verse is like the bad in the verse of his

superiors, but the best of Howe's verse is genuine poetry. Yet however high or low individual critics may estimate the aesthetic and artistic qualities of his verse, Joseph Howe has a right to a place in the history of Canadian poetry, and to a distinctive place in the history of Canadian humorous poetry.

As the inaugurator of the Epoch of the Independent Nativistic Prose Literature of Canada, as an authentic creator of Literary Journalism and Literary and Forensic Oratory, and as a significant, though frustrate Poet, Joseph Howe was, as Samuel Johnson said of Goldsmith,—'a very great man.'

CHAPTER IV

# Thomas Chandler Haliburton

THE NATIVISTIC LITERATURE OF CANADA—THOMAS CHANDLER HALIBURTON—FIRST SYSTEMATIC HUMORIST OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PEOPLES—CREATOR OF A NEW TYPE OF SATIRIC HUMOR AND COMIC CHARACTERIZATION.

IT is the chief glory of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, born at Windsor, Nova Scotia, in 1796, that he was *the first systematic humorist and satirist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples*. This distinction will appear as almost obvious once its meaning and scope are properly understood. From the founding of the American Colonies till the American Declaration of Independence there were no Anglo-Saxon *peoples*. Up to pre-revolutionary times the colonists in the Maritime Provinces, in Canada, and in the Atlantic Colonies thought of themselves as British people merely separated from the people in the Old Country by the main of the Atlantic. It was a separation only in geographical distribution. The British 'family spirit' was still intact, and the Old Country was still 'over home.' It might be thought that there were two British peoples on the American continent after the Fall of Montreal (1760). As a matter of fact, the British people in the Maritime Provinces and Canada had been, as it were, always 'under the wing' of the New England Colonies, at least in the sense of a military and naval protectorate. So that after the Fall of Montreal to the Declaration of Independence the whole of the vast areas occupied by the British in the New World was definitively British America.

With the American Declaration of Independence and the revolution, there resulted in sentiment and aim a political separation between the British people of one section in America and the people of the Old Country. For the first time the British 'family spirit' was disintegrated. In 1786, with the granting of the independence of the Atlantic Old Colonies, a real political separation of the British in North America was permanently established. There was effected a separate United States and a separate British North America (Maritime Provinces and Canada). Thus there were, politically viewed, two Anglo-Saxon peoples in America, and one in the United Kingdom. For the first time in history the phrase 'the Anglo-Saxon *peoples*' denoted a real distinction in political and social entities. The process of time, of course, only increased the sense of separation of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

Unless we think of this 18th century division of the Anglo-Saxons into three separate peoples, politically as well as sentimentally, we shall regard

Jonathan Swift as the first systematic satiric humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. This is impossible, however, for the reason that Swift's satires—*The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of The Books* (1704) and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)—were not only written prior to the revolution in America but also were addressed solely or specifically to the English people of the United Kingdom. Further, Swift was not a consciously systematic satirist. He simply wrote, as occasion demanded, satiric *pièces-a-thèse*. For the same reasons Laurence Sterne cannot be regarded as the first systematic humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) and *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) were published before there was a United States Republic and a British North America as separate political entities. When Charles Dickens published his *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), the Anglo-Saxon *peoples* as such—in the United States, in British North America, and in the United Kingdom—had been a political fact for more than fifty years. Yet Dickens cannot be regarded as the first systematic satiric humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. He definitively addressed the English people in England. He was a benevolent humorist, aiming by comic characterization to create sympathy with our common humanity. He also aimed to bring about certain social reforms, but his method was that of the kindly humorist. The satirist aims to cause pain as a remedial measure. But, above all, Haliburton had anticipated Dickens both in time and in method. For *The Clockmaker*, with Sam Slick as the central comic character, was published serially in *The Novascotian* in 1835, or a year before the publication of the first of *The Pickwick Papers*, and was in method a combination of humor and satire, with a distinct political and social thesis, namely, to promote a *zollverein* of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. Dickens aimed mostly to entertain his own people. Haliburton aimed to change the vision of the Anglo-Saxon peoples in the United States, British North America, and the United Kingdom, and thus, if possible, to effect a world-wide Anglo-Saxon union or unity. In short, Haliburton's works in satiric humor were not conceived and written primarily as literature, but as social and political propaganda. The humor in them—the 'soft sawder'—was introduced to relieve the pain of the satiric truth just as the comic episodes in Shakespeare's tragedies relieve the emotional poignancy of the tragic strain.

To take this point of view about the aim and significance of Haliburton as a satiric humorist is the first step towards a proper approach to his humorous writings, and the only way rightly to estimate his importance in Canadian, American, English, and world literature. It is a simple matter to trace the origin of his genius and to show his place and influences on Canadian, American, and English Literature.

Briefly, Haliburton's satiric mood or temper was a recrudescence of the revolutionary Loyalist mood or temper. He also inherited the Loyalist love of

British connection and an antipathy to republican institutions and civilization, as in the United States. Further, in his time the realistic revolt against the historical romance in fiction was under way. Born with an inherited satiric temper, and finding to hand a great problem, namely, the effecting of the Anglo-Saxon dream of Imperialistic unity amongst the peoples of British origin, Haliburton decided to be a satiric realist, and to have his satiric writings reach and move the hearts of his compatriots in the Maritime Provinces and Canada and of the people of the United States and in the United Kingdom. But as a satirist he saw all the facts with a humorous appreciation, and in presenting the facts of life, the psychology of society, the idiosyncrasies of peoples, political institutions and culture and civilization, as he saw them, Haliburton decided to write with realism and truth but without rancor.

He was the *protégé* of Joseph Howe; and when Howe founded 'The Club,' a coterie of Nova Scotia wits, Haliburton contributed his share of the skits in political and personal satire for which 'The Club' was famous. These skits were derivative in manner. But in 1835 Haliburton invented a method of his own and definitively set out on his career as a systematic humorist, presenting his thoughts, 'as the sunny side of common sense,' in a series of sketches entitled *The Clockmaker; or The Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick of Slickville*. These sketches were published in Joseph Howe's newspaper *The Novascotian* (1835-36). There were twenty-three of them. These were augmented to thirty-three, and were published in book form by Joseph Howe, at Halifax, in 1837, and by Richard Bentley, at London, in the same year. Bentley published a second Series in 1838, and a third Series in 1840. Reprints appeared in the United States, and translations in France and Germany.

His reputation as a satiric humorist having been made by *The Clockmaker*, Haliburton became a thorough systematic creative humorist, publishing *The Letter-Bag of the Great Western* (1840), *The Attaché*; or *Sam Slick in England* (1843-44), *The Old Judge*; or *Life in a Colony* (1849), *Sam Slick's Wise Saws and Modern Instances* (1853), *Nature and Human Nature* (1855), and *The Season Ticket* (1860). Besides these works in creative satire and humor, Haliburton applied himself to editing humorous works, and published *Traits of American Humor by Native Authors* (1852), and a sequel, *The Americans at Home* (1854). All his creative works and his compilations of humor were published on both sides of the Atlantic and ran into innumerable editions and pirated reprints, and *The Clockmaker* and some others were translated into French and German. So that, on the face of original production, Haliburton appears as the first and foremost systematic satiric humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

The core of all his works in creative humor is some problem of the larger politics—British Connection, Imperial Federation, Free Trade, the

Independence of the British North American Colonies, their Annexation with the United States, Anglo-Saxon Alliance or Union, Responsible Government in the Maritime Provinces and the Canadas, Confederation of the Provinces, Voting by Ballot, Universal Suffrage. For instance, in *The Clockmaker* (second series) he presented the desirability of British connection, but in *Nature and Human Nature* declared for the independence of the British North American Colonies as against their annexation with the United States, because he fancied independence would be better for them and the motherland. In *The Clockmaker* (second series) he advocated Imperial Federation in the form of a union or alliance of the Anglo-Saxon peoples for reciprocal security and economic development. But in the same work and in *The Attaché* he opposed Responsible Government for the Colonies out of a fear of mobocracy, a fear that had been engendered in his heart by the Rebellion of 1837. An inherited prejudice against republican institutions and a dread of mobocracy caused him to oppose Confederation of the Provinces and Universal Suffrage. In every one of his works of humor or satire we find some special thesis, but chiefly satiric arguments for the union or unity of the Anglo-Saxon peoples to which he bends all his power of humor, satire, ridicule, and epigram.

Hitherto Haliburton's originality and greatness have been based on two claims. He created one of the perduring or unique comic characters of humorous literature; and he is regarded as the 'father' of American humor. Neither of these distinctions constitutes his real originality and greatness as a satiric humorist and man of letters. He is really great on account of his distinct and definable influences on three literatures.

Beginning with Canadian Literature, we remark that Haliburton's influence in Canada is popularly conceived, not as literary, but as political. It is true that Haliburton's themes or theses were highly social and political. It is also true that, so far as his humor is concerned, he was unappreciated and even unread in Canada. It is true, still further, that he has had no successors as a humorist in Canada (for Stephen Leacock is not a successor, neither being a native son nor following the method of Haliburton). Nevertheless, Haliburton achieved two important results for Canadian Literature. Along with Joseph Howe, Haliburton ushered in the Epoch of the New or Independent Prose Literature of Canada. Again: he not only produced an original prose literature but also wrote it with such originality and novelty of matter and style that Haliburton's prose, that is, Canadian prose, has a significant and permanent place in English and World Literature.

It may sound strange or startling to learn that Haliburton's work in satiric humor and comic characterization actually *displaced* in England the vogue of such popular American prose writers as Irving and Cooper. The fact is important, but the reason is more important. Between 1820 and 1840 Irving,

with *The Sketch Book* and *Bracebridge Hall*, and Cooper, with *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, and his *Leatherstocking Tales*, won popular appreciation in England. By 1840 two Canadian authors, John Richardson, with his historical romance *Wacousta*, and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, with *The Clockmaker* series, also won popular appreciation. But Haliburton's work was appreciated for an altogether different reason from that which caused the vogue of Irving, Cooper, and Richardson. The English were caught by the *new matter* in the work of Irving, Cooper and Richardson, but they felt that it was all in an *old manner*, the manner respectively of Goldsmith and Sir Walter Scott. They were reading, they felt, *English* Literature, done by two Americans and one Canadian. Save in mere matter and 'properties' there was nothing in the work of Irving, Cooper, and Richardson that might not have been done by a visiting Englishman who had gone to the United States or to the Canadas for new material and local color. It was English, not strictly *original American*, literature. And so it had a mere vogue.

When, however, the English people read Haliburton's satiric comedy and comic characterization, they came, *for the first time*, upon an absolute or sheer literary novelty—literature that was *not* English, *not* English-American, *not* English-Canadian, but an original *American* species, absolutely new and unique. Here in Haliburton's work was literature in the English language, but not English in matter, manner, or tone. Here were such novel satiric humor, such arresting and vitalized comic characterization, and such a strange medley of practical wisdom in moral maxims and epigrams, and all expressed in a unique lingo, that the like of it never was before in any literature which had come even from America.

At once a change took place in the minds of the English people in England. Hitherto America had looked across to England for fresh literature, and had based its own literature on English models. But when Haliburton produced a wholly original American literature, England looked, for the first time in history, across to America both for fresh and original literature, and for models which the English writers might follow. At least in one instance English humoristic literature actually modelled itself on Haliburton. There is no argument possible in the matter. For the fact is that Dickens did read *The Clockmaker*, which appeared serially a year earlier than Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, and that Sam Weller is an English version of Haliburton's Sam Slick (not conversely).

It is a literary phenomenon by itself that Haliburton's work enjoyed an 'unprecedented popularity' in England but also displaced in popularity the work of Irving, Cooper and Richardson. The popularity of Haliburton's work was not a mere vogue. It remains to this day. His Sam Slick has been admitted to the gallery of the chief comic characters, not only in English, but also in

world, literature—to a place beside Sterne's Uncle Toby, Dickens' Pickwick and Micawber, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Daudet's Tartarin, Twain's Huckleberry Finn. It is also a fact that Haliburton's epigrams and moral maxims have become part of the English colloquial speech and at least English popular literature.

Most remarkable were the influences of Haliburton and his works on American Literature. Rightly to appreciate these influences, it is necessary to understand what Haliburton was not. He was not, as has been alleged, 'the father (or founder) of American humor.' He was not 'the creator of the American type in literature.' He was not 'the first American in literature.' His Sam Slick is not 'the typical American.' These alleged distinctions are half-truths and are based on ambiguities.

There is considerable truth and point in calling Haliburton 'the Apostle of American Humor.' As to progenitorship, the fact is that Benjamin Franklin is the 'father' of indigenous American humor. In 1765 Franklin sent to a London newspaper what is the first example of that species of satiric burlesque, that preposterous or extravagant nonsense, said with a grave air of veracity, which is accepted as the characteristic matter and manner of American humor. Franklin was versatile in genius and so variously occupied in his long career that hardly can he be regarded as systematic in any calling. Yet he was as systematic as a humorist and satirist as he was in anything else. He began his literary career as a humorist when, in 1722, he contributed pseudonymously to *The New England Courant* the series of imitative Addisonian skits known as the 'Silence Dogood Papers.' Seven years later, he continued his humor in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* with the sprightly letters of 'Busybody,' 'Anthony Afterwit,' 'Alice Addertongue,' and 'Bob Brief,' and with satiric burlesques in *A Meditation on a Quart Mug*, *A Witch Trial at Mount Holly*, and other squibs. Quite systematic was the humor of Franklin's Prefaces to *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732-1758) and of some of the aphoristic wit and wisdom in the Almanacks when the epigrams or maxims were Franklin's own invention, as, for instance, 'Never take a wife till you have a house (and a fire) to put her in.' Though most of the proverbial wisdom in *Poor Richard* was borrowed, the form and wit—the 'Yankee smartness'—of it were Franklin's creation, and he became the 'father' of all those New World humorists who wrote aphoristic wit and wisdom, down to Haliburton and from Haliburton down to Westcott ('David Harum'). Masterpieces in mordant satire worthy of Dean Swift are Franklin's *Of the Meanes of disposing the Enemies of Peace* (1760), *An Edict by the King of Prussia* (1773), *Rules by which a Great Empire may be Reduced to a Small One* (1773), *Speech of Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim* (an ironical justification for the enslaving of the Christians by Mohammedan Africans, 1790). Also to be mentioned are Franklin's *bagatelles* (1778-80), written

during his stay at Passy, France, of which the most famous are *The Ephemera*, *The Story of the Whistle*, *The Morals of Chess*, and *The Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout*.

The foregoing enumeration of Franklin's humorous and satiric writings show that if collected in one or more volumes they would bulk large and prove that he was very considerable a systematic humorist. But only the Letter of 1765 to the London Press and the four masterpieces of irony or satiric burlesque written in 1760, 1773 and 1790 are in the manner which is recognized as the characteristic American humor—a commingling of extravagant nonsense and fact, uttered with such an air of veracity as to make the passage from fact to nonsense and conversely imperceptible and the detecting of it, on first reading, impossible. On the side of aphoristic wit and wisdom, the work of Franklin is indigenous, and, though in substance frequently derived, is original in form and style. So that while we must regard Franklin as the real 'father' of American humor, we must also see wherein Haliburton is even more original than Franklin and had an even more important a constructive influence on American humor than had Franklin.

What was meant by Artemus Ward and others who distinguished Haliburton as 'the 'father' (or 'founder') of American humor,' as the 'creator of the American type in literature,' as 'the first American in literature,' and Haliburton's Sam Slick as 'the typical American,' was a three-fold distinction which these formulae do not truly express. First, Haliburton 'naturalized' in America a method of humor in dialect, so that it became the method of certain of his successors (Ward, Billings, Westcott, Dunne) and a method of exaggeration or humorous mendacity and comic characterization, so that it became the method of certain other successors (notably Mark Twain). Secondly, Haliburton 'popularized' his method of humor in dialect and his comic characterization, especially Sam Slick, so that they became accepted in England and Europe as peculiarly American—the one as the indigenously original American method of humor, and the other as the typical New Englander, whom the English cartoonists transmuted in caricature into 'Uncle Sam,' that is, into the embodiment of *some* typical American characteristics. Thirdly, though American (United States and British North America or Canadian) authors, Irving, Cooper, Richardson, who were contemporaries of Haliburton, had a vogue in England, Haliburton had produced satiric humor and comic characterization which were not only *un*-English in method and conception, but also so original as to be absolutely unlike any other humor and humorous characterization in the world. If any literature was, in substance and manner, strictly American, it was Haliburton's humorous writings.

In short, the 'naturalization' of a method of humor in dialect—in America, and the 'popularization' of the chief phases of what became accepted

throughout the world as American, though really New England, humor of thought, speech, and character—that is what is really meant by saying that Haliburton is the 'father' of American humor, and is also his great achievement so far as he constructively influenced American (United States) Literature. But it is not his greatest distinction from the point of view of creative originality.

His prime originality lay neither in his dialect nor in the creation of his chief character, Sam Slick, but in something which is ultimate and unique in satiric genius, and which entitles him to a place beside Swift as a subtle creator of mordant satire. As regards the dialect and the conversational method of narrative of his chief character Sam Slick, the variations in morphology and phonetics, and the piquancy and liveliness of it all convince one that Haliburton independently developed the dialect or lingo of his humorous characters. But there are facts which prove that he developed it on a groundwork of a real New England diction. When we compare, on the one side, the 'Down East' dialect of Seba Smith's *Letters of Major Downing* in the Portland *Courier* (1833-34), which were imitated by Charles Augustus Davis in the New York *Daily Advertiser* (1835), and on the other side, the New England diction in Lowell's *Biglow Papers* (Boston *Courier* 1846-48; *Atlantic Monthly* 1862-67), with the diction which Haliburton puts into the mouth of Sam Slick, we find that Sam Slick's dialect is more 'outlandish' in morphological and phonetic corruption than the 'Down East' diction in Smith's and Davis' *Letters*, but nearer to the New England dialect in Lowell's *Biglow Papers*. Lowell, who was a scholar and linguist, and whose own appreciation of the New England diction is embodied in the learned disquisitions of Rev. J. Wilbur on dialectical morphology, certainly would not burlesque and degrade the speech of his fellow countrymen. The dialect of Lowell's *Biglow Papers* must be accepted as a real, indigenous New England dialect. Haliburton had read Smith's *Letters*, which had circulated throughout the Maritime Provinces, and a New England of 'Down East' dialect was familiar in Nova Scotia. Haliburton's diction, then, in faithfulness to the real New England diction, falls midway between the diction in Lowell's *Biglow Papers* and the first journalistic forms of that diction as represented in the *Letters* of Smith and Davis. Haliburton's is his conception of that diction and his independent development of it into a novel humorous dialect.

As to the originality of Haliburton's chief character, Sam Slick, the truth is that the humorist created, on a realistic basis, a transcript of the 'composite' order, the main outline being derived from a real peddler-clockmaker, named Seth, familiar in Nova Scotia, and from Haliburton's own coachman, Lennie Geldert, and a friend Judge Peleg Wiswell, who were 'smart' in wit and who were first-rate *raconteurs*. Haliburton also had as material the stage peddler

who had made his appearance in dramatic literature as early as 1811, and who by 1830 was a stock character of the acted drama, having the same comic function as the stage Irishman of the late Victorian age. Neither Sam Slick himself nor his conversational dialect were absolute inventions of Haliburton, but were based on a real and living dialect and character. He employed his creative faculties in giving the one a humorous piquancy and liveliness and the other the individuality and reality of a real person; so that Sam Slick remains as one of the immortal characters of fiction.

But the slightest reflection reveals the fact that Sam Slick is not a *single* person of many characteristics, not a *type* of character, but a *composite* creation, the *epitome* of so many distinct and contradictory traits that they could not reside in a single person but only in persons. Sam Slick, in short, was conceived and drawn to personify *a people*, and his characteristics are an immanent criticism or satirizing of the virtues and vices of republican democracy.

What is Sam Slick? He is a disreputable plebeian creature—slangy, coarse, conceited, boastful, mendacious, irreverent, yet shrewd, wise, practical, acute in perception of social and political ideals, courageous, self-reliant, quick-witted, critical of standards and values, frank in speech, and direct in action. What does he represent? Haliburton's conception of *typical Americanism*. What was he designed to achieve? Haliburton aimed to present in the character, sayings, and doings of Sam Slick, the *reductio ad absurdum* of republican culture, institutions and civilization in America.

President Felton, of Harvard University, in 1842, writing in *The North American Review*, and George William Curtis, writing later in *Harper's Magazine*, were only partially right in attacking Haliburton for having burlesqued and caricatured in *The Clockmaker*, and, particularly in the character of Sam Slick, American culture and civilization. It was mis-representation by sectional and class typification; the illogic of a part for the whole. But they were wrong in their fundamental presumption, namely, that the English people would accept Sam Slick and his sayings and doings as typical Americanism. Cultivated English people no more accepted Sam Slick as the typical American than cultivated American people accepted the London Cockney, Sam Weller, as the typical Englishman. What really happened was a two-fold result in literary appreciation. That such an uncultured and socially inferior creature as Sam Slick should appear as the social and political critic of Anglo-Saxon institutions and civilization struck the imagination of the English people as a most novel and daring creation in satiric comedy, and Sam Slick himself as the most egregiously comic figure in modern literature. The second result was that since the English people accepted Sam Slick and his sayings and doings as a novelty in creative comedy and the American people took it all

as a caricature of their culture and civilization, Haliburton's satiric humor enjoyed, as it does to this day, an 'unprecedented popularity' in England but had less popularity in the United States. Haliburton's unprecedented popularity in England had also the effect of causing the English people for the first time to look across the Atlantic to America for novel literary creation and entertainment.

Did Haliburton really mis-represent? Did he really present only sectional and class culture and civilization in America? Was he justified in choosing an obscure, socially disreputable creature from a section of American society to be the critic of American institutions and civilization? Why did he not choose someone socially higher—an American gentleman—to represent typical Americanism? The truth is Haliburton actually did represent all phases of American culture and civilization. There is the interlocutor in *The Clockmaker*—the Squire, Rev. Mr. Hopewell, and Mr. Everett, who was a real person, a president of Harvard and a diplomat, and there are pictures of the finer social and intellectual life of Nova Scotia and the United States. Felton and Curtis missed all this. How did they happen to miss it? Because Haliburton's lesser characters were just bits of *genre humor*, whereas Sam Slick was such an outstandingly clear and vivid—unique—creation in comic characterization that Felton and Curtis saw only Sam Slick and immediately conceived him as a mis-representation of the whole of American culture and civilization. That they did so is a tribute to the genius of Haliburton. For it contains the answer as to what is Haliburton's real originality as a creative humorist. The answer is this: The fact that Haliburton created a composite character, uncultured and socially inferior, to be the supreme critic of his social and intellectual betters and of American or republican culture, institutions, and civilization, is an *absolutely original achievement in creative satire and comic characterisation*. With a single stroke of genius Haliburton places himself beside Dean Swift as a satirist, and raises himself to the status of one of the world's perduring satirists and humorists.

Finally: Haliburton influenced not only American humorous literature but also American *fine* literature. We note, first, the constructive influence of his editorial labors in compiling and distributing in the United States and other countries the best American humorous fiction, as in his *Traits of American Humor*, and *The Americans at Home*. Too much has been said of his influence on Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, and other American humorists writing in dialect in prose. But his influence on American humor in dialect in *verse* has hardly, if at all, been rightly or fully appreciated. Lowell came under the influence of Haliburton in writing his humorous verse. In his *Biglow Papers* Lowell not only imitated, but also actually borrowed, ludicrous conceits and situations from *The Clockmaker* series. This fact is important, because in the

last analysis Haliburton produced his humorous effects more by grotesque conceits and ludicrous situations than by dialect.

Haliburton had a potent influence also on American journalism of his time. The newspapers reprinted ‘Yankee Stories’ and ‘Yankee Yarns’ and ‘Letters,’ which were the titles of pirated editions of Haliburton’s *The Americans at Home*, and American newspaper staff humorists wrote imitations and burlesques in the manner of Sam Slick. This in turn influenced other American humorists, and they produced imitations of Sam Slick, commercializing them as ‘By the Author of Sam Slick,’ knowing that thus they guaranteed sure and large sales.

It may be granted that Haliburton’s influence on American romantic poetry was only accidental and pragmatic. But the fact is that Longfellow was actually inspired to versify the ‘story’ of the Acadian maiden Evangeline, not when he heard a mere incident of it from Hawthorne, or when he heard it more in detail from his own pastor, who got it from an aunt of Haliburton, but when he read in Haliburton’s *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* (1829) the full pathetic tale of the Expulsion of the Acadians. More important is the fact that Francis Parkman derived from his reading of Haliburton’s *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* his own romantic method of writing history. So that, as far as America is concerned, Haliburton may be called the ‘father’ of the romantic method of writing history.

*Versatility* of powers or genius and *variety* of literary creation distinguish Haliburton as a man of letters. He was a first-rate satirist or epigrammatist, narrative and descriptive writer, anecdotist or raconteur, character-delineator, nature-painter, and, in one respect, he was a prose stylist of first rank. Such versatility is unusual and even exceptional, and seemingly marks Haliburton as a specially gifted writer. But Haliburton’s versatility also exhibits certain peculiarities. Oddly, though he is saliently the humorist or satirist or aphorist or story-teller or descriptive writer or nature-painter or character-limner in one or another of his works, he is, almost without exception, all these in any work. More oddly, while a certain gift or power predominates in a given work, all his works, taken successively, disclose no development of powers either in invention or in literary mechanics. There are differences in each successive work, but only of sheer *variety* in literary substance, not of greater and still greater advance in novel conception and artistic handling of his matter. Summarily: Haliburton’s gifts in humorous story-telling and aphoristic wit and wisdom are salient in the first and second series of *The Clockmaker*, *Wise Saws*, *Nature and Human Nature*, and *The Season Ticket*. His gifts in narration and description are salient in *The Clockmaker*, *The Attaché*, and *The Old Judge*. His gifts in character-portraiture and naturalistic description are salient in *The Old Judge*. But if any work contains all Haliburton’s best qualities—

ingenious and unfailing invention, novel and colorful imagination, rare perception of the humorous and ludicrous, acute insight into human nature, and extraordinary powers of vivid narration and realistic description—that work is *The Old Judge; or, Life in a Colony*.

As a satirist Haliburton employed two forms—realistic satire and humorous exaggeration or mendacity (‘tall stories’ Haliburton called the latter). A prime example of his realistic satire is his description of a fashionable wedding in London; another of a ‘rube’ or bucolic wedding in Slickville, both in *The Attaché*. In this sort of ‘take-off’ Haliburton has never been surpassed by modern journalistic humorists. A first-rate example of Haliburton’s gifts in humorous mendacity or burlesque is his ‘tall story’ of the sale of his horse Mandarin as related in *Nature and Human Nature*. This is the prototype of Westcott’s horse deal burlesques in his *David Harum*. More in the manner made familiar by Mark Twain is the humorous mendacity of Haliburton’s tales of ‘The Gouging School’ and ‘The Black Stole,’ both in *The Attaché*. There are anticipations a-plenty of the Mark Twain manner of ironic exaggeration and mordant satire in the second series of *The Clockmaker*, *The Old Judge*, and *The Season Ticket*.

As a Humorist Haliburton obtained his effects—and won his popularity with all classes—by character typification, story-telling, aphorisms, epigrams, and homely moral maxims, jests, waggish conceits, jocular phrases, and puns, including *double entendres*. He employed two methods of character typification; one being humorous definition; the other, humorous classification. Almost all Haliburton’s characters have names that are essentially what we mean by nick-names, to indicate distinctive mental or moral qualities of the individuals. It is by this method, rather than by character-drawing, that Haliburton succeeded in individualizing each character. It is the method of individualization by suggestion. The name Sam *Slick*, for instance, at once conveys the type of individual or character, namely, the kind of person who ‘lives by his wits,’ who gains profit by subtle or sharp practice. Such a person is ‘slick,’ an epithet derived by a vulgar pronounciation of the adjective ‘sleek.’ Other instances are The Honourable Lucifer *Wolfe*, The Honourable Alden *Gobble*, General Conrad *Corncob*, Captain Ebeneezer *Fathom*, Mr. *Pettifog* the Justice, *Nabb* the police constable, Deacon *Flint*, Rev. Joshua *Hopewell*, Dr. *Query*, and Old *Blowhard*. The moral connotations of these nick-names are obvious, but Haliburton himself in the proper place always names the character and adds a summary of moral qualities to show the aptness of the name and its connotation. The Honourable Alden Gobble is satirically or humorously thus named because he was ‘dyspeptic and suffered great oneasiness arter [and from] eatin’.’ A signal example of Haliburton’s method of typification by humorous classification is found in *The Clockmaker*, (third

series, chapter 13). There he classifies patriots into ‘rebel patriots, mahogany patriots, spooney patriots, place patriots, and raal genu*ine* patriots.’

General popular character types which are familiar in American humor indubitably had their prototypes in Haliburton’s characters. Sam Slick, as a horse trader, is the prototype of David Harum; and, as an aphorist and practical philosopher, is the prototype of Mr. Dooley. Mrs. Figg in Haliburton’s *Letter-Bag* is the prototype of Shillaber’s Mrs. Partington. In the same work Haliburton has an ‘enfant terrible’ who is the prototype of Peck’s ‘Bad Boy’ and of later examples of ‘awful children,’ down to Tarkington’s Penrod.

Haliburton was an egregious punster, and he even indulged in *double entendres* which were coarse and sometimes obscene, but which may be excused on account of their humorous point or satiric wit. As an anecdotist, ‘spinner of yarns,’ ‘tall stories,’ ‘stretchers,’ with a decided tendency to employ the coarse and irreverent, Haliburton anticipated similar traits in Mark Twain, as in Twain’s *Roughing It* and *Innocents Abroad*. Haliburton’s occasional coarseness and irreverence are to be explained by his hatred of sham and insincerity, of conventionalized prudery, of concealed indecency of thought, of the real evil caused by men and women who are outwardly ‘whited sepulchres.’ It must, however, be admitted that, traceable to his Border Scots ancestry, there was in him a love of plebeian or coarse fun for its own sake. But it must also be said that his coarseness of wit was never based on impurity of heart, and that he had the highest respect for the moral beauty and dignity of womanhood. He did remark playfully the engaging vanities and foibles of women, but for pure love and motherhood and all the sweet charities of woman he had the finest and tenderest respect. Unsurpassed in world literature is Haliburton’s tender and holy sublimation of woman’s spiritual winsomeness and dignity, as in this immortal metaphor:—

> A woman has two smiles which an angel might envy; the smile that accepts a lover before the words are uttered, and the smile that lights on the first-born baby and assures him of a mother’s love.

As to the original humor of Haliburton’s ingenious metaphors, similes, outlandish coinage of expressive word morphology (such as ‘absquotulate,’ ‘spiflicate,’ ‘conflustigation,’ ‘conniption fit,’ reechoed in Artemus Ward and Josh Billings), and of his wealth of aphoristic wit and wisdom, so much are they in the permanent warp and woof of the popular literature of humor and of common speech that they need not here be specially remarked and illustrated.

But there is one matter in which Haliburton has not been properly appreciated, and which demands fresh treatment. He has been charged with a lack of prose style. The truth is that Haliburton not only wrote with a positive Theory of Style in mind, but also anticipated Matthew Arnold and Herbert

Spencer by actually publishing his theory or philosophy of prose style. Those who criticized Haliburton as a stylist did so without knowing that he had actually applied a definite theory of style to his structure and color. From that point of view, the critics of Haliburton as a stylist were irrelevant. But they also missed or ignored the fact that he was, if infrequently, a master of descriptive prose style.

Haliburton formulates his theory of prose style in two works—in *The Attaché*, and in *Wise Saws* (chapter 19). The first work contains his 'Apologia' for his *utilitarian* style; the second briefly explains the *psychology* of his style. The 'Apologia' justifies, as Matthew Arnold would have justified, a certain promiscuity and rise and fall in his style; the second work anticipates Spencer's philosophy of the conservation of mental energies as applied to particular styles. Haliburton himself distinguishes between his conversational, colloquial, humoristic—his consciously *utilitarian*—style, and his artificial or literary—his *aesthetic*—style as in his descriptive prose.

In *The Attaché* he points out, in what we have called his 'Apologia,' that his aims, which were utilitarian, did not call for either architectonic skill or verbal artistry, but that his colloquial, loose, prolix, promiscuous, repetitious, diffuse, and digressive style in *The Clockmaker* and *The Attaché* was inevitable and was consciously adopted as best fitted to the heterogeneous themes or matter of these works. 'Prolixity,' he adds, 'was unavoidable from another cause. In order to attain my [practical] objects, I found it expedient so to intermingle humor with the several topics as to render subjects attractive that in themselves are generally considered too deep and dry for general reading.'

In particular, Haliburton justifies his sentential structure on psychological grounds. In *Wise Saws* he says that he purposely designed the structure and rhythms of his sentences so that their length and abrupt translations would spur the mind to attention, and that he employed a conversational style and dialogue to create interest and keep the attention alive. He wished his works, since they had a utilitarian end, to be read by all classes. He resolved to adapt the style of his works to assuring their popularity—'in the parlor and the kitchen.' His themes were discursive and therefore he resolved that the stylistic treatment should be discursive. So Haliburton consciously employed a style which, by novelty of dress, by being written in natural language and illustrated with droll humor, and which by colloquial sentential structure would, like 'oral chat,' sustain interest or excite attention, and inevitably be read in the parlor and the kitchen. 'Why is it,' asks Sam Slick in the *Wise Saws*, 'if you *read* a book to a man you set him asleep? Just because it is a book and the language ain't common. Why is it if you *talk* to him he will sit up all night with you? Just because it's talk, the language of natur'.'

Haliburton's humoristic or utilitarian prose style is justified, as he himself

justified it, by its successful adaption of means to end. In his ‘Apologia’ he noted the ‘unprecedented circulation’ of his works on ‘both sides of the Atlantic.’ He wrote *The Clockmaker* in a people’s style for people’s ends, and the style, in his own view, admirably succeeded. We must therefore hold that academic criticism which scores Haliburton’s humoristic style on the ground that it is loose, prolix, repetitious, digressive, vulgar, colloquial, that it is not ‘*fine* style,’ commits the fallacy of irrelevant conclusion. In the writing of humoristic, utilitarian, conversational style, precisely adapted to its end, Haliburton was a master. But he was also, at least on occasion or whenever he essayed fine style, as in his descriptive prose, especially of Nature, an artist of first rank, worthy of a place beside Ruskin, Stevenson, and Hardy.

As regards Haliburton’s aesthetic style we may instance as example of graphic realism in ‘local color’ his description of the dress and characteristics of an Acadian people (*Nature and Human Nature*) and of a Low German people (*The Old Judge*). An example of his fine artistry in painting social life is his idyllic picture of the home of Captain Collingwood’s sister, Aunt Thankful (*Wise Saws*). As a picture of the sweet and gracious social life in old colonial days, it is a masterpiece. But for sheer pathos of ‘thoughts that lie too deep for tears,’ Haliburton’s description of the Duke of Kent’s Lodge, against a background of Nature (*The Clockmaker*, third series), is worthy of Ruskin or Hardy.

But Haliburton’s *forte* in descriptive prose was naturalistic impressionism. In the technique of nature-painting Haliburton employed the whole palette of pigmentation, but especially the color-tones of carmines, yellows, greens, citrons, indigos, with white and black. His description of a Silver Thaw in February in Nova Scotia (*The Old Judge*) is unsurpassed in literature, and, if the authorship were unknown, might be mistaken for a bit of aesthetic prose by Ruskin:—

> This morning I accompanied the Judge and Miss Sandford in their sleigh on an excursion into the country. The scene, though rather painful to the eyes, was indescribably brilliant and beautiful. There had been, during last night and part of yesterday, a slight thaw, accompanied by a cold fine rain that froze, the moment it fell, into ice of the purest crystal. Every deciduous tree was covered with this glittering coating and looked in the distance like an enormous though graceful bunch of feathers; while, on nearer approach, it resembled, with its limbs now bending under the heavy weight of the transparent incrustation, a dazzling chandelier. The open fields, covered with a rough but hardened surface of snow, glistened in the sun as if thickly strewed with the largest diamonds; and every rail of the wooden fences in this general profusion of ornaments was decorated with a delicate fringe of pendent ice that radiated like burnished silver. The heavy and sombre spruce, loaded with snow, rejoiced in a green old age. Having its massy shape relieved by strong and numerous lights, it gained in grace, what it lost in strength, and stood erect among its drooping neighbors, venerable but vigorous, the hoary forefather of the wood. The tall and slender poplar and white birch . . . bent their heads gracefully to the ground under the unusual burden, and formed fanciful arches which the frost encircled with numerous wreaths of pearls. . . . The boles of the different trees and their limbs appeared through the transparent ice; and the

rays of the sun, as they fell on them, invested them with all the hues of the prism. . . .

In that passage, besides realistic impressionism or color-writing, we find first rate *style* in composition—artistic sentential structure and rhythmical periods, along with pure and dignified diction. In all Haliburton's works we can find passages which show his firm grip on the technique of prose style, and a special power of vivifying his description and color-impressionism with psychological suggestion that enhances the effect on the sensibilities and imagination. In all literature the allurement of sylvan summer in Nova Scotia or Canada is not more winningly or colorfully presented than in Haliburton's impressionistic idyll 'A Day on the Lake' (*Nature and Human Nature*). In psychological suggestion the acme has been attained by Haliburton in his descriptive sketches, 'A Hot Day' (*Wise Saws*) and 'Inky Dell' (*The Old Judge*).

Whoever charges that Haliburton lacks style errs either by irrelevancy or by making the wrong accusation. It is not style that Haliburton lacks; for he has two styles, each of which is right in the right place—a conversational style for conveying unpopular practical ideas in a popular way, and an aesthetic style for conveying ideas which are delightful in themselves as beautiful pictures of Social Life and of Nature. What Haliburton really lacked was architectonic skill—the power of designing artistic structural unity and plot. This is best illustrated by his character-delineation. His major characters have not character-unity but characteristics or character-promiscuity. Sam Slick, for instance, is never *one* character as Micawber or Swiveller in Dickens' gallery is one character, unmistakably and always. Sam Slick is a 'mass of contradictions.' Neither is the Rev. Joshua Hopewell a unity—speaking and acting, that is, consistently with one character. Yet they have a unity. How do they get it? It is not a moral but the *functional* unity of *Spokesmen* of Haliburton's ideas. The reason that Slick and Hopewell have so much promiscuity of character is that Haliburton, as he pleased and without any regard to consistency, made Slick and Hopewell and any other of his major *dramatis personae* the Spokesmen of his various thoughts or ideas. He 'picked on' Slick for the mouthpiece of this idea, and Hopewell for the mouthpiece of another idea, without ever asking if the speech he put into the mouth of Slick was consistent with Slick's mental and moral character, or if the speech he put into the mouth of Hopewell was consistent with Hopewell's intellectual and moral character. The result is that Slick, as we read Haliburton, has ideas, makes speeches, and relates experiences that are impossible in one of his culture and knowledge; and so with Hopewell and others. In short, Haliburton's major characters are *puppets*, *marionettes*. Back of them is the Showman, Haliburton; and the speeches we hear are not theirs but 'their

master's voice.'

Oddly, Haliburton himself maintained in *The Old Judge* that this was not a defect in character-delineation or in artistry but was made necessary by his practical aim and the content of his thought. The promiscuous structure of his themes and composition or style and the promiscuousness, or lack of unity, in his characters correspond to the content and movement of his thought—which was swarming with ideas, full of details of all sorts, loose, and diffuse, bent on expressing at all hazards his ideas and opinions on matters of practical import, and not on creating fine literature. The purpose of his writings, he declared, was to inform and to amuse while informing. His humor was designed and manufactured as the sugar-coating of his social and political ideas. Consequently, the only unity his characters have is the thread that runs through *his* thought; their speeches, jests, anecdotes, aphorisms, and moral maxims are but *his* facts, ideas, opinions, strung on the various *dramatis personae*. Thus inevitably, so Haliburton submitted, his works and their style appear prolix, repetitious, diffuse, digressive, and lack artistic unity. Still they each have their own unity of essential thought; his characters have unity of function; his style, unity of propriety—and the whole, unity of purpose, meaning, and achievement.

Haliburton consciously conceived a noble ideal. As a man of letters he aimed to bring about an alliance or *zollverein* of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. To do this he employed an original method of satiric humor and comic characterization. He was unmistakably a great satirist, and the first and foremost systematic satiric humorist of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. This is his chief glory. But while he thus was the first native-born writer to bring Canadian literature into a high and permanent place in English and world literature, he also was coadjutor with Howe in inaugurating the Epoch of the Independent Prose Literature of Canada. Considered from the sides of versatility of invention, variety of production in literary species, and of mastery of style, Thomas Chandler Haliburton remains to this day the Greatest Prose Writer of Canada. Yet, at the same time, his achievements in creative satiric comedy and comic characterization stamp his genius and work as not for a single country or a specific age, but for all time and the world.

CHAPTER V

# Romance *and* Poetry

THE NATIVISTIC LITERATURE OF CANADA—THE HISTORICAL ROMANCERS—JOHN RICHARDSON—ROSANNA MULLINS—AND OTHERS. THE POETS—GOLDSMITH—SANGSTER—MAIR.

NATIVISTIC romantic fiction in Canada begins with the historical novels of Major John Richardson. In 1832 he published his *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy*; and in 1840 its sequel, *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled*. These are authentic novels of the romantic type, having, as they do, respectably constructed plots, and being filled with the romance of the passion of love, heightened with thrilling adventure and incident, and colored with pictures of aboriginal character and life against a background of Nature in the wild.

Richardson was born near Niagara Falls, in 1796 (in the same year as Thomas Chandler Haliburton, and seven years after James Fenimore Cooper). He spent his childhood and early adolescent days, till he was sixteen years of age, that is, up to the outbreak of the War of 1812, in the vicinity of the Falls and in Detroit. Then, although but a mere lad, he enlisted in Brock's army. Up to that time young Richardson, during his most impressionable and receptive years, was entertained by his grandparents and parents with tales of Pontiac's siege of Detroit, and with stories of the thrilling, romantic, and tragic events in the history of the Niagara and Detroit districts—events which were surely amongst the most enthralling and stirring in the vividly romantic history of Canada and the United States. Those early days of Richardson's were thus replete with rare and unique formative influences. They created in him the love of romance, of the heroic past of his own country, and, later, when he came to write, furnished him with the inspiration and the material for authentic Canadian historical novels or romances.

Two other formative influences, besides those exercised over his heart and imagination by his grandparents and parents, determined Richardson's genius, inspiration, and creative method. In the war of 1812 he had fought side by side with the noble Indian warrior Tecumseh. Further: Richardson, on his own confession, had, as he put it, 'absolutely devoured three times' Cooper's Indian romance, *The Last of the Mohicans*. Some critics, therefore, hold that Richardson was a mere imitator of Cooper; that, first, Richardson studied the mind, and character, and ways of Indians at second-hand in the pages of

Cooper's romance; and that, secondly, Richardson acquired from Cooper's novel the art or craft, the mechanics, of writing fiction.

For the view that Richardson got his knowledge of Indian mind and character from Cooper, there is no ground in historical fact. The War of 1812, during which Richardson fought side by side with Tecumseh and his Indians, began fourteen years before the publication of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), or long before Richardson could have read a page of Cooper. Richardson's imagination was romantically formed in his early days when, during his association with Tecumseh, he came to know Indian psychology and character at first-hand. That is indisputable fact. For the view that Richardson acquired the technique of novel-writing from reading Cooper, there is some justification. It is highly probable that by his reading of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Richardson really got some 'coaching' in the mechanics of writing romance. But this concession fails to prove that Richardson was a mere imitator of Cooper and not a genuinely independent creator. Internal evidences point to independence. For when we compare the diction, the sentential structure, the descriptive epithets and imagery, and the general style of the two romancers, Richardson appears, except as a plot-maker, the superior of Cooper as a craftsman and stylist. It is proof presumptive that on the whole the Canadian romancer developed independently his literary technique. Moreover, in the fine art of character-drawing, Richardson is more veracious and incisive—a better artist—than Cooper. When we compare the American novelist's Indian characters with those of the Canadian, we discover that Cooper's are more like 'studies' from books than pictures from real life, whereas Richardson's Indians are very near to the real Indian, very lifelike. The heroic in them is heroic enough; that is to say, human and natural. Richardson's Indian characters, then, are original creations—absolutely his own. Also his own are his other characters (soldiers, fur-traders, French-Canadians, and the rest of the motley), his plots, all the stirring incidents, and the 'color' of the Canadian background from nature.

Of his romances, *Wacousta*, and *The Canadian Brothers*, the only aesthetic criticisms worth while making are that not infrequently Richardson forces the dramatic in them into the melodramatic, that he puts into the mouths of his characters utterances which are unnatural or not in keeping with the position and circumstances of the speakers, and that he suits his historical facts to his own purposes. Sometimes, too, construction and development are sacrificed to the 'theatrical' in situation, to over-drawing of character, and to 'color-writing.' *The Canadian Brothers* has these defects in a larger degree than *Wacousta*. Yet, on the whole, Richardson's two chief romances are aesthetically satisfying, and are clean, strong, wholesome, and engaging—quite deserving of a place in permanent creative literature.

Summarily: since Richardson had his genius romantically formed, and had engaged in the art of fiction, long before he had read Cooper, the only possible influence Cooper could have had on Richardson was to incite him to emulate the American romancer. Emulation incited by a contemporary author does not imply imitation, and has no significance in original literary creation. Taken, then, by and large, John Richardson had first-rate powers of invention, and was a respectable literary craftsman. He was not a great novelist, but he was sufficiently great as a creator of historical romances to produce novels which have been read during almost a century since publication, and are still read, along with Kirby's and Sir Gilbert Parker's historical romances of life and love and heroism in far-off days in Canada.

Moreover, if not in *Wacousta*, at least in *The Canadian Brothers* Richardson embodied in romantic fiction, as Sangster and Mair did in poetry, the first incipient expression of the spirit of Canadian nationality. Both on account of the superior inherent qualities of Richardson's romances as creative fiction, and on account of their containing the earliest expression of the embryonic spirit of Canadian nationality, Richardson must be marked as of first-rate importance in the literary history of Canada. He was indeed the creator of the Canadian nativistic historical romance as Haliburton was the creator of the nativistic fiction of satiric comedy and comic characterization. In truth it may be said that if all Canadian imaginative prose were lost, save the romances of Richardson and the satiric comedy of Haliburton, Canada would still have a literature.

*The Literary Garland* (1838-51) had considerable to do with promoting letters in Canada, especially by encouraging native-born writers. Amongst those who contributed to *The Literary Garland* was a young girl, Rosanna Eleanor Mullins, a native of Montreal, who, in time, became the wife of J. L. Leprohon, also a native of Quebec. Rosanna Mullins' first novel, *Ida Beresford*, was written when the author was but sixteen years of age, and was published serially in *The Literary Garland*, in 1848. In 1859 she published *The Manor House of de Villerai*, and in 1864, *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, and has several other novels to her credit. Her characters, properties, and settings are largely Canadian, and she evidently set out consciously to create a nativistic literature by writing romances which should definitively portray life and manners in the society of the Old French *Régime* and after the Fall of Quebec and Montreal.

In fact, Rosanna Mullins, much more than Richardson, was inspired by a desire to express the incipient national spirit of Canada. In *The Canadian Brothers* Richardson disclosed an *awakening* consciousness in himself of a sense of the spirit of nationality. Miss Mullins, on the other hand, was the first Canadian novelist to have a *distinct* consciousness of that spirit and to desire to

express it for its own sake. It is from this point of view, rather than from the point of view of intrinsic literary merit, that Miss Mullins' romances have a right to a permanent place in the nativistic literature of Canada. Technically she wrote with a finer pointed stylus than Richardson—with more grace and a finer limning of character, and with a more engaging urbanity. In fact, her style was informed by an Irish and French humaneness that made her work as popular with the French-Canadians (for whom several of her novels had been translated into French) as with the English-Canadian people.

Rosanna Mullins is entitled to another distinction. On the side of nationality she disputes with William Kirby the right of primacy in calling the attention of the later Canadian romancers, especially Sir Gilbert Parker, to the wealth of novelistic material that lay in the life and manners and culture of society under the old French *Régime* and the Occupation. For Kirby was foreign-born, whereas Rosanna Mullins was native-born. As a matter of fact, however, it was Kirby's romantic fiction that opened the eyes of later Canadian novelists to the abounding material for novelistic treatment that lay in the social and political history of the Canadian past.

William Kirby was born in England, but came to Canada in 1832, the year which saw the publication of Richardson's *Wacousta*. He was then but fifteen years of age and his mind unformed. He lived for the greater part of his life at Niagara. So that from his fifteenth year onwards, having taken a deep and special interest in Canadian history and civilization, Kirby really formed his mind and imagination on Canadian ideals and absorbed the Canadian nationalistic spirit.

His historical romance *The Golden Dog*, which was published in 1877, or ten years after Confederation, really belongs to the *émigré* literature of Canada. But because of its constructive and inspirational influences on certain members of the Systematic School of Canadian fictionists, in particular on Sir Gilbert Parker, and because Kirby, though foreign-born, was in spirit essentially a genuine Canadian man of letters, we must regard *The Golden Dog* as more important in the *development* of Canadian fiction than are Richardson's and Rosanna Mullins' romances, and as worthy of a more significant status in Canadian creative literature.

Summarily: *Wacousta* and *The Golden Dog* were the literary progenitors of a series of romances which have a Canadian historical basis and which are Canadian in incident and color. As to his creative and artistic powers, Kirby was a finer artist than Richardson, in plot-making and character-drawing. But, in view of certain faults—a somewhat too theatrical grand manner in character-drawing and a too great indulgence of his notable gifts in color-writing, Kirby and Richardson may be classed as equal sinners.

*The Golden Dog* is, aesthetically and artistically, that is, in plot-making,

character-drawing, and in sustaining interest, superior to *Wacousta* as an historical romance. Still *The Golden Dog* is a genuinely great novel—great inherently as an imaginative and artistic creation, and great as the progenitor of the romantic fiction of Parker, Roberts, Campbell, Saunders and other creators of the native and national fiction of Canada.

James De Mille, who was born in New Brunswick, also must be considered as a creator of Canadian Nativistic Literature. De Mille was a prolific writer of mysterious, thrilling, extravagant, and sentimental fiction, showing the influence of such masters in those genres as Poe and Wilkie Collins. De Mille certainly possessed a creative imagination of his own, was considerable of an artist in plot-making and in sustaining interest, and had a distinct sense of dramatic values, which saves such an extravagant tale of adventure as his *A Strange Manuscript found in a Copper Cylinder* from developing into the merely grotesque and sensational. But because the settings of his novels and tales are not Canadian, and because they in nowise express anything of the growing sense of the Canadian national spirit, they are not, on that side, significant in the literary history of Canada. They merely increase the quantity of Canadian Nativistic Literature.

If we have regard for the historic process in all spiritual and social achievements, and ask: What was it that, on the psychological or spiritual side, brought about Responsible Government in the various Provinces that came to form the original Dominion of Canada, and What was it that brought about Confederation? we must answer that the people in the British North American Provinces were gradually coming to see themselves, their country, civilization, and institutions from the *Canadian point of view*, and were gradually expressing, with more and more of conscious fervor and power, in prose and poetry, their growing interest in and love of Canada and the Canadian point of view. The nativistic prose writers expressed the growing spirit of ‘Canada First,’ as in the writings of Haliburton and Howe, and also in the romances of Richardson, Rosanna Mullins, and Kirby. We turn to observe how the spirit of national ideals was gradually expressed in the work of the nativistic poets.

Nativistic poetry in Canada did not take form till the last year of the first quarter of the 19th century. In 1825 Oliver Goldsmith, a great-nephew of the author of *The Deserted Village*, published his idyll or descriptive poem, *The Rising Village*. Oliver Goldsmith was born at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, in 1781, and died at Liverpool, England, in 1861, after a long official service in his native country. *The Rising Village*, in substance or theme, aimed to describe the habitat, sufferings, achievements, and prospects of the Loyalist settlers. As regards its matter, therefore, the poem has the semblance of a genuine Canadian poem. But the form, the metre, rhythm, and rhyme, the diction and imagery, the characters and the settings, and even the ‘properties,’

are in slavish imitation of the elder Goldsmith's idyll of 'Sweet Auburn' in Ireland. That is to say, the Nova Scotian's Muse is not the Nova Scotian or the Canadian but the British Muse transplanted. Moreover, *The Rising Village* is to be distinguished from Howe's *Acadia* in that Howe, though imitating the form and manner of the elder Goldsmith, expresses his love of his homeland, Nova Scotia, whereas the younger Goldsmith, though a Nova Scotian, fills his poem with an unpatriotic nostalgia. He loves the land where there is some 'Sweet Auburn,' not his native land which he describes as 'bleak and desert.' The nostalgia is real and pervasive—so much so that he removes to England and there dies. But since it is a poem of the habitat and experiences of the Loyalist settlers in Nova Scotia, and since it is correct in versification and is musical and possesses naturalistic truth, *The Rising Village* may be regarded as a genuine poem of *documentary* value, and as the beginning of Canadian nativistic poetry.

The strictly Canadian 'note' in nativistic poetry is first clearly heard in the verse of Charles Sangster. He was born near Kingston, Ontario, in 1822, and published *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, and Other Poems*, in 1856, and *Hesperus and Other Poems* in 1860. The title poem of the first volume is in the Spenserian stanza as employed by Byron and is also otherwise imitative. But it is distinctly Canadian in its lyrical interludes, in which there is a poetic *abandon*, to the beauty and magic of Nature in Canada, as, for instance, in Sangster's *Lyric to the Isles*, beginning:—

> Here the spirit of Beauty keepeth
> Jubilee for evermore;
> Here the voice of Gladness leapeth,
> Echoing from shore to shore
>
> • • • •
>
> Here the spirit of beauty dwelleth
> In each palpitating tree,
> In each amber wave that welleth
> From its home beneath the sea;
> In the moss upon the granite,
> In each calm, secluded bay,
> With the zephyr trains that fan it
> With their sweet breath all the day.
> On the waters, on the shore,
> Beauty dwelleth evermore.

Faulty as Sangster's first poems are in versification and derivative in diction, we must mark his lyrical interludes, as in the foregoing example, as expressing a *new* note, *the* Canadian note in Canadian poetry. It is, however, a *nature* note, not or hardly the *national* note—clear and confident and strong. In Sangster's second volume, *Hesperus and Other Poems*, published just seven years before Confederation, we hear the Canadian national note loudly vocal

and inspiring. We catch it unmistakably in Sangster's *Brock*—a really noble hymn to the memory of a national hero, who had 'saved Canada' for the Canadians, but a hymn that much more expresses the deeply felt unity of the Canadian people:—

> One voice, one people, one in heart
> And soul and feeling and desire.
> Relight the smouldering martial fire
> And sound the mute trumpet! Strike the lyre!
> The hero dead cannot expire:
> The dead still play their part.
>
> Raise high the monumental stone,
> A nation's fealty is theirs,
> And we the rejoicing heirs,
> The honored sons of sires whose cares
> We take upon us unawares
> As freely as our own.

We observe for the first time in Canadian poetry, the consciously felt sentiment of national unity—the first express utterance of the ideal of Canada and its people as a political and spiritual entity apart—in Sangster's line, 'A *nation's* fealty is theirs.' Henceforth we shall often hear this distinction—Canada and its people as a *nation*—in the verse of Canadian poets. Sangster, then, is important as the poet who, in aesthetically and artistically respectable verse, first uttered, *consciously* and clearly, in Canadian nativistic poetry the people's sense of a national spirit and destiny.

Again: Sangster, in *The Rapid* and in *The Falls of Chaudière*, is the first nativistic poet to express in verse that close or intimate kinship with Nature which we discover much more profoundly expressed in the poetry of Roberts, Lampman, and Carman. Sangster utters this new naturalistic note in these authentically inspired lines from *The Falls of Chaudière*:

> I have laid my cheek to Nature's, placed my puny hand in hers,
> Felt a kindred spirit warming all the life-blood of my face.

*I have laid my cheek to Nature's!* We shall observe Lampman lay his cheek to Nature's with more intimacy, with a more profound sense of spiritual companionship than Sangster. We shall note Carman 'place his puny hand' in Nature's—and have Nature as Mother April 'make him over'—with a far more intimate giving of self to the 'heart of the world' than Sangster. Nevertheless, we must remark Sangster's priority—in spirit as well as in actual poetic production—in expressing that special and singular kinship with Nature which must be denoted as peculiarly Canadian. Still, in this respect, he is only the first forerunner of Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Pauline Johnson, Campbell, and Duncan Campbell Scott.

A much more lyrically eloquent and influential forerunner is Charles Mair.

He was born at Lanark, Ontario, in 1838, and published, in 1868, his *Dreamland and Other Poems*. Technically, Charles Mair is a much finer craftsman than Sangster; for the latter was self-educated, whereas Mair was a university graduate who was well read in the modern English poets and had studied the forms of verse and the mechanics of versification. What, however, really constitutes Mair as the authentic forerunner of Roberts, Lampman, Carman and Pauline Johnson as nature poets, is not the fact that he was an artistic poet of Nature in Canada, but that his *method of treating Nature* was a *new* method with Canadian poets.

Two 'features' mark and distinguish the treatment of Nature in the poetry of Charles Mair—impressionistic painting of the face of Nature and the choice of the commonplace or the lowliest creatures in Nature as the subjects of his poetry. The first may have been inspired by Keats, and may be regarded as in the manner of Keats. But the second feature of Mair's lyrical poetry—his conscious attempt to give distinction to the Commonplace in Nature in Canada;—that is original with Mair himself, and appears for the first time in Canadian poetry in Mair's work. It is *Canadian* in and by itself.

Wilfred Campbell has alleged that Mair influenced Roberts and Lampman as Nature poets. All three were influenced by Keats, and certainly Roberts and Lampman knew the poetry of Keats more intimately than that of Mair. At least, Mair in a sense did but anticipate Roberts and Lampman in actually treating Canadian Nature. But Mair's treatment of the commonplace was objective—being mostly a sort of philosophical or religious reflection on the meaning of the commonplace, whereas Lampman's treatment of the same kind of subject was psychological. Mair merely looked on and interrogated Nature, Lampman communed with his lowly companions, such as the trees and the frogs, entered into their hearts, and spoke out for them, expressing their moods, feelings, and reflections.

The passage from the objective treatment of Nature to the subjective interpretation of the commonplace in Nature by Canadian poets, has its *termini* marked by Mair at the one end and Lampman at the other. Mair merely interrogates and wonders what the answer ought to be to his questions. Lampman communes with his lowly and animate companions in Nature, and, by imaginative sympathy, answers for them.

These distinctions between Mair as an impressionistic Nature-*painter* and an objective *interrogator*, and Lampman as a subjective interpreter of Nature, are nicely illustrated in Mair's exquisitely beautiful and sensuously lovely poem, *The Fire-Flies*:—

> I see them glimmer where the waters lag
> By winding bays, and to the swallows sing;
> And, far away, where stands the forest dim,

Huge-built of old, their tremulous lights are seen.
High overhead they gleam like trailing stars,
Then sink adown, until their emerald sheen
Dies in the darkness like an evening hymn,—
Anon to float again in glorious bars
Of streaming rapture, such as man may hear
When the soul casts its slough of mortal fear.
And now they make rich spangles in the grass,
Gilding the night-dews on the tender blade;
Then hover o'er the meadow-pools, to gaze
At their bright forms shrined in the dreamy glass
Which earth, and air, and bounteous rain have made.
One moment, and the thicket is ablaze
With twinkling lamps, which swing from bough to bough;
Another, and like sylphids they descend
To cheer the brook-side where the bell-flow'rs grow,
Near, and more near, they softly come, until
Their little life is busy at my feet;
They glow around me, and my fancies blend
Capriciously with their delight, and fill
My wakeful bosom with unwonted heat.
One lights upon my hand, and there I clutch
With an alarming finger its quick wing;
Erstwhile so free, it pants, the tender thing!
And dreads its captor and his handsel touch.

Where is thy home? On what strange food dost feed,
  Thou fairy hunter of the moonless night?
From what far nectar'd fount, or flow'ry mead,
  Glean'st thou, by witching spells, thy sluicy light?

Is not that poem *Canadian* definitively and through and through—and is it not also authentic poetry, far in advance, aesthetically and artistically, of any poetry previously written in Canada? They who, with master artistry, write delineative poetry, shall hardly achieve, in short and single phrase, so apt and clear and vivid a picture of the Canadian firefly as Mair's incisively realistic and genuinely poetical line:—

Thou fairy hunter of the moonless night.

That is masterly, and yet how it fails before such a tremendously pregnant crystallization of the subjective treatment of Nature as Bliss Carman's pervasive thrall of the senses and the imagination in his imperishable line:—

The resonant far-listening morn.

The glory that is Carman's in pure poetry, is not Mair's, and the glory that is Lampman's in the sympathetic interpretation of the moods and thoughts of lowly animate Nature, is not Mair's. Yet unquestionably Mair is the authentic forerunner of those perfervid Nature-worshippers, Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Pauline Johnson, Campbell, and Duncan Campbell Scott, the creative Poets of the Systematic School, who wrote the first native and national

literature of the Dominion of Canada, and wrote it so that the world heard and has acclaimed them Master Poets and their poetry authentic Literature!

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*The Fireflies* is quoted from *Dreamland and Other Poems* by Charles Mair.

# Part II.

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# Post Confederation Literature
# (1887-1924)

CHAPTER VI

# *The* Systematic School

THE FIRST RENAISSANCE IN CANADIAN LITERATURE—THE SYSTEMATIC SCHOOL AND PERIOD—ROBERTS AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

THE years 1860, 1861, and 1862 may be regarded as the most significant in the literary history of Canada. In the year 1860 were born Charles George Douglas Roberts and Charles William Gordon (*pseud.*, Ralph Connor). In the year 1861 were born William Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, William Wilfred Campbell, E. Pauline Johnson (*pseud.*, Tekahionwake), Margaret Marshall Saunders, and Frederick George Scott. In the year 1862 were born Duncan Campbell Scott and Gilbert (now Sir Gilbert) Parker. The most gifted and eminent of Canadian poets and imaginative or creative prose writers, these ten Canadians comprised a single group, and they began, under the influence of the awakening spirit of Canadian nationality, the first systematic writing of poetry and prose, inaugurating a period of original literary creation, which we shall term, for expository purposes, the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

These ten writers were born, bred and educated (intellectually and aesthetically) in the four Provinces—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec—which formed, on the proclamation of the British North America Act, 1867, or shortly after the birth of this group of writers, the Dominion of Canada. From the point of view of their nativity and education the members of the literary group born in 1860, 1861, and 1862, are the first strictly so-called *Canadian* poets and prose writers.

Again: they were the first native-born poets and prose writers to begin, under the Confederacy, a systematic literary career. The term ‘systematic’ defines their conspectus and aims. To this literary group the free and impassioned expression, in verse and prose, of beauty and truth, as beauty is in Nature in Canada and truth in Canadian thought, activities, and institutions, appeared as their own specific function and ideal life. They were thus the first Canadians consciously to undertake a literary career which should be, in its way and degree, commensurate with the growing spiritual, social, political, and commercial life of the Great Dominion, and to find their inspiration chiefly, if not wholly, in the natural beauty and sublimity of their homeland, and in the spiritual import of their country and of the lives of their compatriots. In short, their literary conspectus was thoroughly Canadian; and their inspiration and

ideals, too, were Canadian. In fact, their inspiration and ideals were a moral necessity born of a loyal obedience to the same creative impulse that was active in other Canadians who also were bent on constructive achievement in other spheres of Canadian endeavor.

Moreover: the literary group born in 1860, 1861, 1862, may be distinguished as having been the first Canadian poets and prose writers who, by actual performance, showed the nations, largely the peoples of the Motherland and the United States, that the political and commercially lusty young Confederacy was, on its own account, decidedly active in letters. The truth is that, in the decade following 1887, which witnessed the publication of the first work in verse and in prose by the systematic group of Canadian men and women of letters, Canadian poetry and imaginative prose, though they were derivative in form and frequently derivative in theme, quite gained the decent regard, and, in some instances, the admiration, of distinguished men of letters in England and in the United States, and furnished a pledge of greater achievement in literature.

The Canadian poets and prose writers born in 1860, 1861, and 1862, distinguish themselves and the years in which they were born as the first systematically creative School and Period in the literary history of Canada. Their creative activities and their poetry and prose we have denominated as the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

What is meant by the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature? In 1880 a young native-born Canadian, Charles G. D. Roberts, published a book of poems. The critics of England and the United States thought well of the verse. There was in it a quality that had not been in previous books of verse by native-born Canadians. The poems were marked by a certain noteworthy *artistic finish* in the craftsmanship.

This was significant. Hitherto native-born Canadian poets had not been adroit in technique; they had been very careless about it, and some of them had no respect or feeling for it at all. Poetry was poetry, they thought, whether it was well dressed or not. With the publication of his *Orion*, Roberts sounded the death knell of slovenly or indifferent technique in Canadian poetry. Working with him, and largely under the influence of his ideal of technical finish in verse, were Lampman, Carman, Campbell, Pauline Johnson, Duncan Campbell Scott, Frederick George Scott, and others. They all cared supremely for fine technique in poetry.

In the second decade after 1887 there arose in Canada a group of poets who were not solicitous about the technique of their verse. With them fine artistry in Canadian verse declined. This Decadent Interim lasted but a few years. A later band of poets arose who went back to the ‘technical’ ideals which were exemplified in the poetry of Roberts and his colleagues. This

younger band of poets ‘restored’ the ideals of the first literary group and began the Restoration Period in Canadian poetry. Collaterally, a similar course of distinction, decadence, and restoration of technical ideals can be observed in Canadian imaginative and aesthetic prose.

In another sense the period which began with Roberts and his *confrères* may properly be denoted as the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature. It happens that the best of the Pre-Confederation Literature, produced either by *émigrés* or by native sons of the Province, was the work of ‘old minds.’ Consider, for instance, the historical romances of Major John Richardson and the satiric humor of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the poetry of Oliver Goldsmith, 2nd, and of such *émigrés* as Charles Heavysege and John Reade, the romantic poetic dramas of John Hunter-Duvar and the prose tales of James De Mille. We observe that, despite certain engaging novelty in themes and treatment, it is all the work of old men; that is to say, of minds which were attempting to ‘transplant’ old traditional methods and the forms of a past literature in a soil which was naturally hostile to their growth and gave them a mean and dry exotic existence.

If we fancy that we discover in the best Pre-Confederation literature the fresh beauty and vitality of youth, we shall discover, if we look critically, that this vitality and beauty are the last hectic or pale flowering of an exotic English literature, and that, commingled with the beauty, are the wrinkles of sapless age. To be sure, there is the flame of creative fire in, for example, Richardson and Haliburton. Notwithstanding, it is the flame which flares up, with a startling brilliancy, just before it dies out.

In truth, then, Pre-Confederation Canadian Literature was essentially a transplanted Old World literature. Inevitably it was alien to the soil of Canadian life, genius, and ideals. It, therefore, lacks real vitality, vigor, and truth. Except in Nova Scotia, in the time of Haliburton and Howe, it was the outcome of personal, not necessary social expression.

But, after Confederation, expression of the spiritual and social needs of the Great Dominion became a national necessity. This expression, being born out of the spiritual and social needs of Canada, must be considered, however derivative the mere forms employed, as a genuine literary Renaissance. The period or movement begun by the systematic groups of poets and prose writers born in Canada in 1860, 1861, and 1862 may, then, properly be denoted as the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

CHAPTER VII

# Charles G. D. Roberts

ROBERTS SPONSOR TO LAMPMAN—LITERARY FATHER OF BLISS CARMAN—MASTER OF VERSE TECHNIQUE—FORMS OF HIS VERSE, AND ITS QUALITIES.

WHETHER Charles G. D. Roberts had a genuine formative influence on Canadian literature, particularly Canadian poetry, or whether he should be regarded merely as 'the eldest brother' of the first systematic group of Canadian poets and prose writers may, possibly, be a moot question. Of a certainty he was the first native-born Canadian to take the leading role in making real and permanent, both by singular influences and by actual production in poetry and imaginative prose, a native and national literature in Canada.

First: Roberts was the literary *sponsor* of Archibald Lampman. In 1884, while editor of *The Week*, Roberts published in that periodical the very first poems which Lampman contributed to the public press (*The Coming of Winter*, and *Three-Flower Petals*). This is much more significant than appears on first view. It must be remembered that Roberts, though but twenty-four years old at the time of his editorship, had already published, in 1880, his *Orion and Other Poems*, which had been well received by the critical press in England and the United States. This distinction, abetted by his editorial connection with Goldwin Smith, the founder of *The Week*, gave him some of the glory of a new literary 'star' and made him an authority whose good opinion of another's verse was very inspiring when it took the form of introducing a young unknown native poet to the Canadian public. In 1884 Lampman was a young man, human, sensitive, and shy. Roberts was the first to recognize Lampman's authentic genius and the first to give him that practical encouragement which alone counts constructively—a first and right start, *per aspera* indeed, but, for Lampman, *ad astra*.

Roberts was also the 'literary father' of Bliss Carman. In 1885 Roberts was appointed Professor of Literature at King's College, Windsor, Nova Scotia. It was Roberts who really trained Bliss Carman in the poetic perception of Nature and in poetic technique and who inspired him to begin a poetic career. It all happened in this way: To Roberts' home, at Windsor, came Bliss Carman, a cousin of the elder poet. Here Carman spent several of his growing, most impressionable, and most receptive years, coming directly under the pervasive influences—the aesthetic culture and a tutorship in poetic technique

—of the elder poet. Further: with Windsor as a centre, and Roberts as a companion and guide, Carman made excursions over the lovely and glamorous scenes and haunts of beauty near and beyond Roberts' home. Carman, with Roberts, dwelt and communed with Nature intimately, visited the hiding places of earthly beauty, fed his senses with pure delight of stream, lake and marsh, woodland and sky, tuned his heart to hear, with peculiar meaning and joy, the cries of the denizens of the woodland, the murmurings, dronings, and shrillings of insects, and the dulcet lilting voices of birds. Also, in fancy and peaceful reverie, Carman lived over again all the rare moments and joys of sensation and spiritual ecstasy experienced by him in that lovely area of country conscribing Windsor, the land of Evangeline, the Gaspereau valley, the Basin of Minas, and the Tantramar marshes.

Thus the young Carman's senses and imagination discovered the beauty, glamor, and glory of land and sea. Inevitably, at length, he was inspired to emulate the elder poet, Roberts, and to begin the systematic writing of the winning lyrism which, in the years that followed, has given Carman a name *sui generis*, not only amongst the poets of his homeland, Canada, but also amongst the poets of the English-speaking races.

Again: two years after taking up his residence at Windsor, Roberts published his really epoch-making volume of poetry, *In Divers Tones* (1887). This was his second volume of verse and, in it, his genius and art shone with greater glory, especially in the eyes of the critics and poets of the United States who were not likely to think, at any rate in that day, that anything could come out of Canada, particularly Nova Scotia, except pulpwood, coal, fish, and potatoes. Roberts and his poetic work disillusioned the young Canadian poet's American cousins and taught them that Canada produced mind, and even poetic genius.

Roberts was related to Carman by blood and temperament and poetic tutorship. These facts of various relationship between Roberts and Carman became known in the United States; and the light of Roberts' literary reputation was reflected on his cousin, Bliss Carman. It was, therefore, natural that the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* should, as actually happened, publish in that magazine Carman's first significant poem, *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1887), which became the title poem of his first volume of verse, *Low Tide on Grand Pré: a Book of Lyrics* (New York, 1893). All this is more significant than it seems.

For a young poet, story-teller, or essayist to have his work published in *The Atlantic Monthly* is a literary distinction by itself. The imprimatur of *The Atlantic Monthly* is as a royal seal in the kingdom of letters on the American continent. Largely through the sponsorship of Roberts' reputation, Carman was favorably known to the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. When, therefore, the

magazine published Carman's first important poem, the poet was properly and most significantly introduced to the literary world. For *The Atlantic Monthly* enters only the homes of the most cultured readers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The placing of its imprimatur on the verse of Bliss Carman was a declaration to the world that Canada had produced another new and engaging poet.

Once more: at least in one matter Roberts had a considerable influence on several of the other members of the first systematic group of Canadian poets. He was the first native-born Canadian poet to be solicitous about poetic technique, and had thus won the notice and even commendation of critics and poets in England and the United States. In his *Orion* and in his *In Divers Tones* Roberts held up the ideal of finished technique in poetry. Roberts' success from 1880 to 1887 became, therefore, an inspiration to other poets in the first systematic group, and inspired them to accomplish a body of verse excellent enough, at least in technique, for publication in volume form without danger of discrediting themselves and their country. So, in fact, it happened: Lampman and Scott (F. G.) published their first volume of verse in 1888; Campbell his first in 1889; Carman his first in 1893: Scott (D. C.) his first in 1893; Pauline Johnson her first in 1895.

Still further: it was Roberts' two volumes of verse that first called the attention of the literary public in the United States and in England to the fact that *systematic* literary activity was going on in Canada, and that first awakened critical curiosity about the new Canadian poets and their verse whenever a volume by Roberts or any of his poetic compatriots was published. Roberts' renown obtained for the others a ready and just 'hearing.' This achieved, the quality of their verse, especially of their nature-poetry, brought them, it is fair to say, very favorable appreciation from the critics and poets of the United States and England.

Finally: Roberts is related to the first systematic group of Canadian poets and prose writers, not only pragmatically as sponsor, inspirer, and leader: but also in a special way. He was the 'Voice' of the Canadian Confederacy. Seven years after the publication of his *Orion*, suddenly the Canadian people heard Roberts trumpeting a new song. In it there was nothing classical in theme, and nothing cold and correctly formal in artistic structure and finish. Roberts had changed from an Artist to a Prophet, from an Artificer in verse to a Voice—the Voice of one crying in the wilderness and trying to make straight the paths of the Canadian people. He was still a young man but he had been vouchsafed vision and he called magniloquently to his compatriots, thus:—

> O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,
> Who stand'st among the nations now
> Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,

With unanointed brow,—

How long the ignoble sloth, how long
The trust in greatness not thine own?
Surely the lion's brood is strong
To front the world alone!

He repeated his trumpeting to the Canadian to awake to a national consciousness of destiny and to achieve that destiny—he repeated the 'call' in language even more magniloquent—in his *Ode to the Canadian Confederacy*.

Perhaps these were only 'occasional' poems, artificially inspired. At any rate Roberts' Vision of Canadian nationality and his interest in expressing it forsook him. A few years after uttering the 'Call' he left his native Canadian habitat (in 1895) for New York. Yet in the fifteen years from 1880 to 1895 in the homeland, or till his removing to New York, by his own fine artistry and by the influence, at least of his example, on his contemporaries in Canada, Roberts was considerably, perhaps chiefly, potent in raising native Canadian poetry to a degree of technical finish that was never before reached or even attempted by native-born Canadian men and women of letters.

Summarily: as discoverer and sponsor of Lampman, as inspirer and sponsor of Carman, and as exemplar, at least in technical ideals, to the first native-born group of systematic poets of the Dominion, Charles G. D. Roberts wielded a constructive influence on Canadian native and national poetry. That without his influence there would still have been a Systematic School of Canadian Poets, of which Lampman, Carman, or D. C. Scott might have been the most conspicuous creator, is a high probability. But it is a theoretical probability. We cannot, however, gainsay the fact of Roberts' constructive influence on his *confrères* in the Systematic School of Canadian Poets. On the grounds, therefore, of his triple role as sponsor, inspirer, and exemplar, and of his own creative poetic art, Charles G. D. Roberts is justly to be distinguished as the Inaugurator of the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

Roberts' own poetry may be critically appreciated (1) as a recrudescence of the English classical idyll; (2) as poetry of nature, with special reference to its distinction from the nature-poetry of Lampman; (3) as elegiac poetry; and (4) as poetry of modern eroticism.

At the outset it is important to emphasize two singular facts. First, with the single notable exception of Roberts' spasmodic 'Call' to the Canadian people to achieve a national destiny, and with the further exception of a national or Canadian setting and color in some of his nature-poetry, Roberts' verse is anything but Canadian. Secondly, Roberts' poetry is signally an example of poetry which is not, to use Mathew Arnold's formula, 'a profound and beautiful application of ideas to life.' It is characteristic of the essential Canadian genius that its attitudes to the universe and to existence are moral

and religious, that it values the fine arts, including literature, as a means for the ideal enhancement of life, and loves the Beautiful in the fine arts as the only visible instance of the union of the real and of the ideal, which is, philosophically viewed, our only pledge of the ultimate supremacy of the Good. The only really deadly criticism, therefore, that can be applied against the poetry of Roberts is that he has missed in his own verse the supreme ethical note or ideal which is in the poetry of one of his masters, Keats:—

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty,

and that he did not engage himself to write poetry, with the intent which was really the aim of Keats, as well as of Arnold, namely, as a profound and beautiful application of ideas to life. Aware now of the unethical intent and quality of Robert's poetry, we can the better and more justly appreciate his development as a poet and his achievements in poetic substance and technique.

It was natural and inevitable that an undergraduate introduced, at College, into the world of letters through the poetry of the Greek and Latin classics and the highly lyrical and sensuous poetry of Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson, should, when he himself felt impelled to write, produce poetry which, in substance and style, was based on classical themes, and colored with sensuous images, and that, when critically estimated, this poetry should be valued as a sincere but finished academic exercise in verse. Roberts' first volume, *Orion and Other Poems*, was just such an academic exercise in verse. Yet it was an exercise by a lad just out of college who not only informed his verse with a respectable showing of classical scholarship and with an engaging Arcadian setting and color but also wrote with so careful a technique that when his verse was compared with that of earlier Canadian poets, it was found to be unprovincial in scope and appeal, and more finished in technique than any previous Canadian verse. It was indeed derivative, literary, academic. It was vitiated with youthful crudities in thought and manner and certain borrowings. But, on the whole, it was as excellent a first book of verse as might be issued by any young Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate or, conceivably, by Shelley, Tennyson, or Swinburne in their undergraduate days. Indeed, critics and poets in England and in the United States, in reviewing *Orion and Other Poems*, noted the volume as a respectable performance in verse and a fair promise of excellent future poetry from the Dominion.

Roberts' first volume *Orion and Other Poems* is a significant disclosure, both positively and negatively, of his essential genius and art. Positively, the bias or bend of his genius was towards English neo-classical idyllism and sensuous impressionism. Negatively, his genius lacked, and has continued to lack, original imagination or imaginative power. In his first volume, his 'properties,' to use a term borrowed from the stage and employed by Robert

Bridges, Poet Laureate, are the same ‘properties’ as appear in the Keatsian idyll. In Roberts’ earliest verse masquerade mythical Greek deities and heroes, sylvan demi-gods and demi-goddesses, Arcadian denizens and shepherds, painted with rich sensuous color against a background of pastoral or idyllic landscape, to the accompaniment of impressionistic verbal music; alliteration, consonance, assonance, and vowel-harmony. All this is a recrudescence, unmistakably, of the same qualities in Keats, Tennyson, and Swinburne. In short, Roberts appears as an unoriginal or unimaginative nature-and-figure-painter and verbal melodist. A single example from *Orion* will suffice:—

> For there the deep-eyed night
> Looked down on me; unflagging voices called
> From unpent waters falling; tireless wings
> From long winds bear me tongueless messages
> From star-consulting, silent pinnacles;
> And breadth, and depth, and stillness
> Fathered me.

In that passage criticism at once notes that Roberts, as a very young poet, begins his professional career as a clever ‘word virtuoso.’ That passage certainly suggests, as no doubt it imitates, the sensuous impressionism of the Choric Song in Tennyson’s *Lotus Eaters*. Its verbal music carries the same kind of vague impressionism which we hear in the gossamer tone-painting of Debussy’s orchestral prelude *L’Après-midi d’un Faune*. No one will doubt the sincere ambition of Roberts to be a poet, and the sincerity of his choice of themes and properties, diction, and poetic style. Yet, while noting the artificiality of it all, one does wonder that a tyro poet could, in a first volume of undergraduate verse, so consummately simulate, as Roberts did, the art of the supreme masters of English neo-classical idyllism and impressionism.

As yet, then, Roberts’ poetry discloses only talent in him, nothing of genius, or originality, or imagination. His poetry is, after all, a cleverly sublimated academic exercise. Literary psychologists cannot escape the feeling that Roberts deliberately ‘manufactured’ his first volume of verse—cannot help picturing the young poet diligently figuring away in his student’s cloister at the properties, forms and metres of his imitative idyllism and impressionism. It is all Artifice; all artificial. As yet in Roberts’ verse there is no ‘note’ of inspiration awakened by the magic and mystery of the great Dominion—no New World ‘note’ caught from Canadian Nature, or from Canadian romantic life and contemporary civilization.

In his second volume of poems, *In Divers Tones*, there is an advance in variety of inspiration, in his forms and metres, and in finish of technique. Still, on the whole, the themes and properties, rhythms, metres, and color are those of English neo-classical idyllism and impressionism. There is, however, some suggestion of a change away from his former too imitative adherence to the

subject, manner, and style of the English idyllists. There is, for instance, a suggestion of a structural, but not ethical, influence from Browning. There is, in this regard, a Browningesque coinage of unconventional or awkward diction, an adoption of a Browningesque metre and an introduction of 'medley' as when he inserts, after the Browning manner, a lyrical interlude, unexpectedly and with no logical justification, into the text of a broader, more serious movement and more ethically informed subject. His second volume of poetry, *In Divers Tones*, shows that Roberts has talent, but is still unimaginative and artificial. Yet his second volume is much more significant than his first, not by its being more various in its themes and forms, but by its exhibiting new tendencies in the bent of the poet's mind and imagination. There is a tendency towards ethical influences and to get away from his early preoccupation with English neo-classical idyllism and impressionism. There is also the merest show of a tendency to occupy his imagination with ideas of the Canadian 'spirit' and the beauty and wonder of Nature in Canada. There is, however, no distinctive embodiment of inspirational ideas or moods awakened by the Great Dominion or the New World.

Notwithstanding, in his second volume Roberts is taking his first step on the way to the expression of the essential form and manner of his creative genius as a poet. He was born to lilt, in simple lyrical and descriptive verse, the aesthetic sensations and the emotional nuances of Canadian life and external nature. In short, Roberts was born to become, as he did become, the most engaging and artistic, though not the first, native-born Canadian idyllist. *In Divers Tones* he first appears as a really significant creative Canadian poet. But whenever, in his later literary career, Roberts forsakes his light or simple idyllic and impressionistic treatment of Canadian life and external nature, as he forsakes it in the monody, in his poetry of city life, and in his poetry of modern eroticism, he may be engaging or arresting or impressive, but in nowise is he creatively significant.

In the same volume, *In Divers Tones*, Roberts exhibits two manners. In some poems in the volume he clings to his old manner of English Classical Impressionism. In other poems in the same volume he essays his new manner of Canadian Impressionism. The first is distinguished by overweighted sensuousness, by over-burdened luxurious color of descriptive epithet and verbal music. An impressive example is *Off Pelorus*, the sensuous quality of which may be suggested by the following single stanza:—

> Idly took we thought, for still our eyes betray us,
> Lo, the white-limbed maids, with love-soft eyes aglow,
> Gleaming bosoms bare, loosed hair, sweet hands to slay us,
> Warm lips wild with song, and softer throat than snow!

Roberts' strictly Canadian Impressionism is colorful and musical, but the

structure of the verse is simple, as, for instance, *On the Creek*, an idyllic lyric, full of Canadian color, and highly alliterative, beginning:—

> Dear heart, the noisy strife,
> And bitter harpings cease.
> Here is the lamp of life,
> Here are the lips of peace.

Roberts developed other ‘manners’ or styles. But, unquestionably, this Canadian idyllic impressionism, simple in thought and form, yet colorful and musical, is his natural *forte*—his *natural, characteristic manner*. It is exemplified, in the same volume, by other Canadian idylls in the simple style of *On the Creek*, as, for instance, *In The Afternoon*, *Salt*, *Winter Geraniums*, *Birch and Paddle*; by distinct and deliberate suffusions of Canadian Nature in dactylic hexameters, as in *The Tantramar Revisited*, and in the sonnet-form (somewhat anticipating the nature-poetry of Lampman), as in Roberts’ genuinely noble sonnets *The Sower*, and *The Potato Harvest*.

We may turn now to a general consideration of Roberts’ poetic treatment of Nature. In Roberts’ first volume, in his strictly Arcadian poetry, there is nothing of Canadian Nature, nothing of Canadian scenery, nor the color and sentiment of Canadian life in the habitat of the distinctive Canadian spirit. In the second volume, *In Divers Tones*, there is a definitive engagement, on his part, with Canadian Nature, or with Canadian life and sentiment pictured against Canadian backgrounds; and also a change in the form and style of Roberts’ poetic composition.

The natural forms of Roberts’ art are light, simple, lyrical, and descriptive verse, which he treats with charming naturalness, almost *naiveté*, with simple tunefulness of ballad or folk rhythms, and which sometimes he delicately suffuses with a contemplative revery, a gentle melancholy, or a subdued sentimental reflection on the magic and mystery of Nature and life, somewhat in the manner of Herrick and Tennyson, and Longfellow. But Roberts’ lyrical idyllism or nature-description is not always wholly soft or sentimental, pretty, or gentle, or charming, nor is his new manner always in folk rhythm in form. At times, even when simple, his verse is picturesque, even brusque, vigorous, and overweighted with descriptive details as if, in the last matter, he must ‘paint in’ all the features and properties of Canadian Nature and leave nothing of its physiognomy to be added by the imagination of the reader.

Roberts, however, has one singular limitation, an innate defect of his genius. He cannot limn the human person or figure as one of the properties of his poetry of Canadian woodlands or pastoral scenery and life. In the matter of human portraiture against a background of Nature Roberts, as poet, is abstract and faltering in drawing, lifeless, unveracious, ineffective. Otherwise in the Canadian idyll or in nature-description he is concrete, veracious, simple but

graphic, nearly always winningly musical and on the whole satisfying. In short, Roberts discloses in his new manner, in the Canadian idyll and his Acadian nature-poetry, the sure possession of the secrets of color, movement and music, and of real Canadian national sentiment, in the presence of life and nature. He is an adroit nature-colorist and verbal melodist.

Absent, however, from his genius and art are all gifts in spiritual portraiture and the fine and noble interpretation of Nature which Lampman discloses in his nature-poetry and his interpretation of the essential Canadian spirit from the embodiment of that spirit, as Lampman discerns it, in Nature in Canada.

Roberts' treatment of Nature may be illustrated by examples taken from his second volume, *In Divers Tones* (1887), and from *The Book of the Native* (1896), in the latter of which are some poems that really belong, in form, and spirit, to the time when he was changing his abstract *Arcadian* manner to his concrete *Acadian* manner as in his *In Divers Tones*. Illustrative of Roberts' change to a Canadian theme and to the modern simple method of treating Nature, in the pseudo-classical style, an apt example is *The Tantramar Revisited*, composed in the dactylic hexameter, a form, suggested, no doubt, by Longfellow's pretty story of Evangeline. In this poem Roberts treats Canadian Nature with an impressive originality in properties, color, and sentiment, and certainly with a pervasive directness and veracity which prove his sincerity and which convince the reader that the poet was moved by the beauty and pathos of his Acadian subject:—

> Ah, the old-time stir, how once it stung me with rapture,—
> Old-time sweetness, the winds freighted with honey and salt!
> Yet will I stay my steps and not go down to the marshland,—
> Muse and recall far off, rather remember than see,—
> Lest on too close sight I miss the darling illusion,
> Spy at their task even here the hands of chance and change.

What a change in Roberts—this change from the abstract, artificial, academic, over-sensuous treatment of Nature in Arcadia to his direct, simple, concrete treatment of real nature in Acadia, with his poet's eyes directly 'on the object.' There we have the real, the genuine Roberts, the original authentic poet of Canadian Nature and life and nationality.

For an example of his colored realism or idyllic naturalism tinged with a sort of Wordsworthian plainness or austerity of style and ethical revery, consider his sonnet *The Sower*. It has been called Roberts' 'popular masterpiece.' As a sonnet, it is perfect in artistic structure, and is as faithful to Canadian Nature and sentiment as, say, Millet's paintings, *The Reapers* and *The Angelus*, are true to French pastoral life and religious sentiment.

But this sonnet is a good example of Roberts' ineffectiveness in human or

spiritual portraiture. How effectively it pictures for us the land, the sky, the birds, the human properties of the Acadian landscape in Nova Scotia. The poem visualizes vividly for us all the features and elements of external Nature; yet it fails to visualize the Sower *himself*, to limn him effectively, graphically, impressively against the background of Nature as, on the other hand, Millet has graphically limned the human figures in his paintings against the French landscape.

Finally: a poem which is a really fine example of Roberts' characteristic genius and art in the authentic Canadian idyll and in nature-description, and which, perhaps, contains his nearest approach to graphic figure-poetry, namely, his lyric *The Solitary Woodsman*, is specially noteworthy. Though published in *The Book of the Native*, it really belongs to the period of *In Divers Tones* when Roberts was changing over to his natural and characteristic manner of Canadian idyllic impressionism. For it is a gentle, natural, and simple lyrical idyll of Canadian Nature and life, tinged with a delicate mood of contemplation and pathos. A touch more of 'personal detail,' of moral characterization, would have made *The Solitary Woodsman* as universal and popular a portrait as the genre picture of the hardy, happy village blacksmith in Longfellow's poem with that subject. Nevertheless, the poem has vigor, action, life-likeness; it is veracious and picturesque. In it Roberts is at his best in the Canadian lyrical idyll and in figure-portraiture.

Strict analysis of Roberts' nature-poetry reveals both the positive qualities and the defects of his genius and art. As a poet of Nature in Acadia he hardly more than effects *glimpses* of Canadian scenery and pastoral life, colorful, no doubt, and tinged with a homely or even tender naturalistic sentiment. His pictures of Canadian scenery and pastoral life are indeterminate *pastels* of the general features of Nature in Canada rather than rich, broad paintings done with the forthright, broad brush-work of a master artist. It is all pretty, or charming, and faithful to Nature in Acadia. But it is all based on superficial observation and is devoid of poetic, that is to say, profound and beautiful application of ideas to life. It is not to be expected that the Canadian people will treasure these pastels of Canadian scenery and pastoral life. For though they be beautiful, simple, and realistic, the ethical element in them is always a reflection, a moral platitude, from the poet's own moralizing, or a recrudescence of some older poets' moralizings.

The public is quick to detect insincerity in a poet. While it would not be just to accuse Roberts of insincerity whenever he attempts to moralize in his nature-poetry, or to give it a moral or religious significance, it is still true that Roberts' nature-poetry is too superficial, too obviously 'an effort' to make pretty or charming pastels of Canadian scenery and pastoral life, too lacking in thoroughly humanized treatment of Nature, to be popular or cherished for its

own sake by the Canadian people.

His pure lyrical pastels, as for instance, *On the Creek*, and *The Solitary Woodsman*, are more likely to remain permanently popular than are his Nature poems in other forms, as, for example, the genuinely important sonnet-sequence in his *Songs of the Common Day* (1893). In these sonnets, however, he shows no increase of descriptive power but only the variety of his word-painter's palette. Moreover, in these sonnets there is a felt insincerity of aim. Though fine in structure, faithful to Canadian Nature, variously treating the aspects of Canadian Nature, and often sentimental and moralistic, they impress the reader as having been designed and written deliberately to show forth the poet's powers in realistic or naturalistic impressionism, in the philosophical interpretation of Nature, and in technical artistry. Notwithstanding, it must be admitted that in these sonnets Roberts, as an impressionistic painter of Canadian Nature, is a master, and has his analogues, in the pictorial painting of Nature, in Corot and Millet, and in the tonal painting of Nature, in MacDowell and Debussy. These sonnets were consciously designed to be 'works of art,' and to impress the philosophically minded poets and critics of poetic form. Fine and masterful as they are in technical artistry, and impressive, too, with a resurgence of moral ideas, nevertheless they appeal neither to the popular heart nor to the philosophical imagination. For they create in the heart of the reader the sense only of a splendid achievement in poetic artistry, but never any sense of the poet's own enrichment of life from his interpretation of beauty in Canadian Nature, civilization, and life.

Summarily: as an original Poet, Roberts' *forte* is the treatment of Canadian Nature and pastoral life in impressionistic pastels, to an accompaniment of verbal music in folk rhythms or simple lyric forms. Thus accepted and appreciated he is a satisfying nature-colorist and melodist. But, impressive and magnificent, as he is, in more formal or larger poetic genres, as for instance, the sonnet and monody, he fails to give us in both a vital application of ideas to life.

Consideration of Roberts' poetry of modern eroticism reveals only what has been called a variety of Roberts' 'ethical heterogeneity.' This, however, is a defect in the man rather than in the poet, and only negatively affects Roberts' significance in the literary history of Canada. Roberts' work as a threnodist, romantic novelist, and inventor of a species of animal psychology in the romance is considered elsewhere. It is, however, as the inaugurator of the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature, both poetry and prose, rather than as a poet of Canadian Nationality and Nature, that Roberts has a right to a supremely significant status in the literary history of Canada.

The quotations from Charles G. D. Roberts' works are found in the individual volumes mentioned in the text. There is also issued a collection entitled, *Poems* by Charles G. D. Roberts—New complete edition—(Copp, Clark Co., Toronto, 1907).

CHAPTER VIII

# Archibald Lampman

AN INTERPRETER OF THE ESSENTIAL SPIRIT OF CANADA—STUDY OF LAMPMAN'S 'SAPPHICS'—POWER OF HUMANIZING NATURE—EXCELLENCE OF HIS SONNETS—CONSUMMATE ARTIST OF NATURAL BEAUTY.

IN 1887 Charles G. D. Roberts had, with his poem beginning 'O Child of Nations' and again with his magniloquent *Ode to the Canadian Confederacy*, issued a 'call' to the Canadian people to realize a national consciousness and to achieve a national destiny. He appeared as the 'Voice' of Canada. But he was a mere 'Voice.' For aside from simply uttering the 'call' he did nothing else to awaken in the Canadian people a consciousness of their own native or national spirit and a love of country, except to publish some impressionistic word pictures of Canadian scenery and pastoral life.

Meanwhile Swinburne had told the world that out of Canada or Australia would come a great New Voice of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. In 1889, or two years after Roberts had trumpeted his 'call' to Canadians, Theodore Watts-Dunton, poet, novelist, and the most far-visioned of British critics then living, in an article on Canadian poetry made the same prophecy as had Swinburne. 'Canada,' he said, 'had excellent poets, and with the development of a national consciousness of the history, resources and wealth of the country, would produce great poets.' In 1918, or practically thirty years after the prophecies of Swinburne and Watts-Dunton and the 'call' of Roberts, Sir Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Professor of Poetry at Oxford, in an address on 'Overseas Poetry,' as he called it, before the Royal Colonial Institute, London, also confessed to a vision of great poets arising in Canada and said that, in his view, so far Canada had produced only 'some *good* poets.' It is probable that the prophecies of Swinburne and Watts-Dunton were merely generous pleasantries or, possibly, 'guesses at the truth.' In any case what they were really concerned about was the appearance of a great *Imperial* poet in Canada or some other one of the British Overseas Dominions.

What Canadians themselves should be concerned about is not whether Canada has produced a significant Imperial poet but whether the Dominion has produced a signally excellent poet who, if not the prophetic Voice of the Dominion, is the true *Interpreter* of the essential Canadian spirit.

When Sir Herbert Warren declared that Canada had produced only some good poets, he had in mind Roberts, Carman, Pauline Johnson, Valancy

Crawford, W. H. Drummond, and Robert Service. But the greatest poet that Canada has produced, greatest as a nature-poet, and as an interpreter of the essential mind and heart of the Canadian people and country, is Archibald Lampman. If Lampman is not great in the sense that Shelley or Keats or Wordsworth or Tennyson or Browning or Swinburne is great, at least he is more than a good poet. He is a consummate artist. But more important, he is a subtle interpreter of the Canadian national spirit by way of a new and philosophical interpretation of Nature in Canada. He is *par excellence* the poet of Canadian Nature and Nationality.

For inductive proof of 'nationality' in literature, consider critically, and at some length, from Lampman's poetry, an impressive example of wholly indigenous expression of the Canadian genius and the Canadian view of Nature and of Life. Justly it may be held that this example of interpretative nature-poetry by Lampman, which goes under the name of *Sapphics*, is, for faultless technic, for spiritual vision of Nature and for the beautiful application of noble ideas to life, an indubitable contribution to poetic art, and is peculiarly Canadian. This is not too high praise; for the poem itself, with analyses of its form and beauty, together with a commentary on its spiritual meaning, will furnish sufficient evidence that it must be given a unique place in Canadian Literature. For easy expository purposes the poem may be divided into three parts, which contain its three themes and their inspiration:—

I

Clothed in splendor, beautifully sad and silent,
Comes the autumn over the woods and highlands,
Golden, rose-red, full of divine remembrance,
Full of foreboding.

Soon the maples, soon will the glowing birches,
Stripped of all that summer and love had dowered them,
Dream, sad-limbed, beholding their pomp and treasure
Ruthlessly scattered:

Yet they quail not; Winter, with wind and iron,
Comes and finds them silent and uncomplaining,
Finds them tameless, beautiful still and gracious,
Gravely enduring.

II

Me, too, changes, bitter and full of evil,
Dream by dream have plundered and left me naked,
Gray with sorrow. Even the days before me
Fade into twilight,

Mute and barren. Yet will I keep my spirit
Clear and valiant, brother to these my noble
Elms and maples, utterly grave and fearless,
Grandly ungrieving.

III

Brief the span is, counting the years of mortals,
Strange and sad; it passes and then the bright earth,
Careless mother, gleaming with gold and azure,
Lovely with blossoms—

Shining white anemones, mixed with roses,
Daisies mild-eyed, grasses and honeyed clover—
You and me, and all of us, met and equal,
Softly shall cover.

The pure beauty of that poem, of its spiritual imagery, of its rhythmic flow and cadences, *andante tranquillo*, and the noble mood and emotion it induces—how it all affects the heart and imagination like music heard in dim cathedral aisles, or recalls us from the vulgar distractions of life to sequestered retreats in the Canadian wildwood, there to contemplate existence with a subdued joy and tender peace! Nay more, we rise from communing with the poet, as he did from his communion with Nature, anointed with a new spiritual grace and with a new strength to achieve, amidst ten thousand vicissitudes of fortune, a right worthy destiny—'grandly ungrieving.'

Each of the three parts of the poem has its own theme and inspiration. The first section gives us the poet's vision of Nature and of Nature's own (as well as the poet's) autumnal mood. This is an important distinction. It distinguishes a peculiar Canadian pictorializing and humanizing vision of Nature. Who can mistake in what land comes that autumn, 'clothed in a splendor,' and 'beautifully sad and silent,' in what land flourish those woods, 'golden, rose-red,' and in what land rise those hills, 'full of divine remembrance'? Those are indisputably, unmistakably, Canadian woods and hills, in their precise autumnal garb and mood.

Some would contend that this way of pictorializing Nature is Grecian or even English. Rather is it peculiarly Canadian. It is so for this reason: The Greeks, as it were, 'decked out' Nature solely for the sensuous enjoyment of a world made lovely to look upon or pleasant to dwell in. The external beauty of Nature was with them, as with Keats and Wordsworth, when these two did not assume the moralizing attitude, the sufficient reason for their impressionistic word-painting. With Lampman, as with the Kelts (and Lampman was a Gael on his mother's side), the physical loveliness of the face and garb of Nature is an essential, living aspect of earth. For does not Nature herself, as if conscious and reflective, change her aspect and garb becomingly with her seasons and moods? Lampman's attitude to Nature is not the attitude of an impressionistic landscape painter, but of one for whom physical loveliness is supremely a spiritual revealment. This, however, might be wholly Keltic, and not Canadian. But it is Canadian, and not Keltic, because the interior revealment expresses a special view of Nature and a special mode of intimate communion between the

Canadian heart and the spirit of Nature in Canadian woods and streams and hills.

Part second of the poem gives us an altogether novel and original spiritual interpretation of Nature's mood and temper. It is a mood or temper, be it remarked, not expressed by Nature in any land save Canada, and not to be divined, and sympathized with, by any other racial genius save by the mind and heart indigenous to Canada, sensitive emotionally to the varying aspects and manner of Nature in Canada, as children to the meaning of changes in the facial expression and manner of a mother.

The uncritical, having in mind that inveterate sermonizer Wordsworth, may think that Lampman in this poem does but 'moralize' Nature. Far from it, Lampman 'humanizes' Nature in a peculiar way, namely, by reciprocal sympathy. We must mark that—'reciprocal sympathy'—as an original Canadian contribution to the poetic interpretation, the spiritual revealment, of Nature. Lampman, as he says himself, is 'brother' to Nature. Her reflections on her own vicissitudes are as his own on his fortunes of life. The Poet and Nature, though two physically, are one by mutual bonds of sympathy. The poet sympathizes with Nature as he himself feels that she sympathizes with him. Thus does he humanize, not sentimentally, but nobly, the Canadian maples and birches, which, as he says:—

> Dream, sad-limbed, beholding their pomp and treasure
> Ruthlessly scattered:
>
> Yet they quail not . . . .

'Yet they quail not'—there we have envisaged the mood and temper of Canadian Nature! The Gael, visioning the maples and birches, with his racial melancholy sentiment for glories departed, might say of them that they 'dream, sad-limbed.' But only a Canadian, or a Canadian Gael, apprehending, through sympathy, their inmost mood, could say of them, nobly, inimitably: 'Yet they quail not.' And so Lampman, divining, with a more than Keltic subtlety of vision, the spirit of the Canadian woods in autumn, sympathetically responds to their mood, and is heartened to endure, as they do, 'silent and uncomplaining.'

> Yet I will keep my spirit
> Clear and valiant, brother to these my noble
> Elms and maples, utterly grave and fearless,
> Grandly ungrieving.

'Yet I will keep my spirit clear and valiant!'—Mark that as the authentic *spiritual* note of the Canadian genius. It is not Canadian, however, merely because it is the expression of indomitable courage and serenity, but because the idea, the inspiration, of a self-controlled destiny, achieved with clearness of

vision and valiant heart, first comes to the mind and heart and moral imagination of the Canadian poet *as a gift from Canadian woods*. He, for his part, conveys that gift to his compatriots, by his poetic envisagement of the 'brotherhood' of Man and Nature in this land of glowing birches, noble elms and maples. That 'note' of clear-visioned faith and courage and serenity is in Canadian poetry of earlier days, long before the Confederacy, as well as in these days of social and commercial progress. It was in the poetry of Sangster and Mair in Ontario, and in the Gaelic verses of James MacGregor in Nova Scotia. But it is most articulate and vocal in the poetry of Archibald Lampman.

Considering now the first two parts of Lampman's poem as a whole, we become aware that the first distinctively 'national' note in the literature of the Canadian Confederacy is a unique humanizing of Nature, singularly apparent in the Nature-poetry of Lampman—a sympathetic identity of mood and temper, a reciprocal sense of brotherhood, between Man and Nature. This is a psychological phenomenon by itself, belonging solely to the Canadian genius and expressing itself, with fine art, solely in Canadian poetry.

Like other poets, British and American, Canadian poets have notable pictorializing gifts, and can visualize a scene so vividly as to give a reader of their verse the intimate view of an eye-witness of the reality. They can, as aptly as Wordsworth, also moralize Nature and convey a noble preachment. But of them all Lampman stands alone in this—*the power to humanize Nature into personality, and sympathetically identify her spirit with his own, in mood and will*.

Lampman also stands alone in this—*in his love of local beauty and his power to individualize and vitalize it*. This, too, is a 'national' note and a psychological phenomenon by itself. His is not a love of Nature's beauty abstracted from a particular time and place, but of those very scenes and haunts where first he beheld Nature in all her physical loveliness and many moods and became her intimate companion and lover. Lampman so individualizes and vitalizes his fields and woods, as Campbell his lakes, Roberts his woods and marshes, and Carman his tide and mists and April morns, that the reader can localize the region, and 'time' the season, of their inspiration with the nicest perception. So singularly is this quality present, most notably in poetry of Lampman, though also in the poetry of Roberts, Carman, Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott and Pauline Johnson, that a reader can, with absolute surety, say not only, 'This is Canadian nature-beauty,' but also, 'This is Canadian nature-beauty in Nova Scotia, in New Brunswick, in Ontario.' Surely, then, this peculiar imaginative interpretation of Canadian Nature whereby Lampman and his *confrères*, first, localize Nature, and, next, humanize her noblest mood and temper into an identity with their own is a supreme expression of the national spirit and raises Post-Confederation poetry to the dignity of authentic

literature.

Canadians are, in the eyes of the older nations, a notably sane and happy people. They are so because they keep their souls, in the phrase of Lampman, always ‘clear and valiant,’ having, as Lampman, and even as Roberts and the other poets of the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature, a sure vision of the greatness of their country’s destiny and of the means to it. The peculiar moral qualities of the Canadian people are an inviolable faith in themselves, an indomitable courage, and an imperturbable serenity. The ground and inspiration of these qualities are in Canadian woods and hills and waters, and Archibald Lampman, in his nature-poetry, interprets these qualities of the Canadian people and country with sweet reasonableness and genuine nobility.

In two of his finest sonnets, rich both in aesthetic and in spiritual beauty, and worthy both of Keats and Wordsworth, possibly suggesting the spirit of their finest sonnets, Lampman has summarized his poetic and philosophical creed. So beautiful in structure and imagery, so noble in their expression of the courage and serenity and faith which obtain in his *Sapphics*, and yet so wistful of the heavenly beauty and so infused with the pathos of life are these sonnets, that they move the soul and subdue the spirit with ‘thoughts too deep for tears.’ If there is any genuine meaning to Arnold’s conception of the moral dignity and spiritual function of poetry as ‘the profound and powerful application of ideas of life,’ these two sonnets by Lampman quite match the finest sonnets of the same degree of poetic vision by Keats, Wordsworth, and Arnold:—

I

Not to be conquered by these headlong days,
But to stand free; to keep the mind at brood
On life’s deep meaning, nature’s altitude
Or loveliness, and time’s mysterious ways;
At every thought and deed to clear the haze
Out of our eyes, considering only this,
What man, what life, what love, what beauty is,
This is to live, and win the final praise.
Though strife, ill fortune, and harsh human need
Beat down the soul, at moments blind and dumb,
With agony; yet, patience—there shall come
Many great voices from life’s outer sea,
Hours of strange triumph, and, when few men heed,
Murmurs and glimpses of eternity.

II

There is a beauty at the goal of life,
A beauty growing since the world began,
Through every age and race, through lapse and strife,
Till the great human soul complete her span:
Beneath the waves of storm that lash and burn,
The currents of blind passion that appal,
To listen and keep watch till we discern
The tide of sovereign truth that guides it all;
So to address our Spirits to the height,
And so to attune them to the valiant whole,
That the great light be clearer for our light,
And the great soul the stronger for our soul:
To have done this is to have lived, though fame
Remembers us with no familiar name.

Certainly these sonnets breath a higher spiritual air than do the finest sonnets of Roberts, as, for instance, *The Sower* and *The Potato Harvest*. As certainly, in sustained serenity and moral import, as well as in profound spiritual beauty, Lampman's sonnet-sequence *The Frogs* surpasses Roberts' sonnet-sequence in his *Songs of the Common Day,*—not only technically and in nature-color and music but also in transporting the spirit with inevitable 'murmurs and glimpses of eternity':—

And slowly as we heard you, day by day,
  The stillness of enchanted reveries
  Bound brain and spirit with half-closèd eyes,
In some divine sweet wonder-dream astray;
To us no sorrow or upreared dismay
  Nor any discord come, but evermore
  The voices of mankind, the outer roar,
Grew strange and murmurous, faint and far away.

Morning and noon and midnight exquisitely,
  Rapt with your voices, this alone we knew,
Cities might change and fall, and men might die,
Secure were we, content to dream with you
  That change and air are shadows faint and fleet,
  And dreams are real, and life is only sweet.

There we have, not talent cleverly performing an academic exercise, but serene and noble genius profoundly and finely interpreting and appreciating Beauty and Good in the universe and in existence. Indubitably Lampman is a master of the sonnet, a master whom those greatest masters of the sonnet, Keats and Wordsworth, would welcome to their company, and of whose company, as a nature-poet working in the sonnet or the lyric forms, he really is.

But Lampman is more than a philosophical interpreter of the mystery and wonder of Nature and Life. He is also a consummate artist in revealing to others his vision of the natural magic and beauty of Nature in Canada. He is

even a finer colorist and melodist than is Roberts. He is such because he has finer powers of observation, and notes not merely the general superficial beauty of the face of Nature but also the minutest details of Nature's physiognomy and garb, and the gentler, more gracious of Nature's moods.

Unlike Roberts, Lampman is not a mere sensuous impressionist. He is an artist with the same gifts as those of Thomas Gray for discerning, appreciating, and envisaging in lyric verse the subtler and lovelier beauties of fields and woods and hills and streams and sky, and for interpreting to the spirit the meaning of pastoral beauty and life in Canadian woods. Roberts paints charmingly indeed at times the mere face of Nature. Lampman not only paints exquisitely and daintily the physical loveliness and garb of Nature but also conveys her most winsome moods and her daintiest messages for the refreshment and sustenance of the spirit. Moreover, Lampman has Gray's gift in limning the human figure, of adding, with graphic nicety, a humanistic touch to his spiritual portraits. As a poet who paints and interprets Nature with the intimate vision and delicate brush of the artist, not with mere impressionism but with minute and lovely truth and realism, and also as a poet who humanizes Nature with graphic portraits and interprets Nature subtly and intimately to the spirit, Lampman is a master by himself.

Whatever influences Keats may have had on Lampman's art, it must be observed that fundamentally, as an artist and as an interpreter of Nature, with the power to add here and there graphic bits of human portraiture, Lampman is nearer to Gray than to Keats or even to Wordsworth. All these qualities are incisively exemplified in Lampman's lyric *Heat*. In this poem Nature and pastoral life in Canada, on a day of sultry summer heat, are painted with the nicest realistic detail; and in it the bit of human portraiture, the wagoner 'slowly slouching at his ease,' is as graphic and as true to life as Gray's bit of human portraiture, the plowman homeward plodding his weary way, is graphic and true to English pastoral and natural life.

If any Canadian poet ever entered the sanctuaries of Nature and revealed the intimate observation and consummate artistry which marks the art of all the exquisite poets of Nature—that Canadian poet is Archibald Lampman. He is, however, a greater poet than he is an artist. As a poet he is the superior of Roberts. As an artist he has no superior save Duncan Campbell Scott. But as a poet of Nature, interpreting from Nature the essence of the Canadian spirit, Lampman is superb, supreme—unmatched, and even unrivalled by any other poet that Canada has yet produced.

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The quotations from Archibald Lampman's work in this chapter are from *The Collected Poems of Archibald Lampman*, edited, with a memoir by Duncan Campbell Scott—new edition, 1923 (Musson

Book Co.: Toronto).

CHAPTER IX

# Bliss Carman

AS A WORLD-POET—CREATIVE MELODIST—PERIODS OF HIS POETRY—SINGING QUALITY AND ITS METHOD—LYRIST OF THE SEA AND OF LOVE—TREATMENT OF NATURE.

BLISS CARMAN is the only Canadian-born poet who reasonably and inevitably challenges comparison with English and United States poets of admitted distinction. He is, in the continental sense of the term, more American than he is Canadian; more English than American; and more a world-poet than Canadian, or American, or English, in the sense that famous poets writing in the English language, from Chaucer to Masefield, are world-poets. His genius and poetry, as do the genius and poetry of no other Canadian poet, challenge criticism to define the qualities of his mind and art. Unless, therefore, those who have written *con amore* about Carman and have denoted him as the greatest Canadian poet distinguish in what respect or respects he is so to be designated, the distinction is unmeaning. Carman is not the greatest Canadian poet in versatility of genius, variety of themes and forms, and perfection of technic or craftsmanship. He is surpassed by Roberts in versatility of genius and variety of forms. He is not the greatest Canadian nature-colorist or impressionistic word-painter in verse. There again Roberts surpasses him. Carman is not the greatest Canadian poetic interpreter of nature in Canada and of the Canadian spirit. Lampman is his equal, and, in one respect, his superior. Nor is Carman the greatest Canadian artist in narrative verse. Pauline Johnson and Edward W. Thomson surpass him. Further, Carman is not, save in a special sense, the greatest Canadian melodist. Pauline Johnson and Marjorie Pickthall have a more dulcet singing lilt and sensuous music. Finally, Carman is not the greatest, that is, the nearest to perfection, in technical artistry, of Canadian poets. Duncan Campbell Scott is his unrivalled master in that respect.

Yet indubitably Bliss Carman is the very foremost of Canadian-born poets. In Carman's genius and poetry there are an originality and power and beauty and distinction that, first, make him unique amongst Canadian poets and that, secondly, compel the critical world to admit that he is the only Canadian-born poet who, whenever he is the supreme lyrist and the inspired technician in verse that he can be, has made a distinct, singular, and enduring contribution of his own to English or world poetry, and, on that account, is in the direct line of

the Chaucerian succession. Whenever, that is, Carman excels in sheer genius, and as a nature-painter, nature-interpreter, story-teller in verse, melodist and technician, he surpasses each and all his Canadian compatriot poets at their best in their specialty. They each excel in one or two powers. Carman excels in all their combined powers, to the maximal degree. Moreover, none of his Canadian compatriot poets is his equal or even rival in originality and power of imagination, in sheer vision of the metaphysical meanings of nature and existence, in intensity of passion, in romantic atmosphere, in satiric humor, in free and potent diction and inevitable imagery, and in light or ecstatic lyricism. So great is Carman as a poet of the Sea that he has made a distinct contribution in this *genre* to English poetry. As a lyric poet of romantic and Spiritual Love, he has no superior, if even an equal, in Canada or America, and few in any other country. His Elegies are lovely lyric memorials of the Spirit. His poems of sheer joy of living or of satiric humor have no prototypes. His symbolistic or so-called mystical poetry, as an interpretation of the universe and as a means of solace and serenity in the midst of seeming Satanic triumphs, are as noble and grateful to the spirit and as sustaining as the breath of life from his own Maritime sea-winds and woodsy zephyrs. But when he sings most freely and liltingly, then is Bliss Carman the supreme melodist, and Chaucer is heard again in the land, and the troubadours, and all those upon whom Nature bestowed the gift of verbal *bel canto*.

While, then, it is the challenging quality of Bliss Carman's poetry, as if he were directly of the strain of Chaucer, Burns, Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Masefield, and as if his verse, like theirs, stood, as it does, upright on its own feet, that gives it its first and most important general distinction, it possesses other distinctions, one of which, namely, its special verbal music, of Keltic origin and form, is unique in Canadian poetry and rare in modern English poetry. It is these particular distinctions which stamp Bliss Carman as an extraordinary creative poet and melodist, and as the one Canadian poet who has a right to an indisputable place beside the finer and more compelling poets of England and the United States. These claims may be abundantly substantiated by a study of the texts of what may be called the Popular Collected Poems of Bliss Carman, namely, *Ballads and Lyrics* and *Later Poems* (with an appreciation by R. H. Hathaway), and by a study of such interpretative commentaries as Odell Shepard's *Bliss Carman* and H. D. C. Lee's *Bliss Carman: A Study of Canadian Poetry*, together with Hathaway's 'Appreciation' in *Later Poems* by Bliss Carman. In this chapter Carman is considered and treated from the three sides in which he is unique amongst Canadian poets: namely, as, in the light of the history of English poetry, a singularly original and inventive Vowel Melodist; as a Nature-Poet whose impressionism and 'readings' of earth differ from those of Roberts and

Lampman; and as a Philosophical or Mystical Poet who perceives in Beauty the only manifestation of the union of the Real and the Ideal and regards it as an intuitive proof of the Supremacy of Good in the universe.

However well-intentioned the attempts to divide the poetical activity of Bliss Carman into *Periods*, on the whole they are not pedagogically successful. Three Periods have been remarked—a so-called Romantic Period, represented by *Low Tide on Grand Pré* and the *Songs of Vagabondia* series; a Transcendental Period, represented by *Behind the Arras*, subtitled 'A Book of the Unseen,' which indicates its mood, and *The Green Book of the Bards*; and a Synthetic Period, in which his appreciation of the beauty of earth is not contrasted with the evanescence and the mystery of life, but in which there is a joyous acceptance of both. This Synthetic Period is represented by *The Book of the Myths*, *Sappho*, and *April Airs*. Yet in each volume, from *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1893) to *April Airs* (1916), there is in varying degree the same 'touch of manner,' the same 'hint of mood,' the same occupation *both* with the beauty of earth and with the mystery and meaning of existence and the universe. Really there is no development of Carman's genius and art—no periods of growth—after his first book, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*, except an increase in ready mastery, not of technic, but of *clear expression* of thought and meaning. Some of his finest verbal melody and some of his most compelling lines are in his earlier volumes, and with them also embodiments of his essential thought about life and the universe. But we do note, in each succeeding volume, a gradual decrease in Carman's *sense* of world-pain (*weltschmerz*), and an increase in *clearer expression* of his thought about the mystery of life. To use musical language: in his earlier books Carman heard *discords* in the universe. They were really not discords but *dissonances*. As he grew older and reflected more philosophically, he was able to resolve these dissonances; and as he gradually achieved this, the more he combined, with clarity and surety, his fine natural powers of lyrical utterance with, to use Meredith's phrase, his 'reading of earth,' his intuitions of the ultimate supremacy of the Good.

Since he fully recovered from the illness which attacked him about 1919, Carman has entered on what promises to be his greatest, most constructive period, the keynote of which is his characteristic lyrical utterance in the expressing of a confident synthesis of Sight and Faith, of Beauty and Goodness. It is all the same verbal melody and the same love of beautiful sound, color, and form as in *Low Tide on Grand Pré*, but all the felt dissonances that existed for thought have been resolved, and now existence is filled with an ineluctable joy and a tender peace which are a pure gain for the spirit. The poems which represent the *new* Carman or the Carman of the *new* and final period exist, for the most part in manuscript, though a few have been

published fugitively. We quote one of these new fugitive poems, *Vestigia* (1921), in which the notable qualities, aside from verbal melody and color, are a confident synthesis of Sight and Faith, Earth and God, and absolute simplicity and clarity of the diction and images:—

> I took a day to search for God
> And found Him not. But as I trod
> By rocky ledge, through woods untamed,
> Just where one scarlet lily flamed,
> I saw his footprints in the sod.
>
> Then suddenly, all unaware,
> Far off in the deep shadows where
> A solitary hermit thrush
> Sang through the holy twilight hush—
> I heard his voice upon the air.
>
> And even as I marvelled how
> God gives us Heaven here and now,
> In a stir of wind that hardly shook
> The poplar leaves beside the brook—
> His hand was light upon my brow.
>
> At last with evening as I turned
> Homeward, and thought what I had learned
> And all that there was still to probe—
> I caught the glory of His robe
> Where the last flowers of sunset burned.
>
> Back to the world with quickening start
> I looked and longed for any part
> In making saving Beauty be . . . .
> And from that kindling ecstasy
> I knew God dwelt within my heart.

Of the manuscript poems belonging to this fourth period, I may merely mention the titles, as, for instance, *Wa-wa*, a mystical interpretation of the wild-goose honk, *The Truce of the Manitou*, and, above all, *Shamballah*, which is the perfection of Carman's mystical interpretations—a poem of

> The City under the Star,
> Where the Sons of the Fire-Mist gather,
> And the keys of all mystery are.

Fugitive poems representing this final period are *The Mirage of the Plain*, *The Rivers of Canada*, *Kaleedon Road*, and *Vancouver*, which contain mystical interpretations 'suggested,' as Carman has said, 'by the vast spaces of Canada.' *Apropos* of the mood, manner, and interpretations of Nature in this period, Carman has observed: 'All Nature poems are more or less mystical.'

What we really observe, then, in Carman's genius and poetry is not genuine, clearly marked Periods, but rather *Periodicities*—waves of poetical activity, in which the crest of the wave is either lyrical ecstasy, the singing of

the Beauty of Earth for its own sake and out of love of beautiful sound and color, or mystical ‘readings’ of Earth, transcendental interpretations of the meaning of the life of sentient and spiritual creatures, but below the crest of the wave are poems of transcendentalism if the crest is lyrical naturalism or poems of lyrical naturalism if the crest is transcendental. Yet in these periodicities there is a sure and well-demarcated development, not of technic, but of clarity of thought and expression—from that earlier so-called mysticism which was only mystification, to the genuine mysticism which is the immediate intuition of God in the universe and especially the immediate perception of the oneness of the spirit of Nature with that of Man and of God. But all the while, as the development goes on, even to his final period, Carman remains the superb melodist and colorist. So that Bliss Carman must be regarded as at once both the most lyrical of Canadian philosophical poets and the most philosophical of Canadian lyrical poets.

Carman’s prototype in sheer singing quality is Chaucer—the first, freest, and sweetest of the English poets, whom Tennyson apostrophized in avian metaphor as a ‘warbler.’ So in the same way Carman sings with the natural lilt, abandon, and melodiousness of the lark and linnet. He is a ‘warbler.’ It is an irrelevant criticism to say, as has been said, that Carman ‘sings on and on,’ frequently in his earlier poems, out of his own ecstasy over hearing the beautiful verbal melody he is making, whether a given poem makes sense in thought or not. He is not ecstatically singing on and on from love of beautiful sound, but because he cannot clearly express what he means in his thinking; and so we hear the singing as if it were the accompaniment to the thought which we cannot, any more than he, articulate. But how lovely, how melodious the accompaniment!

As a matter of truth, however, we shall get at the secret of Carman’s unique singing quality if we ask what is the *method* of his warbling. It is in his method that he differs from all modern English poets and has made an original and distinct contribution to English lyrical poetry. This is the fact: Bliss Carman is a belated troubadour or 16th century English lutanist or Keltic harpist. Lutanists and harpists created the text for their songs; and the prime end was melody or at least melodiousness. The ultimate element or unit in verbal melody with the lutanists or harpists was the *word*, and the core of the word, for melodic purposes, was the vowel. Poets arose in England, but more especially in the Highlands of Scotland and in Ireland, who aimed to make the melody of unaccompanied poetry imitate the melody of the lutanists’ and the harpists’ accompanied verses. The lutanists, harpists, and melodic poets, who aimed to imitate music, passed, and new generations of poets substituted metrical and stanzaic structure and alliterative arrangement of consonants for the old vowel-melody. The unit in English poetry, after the 16th century,

became the *line*, not the word or the vowel in the word.

It is the chief glory of Bliss Carman, as a creative poet, that he brought back into English poetry the *word* and the pure unimpeded *singing vowel*, with the same intent as the Italian *bel canto* composers, as the unit in verbal melody. Some critics have made considerable point of the fact that Carman is a 'great' poet, *in spite* of the fact that he employs chiefly the rhymed octosyllabic line or measure, or iambic tetrameters and trimeters, with trochaic and anapaestic substitutions and other metrical mechanics for variety. The truth is that Carman wrote his poetry as a melodist, not as a technical musician; that he aimed to *sing*, like the lark or linnet, not to *compose*, like a musician. His measures were chosen, whenever he meant to be lyrical, because they were *singing* measures and his diction was chosen for the melody inside the words, for the 'vowel-chime' in them. In Carman's lyrical poetry the word determines the line, or rather the word alone counts, and the line is insignificant. Dulcet vowel-melody or delicate vowel-harmony is Bliss Carman's chief original contribution to Canadian and English poetry. Examples are innumerable. Consider the clarion tones in this line, which as a line by itself is perfect:—

> The resonant far-listening morn.

There are no closed vowels in those words, and the word 'resonant' is precisely resonant in vowel-melody and harmony. It is the open vowels that count melodically in this stanza:—

> *But in the yule, O Yanna,*
> Up from the round dim sea
> *And reeling dungeons of the fog,*
> I am come back to thee!

What a superb singing line is the first, and what booming sonorities are in the eloquently descriptive third line, 'the reeling dungeons of the fog.' Repeat it orally (for with Carman poetry is an *oral* art) and all the melody will be found in the vowels. And what bright vowel-melody resides in the single words of this line:—

> The glad indomitable sea!

For an example of just the kind of vowel-melody, dulcet and delicate, which is of the lutanist or harpist order, all in the words *per se*, not in the lines as lines, consider this stanza:—

> A golden flute in the cedars,
> A silver pipe in the swales,
> And the slow large life of the forest
> Wells back and prevails.

This is the music or melody which Pan must have piped and with which he hushed to peace the wild-creatures of the ancient forests—it is silvery, pastoral

reed music, and in verbal reed melody Carman is a modern Pan.

Carman can make beautiful line-melody, line-harmony when he wishes to do so; and he is a master of alliteration, quite the peer of Tennyson or Swinburne. For instance, these alliterative lines:—

> The gold languorous lilies of the glade.
>
> • • • •
>
> Burying, brimming, the building billows.
>
> • • • •
>
> Silent with frost and floored with snow.
>
> • • • •
>
> And softer than sleep her hands first sweep
>
> • • • •
>
> And down the sluices of the dawn.
>
> • • • •
>
> And like green clouds in opal calms.
>
> • • • •
>
> Behind her banners burns the crimson sun.
>
> • • • •
>
> While down the soft blue-shadowed aisles of snow
> Night, like a sacristan with silent step,
> Passes to light the tapers of the stars.

Carman is as adept as Kipling in employing, for the sake of verbal music and variety of rhythm, such devices as shifting of accent, slurring, and elision, and, further, he invents beautiful measures, as, for instance, the dimeter of *Ilicet*, or the six-line stanza of *The White Gull* (Shelley):—

> O captain of the rebel host,
> Lead forth and far!
> Thy toiling troopers of the night
> Press on the unavailing fight;
> The sombre field is not yet lost,
> With thee for star.

Carman is also singularly adept in the use of what may be called musical onomatopœia. In this quality his ear is specially sensitive to *pianissimi* in Nature, the soughing of the winds, the sighings and whisperings of the zephyrs, the fifings and murmurings of the insects (with Carman the crickets always ‘fife’ and the bees ‘murmur’), and, to use his own phrase, all the ‘tiny multitudinous sound’ of rustling leaves, dancing grasses, crooning brooks, tinkling rain, which make the instrumentation of the Toy Symphony of Nature:—

> Outside, a yellow maple tree,
> Shifting upon the silvery blue
> With tiny multitudinous sound,
> Rustled to let the sunlight through.

It is, however, in the use of rhythmical onomatopœia that Carman is even more inventively masterly than in mere sound imitation. An outstanding

example of the imitation of the ‘fife and drum’ marching rhythm, with an exact imitation of the fife in the word ‘whistle’ and of the rattle-roll of the drum in the word ‘rallied,’ is Carman’s lovely nature-lyric *Daisies*, second stanza:—

> Over the shoulders and slopes of the dune
> I saw the white daisies go down to the sea
>
> • • • •
>
> The bobolinks rallied them up from the dell,
> The orioles whistled them out of the wood;
> And all of their singing was, ‘Earth, it is well!’
> And all of their dancing was, ‘Life, thou art good!’

Always, from his very first book, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*, to his latest, *April Airs*, published almost a quarter of a century later, Bliss Carman has been the master troubadour, the master melodist, constructing his melody chiefly by an exquisite but subtle use of vowel-tones, vowel-harmonies. But never has he aimed to be the consciously meticulous technical musician, laboring at involved and intricate metrical and stanzaic structure, assonance and alliteration. His verbal melody is in the word and vowel as his ear naturally picked these up from everyday speech, and is just as spontaneous and simple. His melody did not come by ‘working at’ it in the study. We may often note Roberts, and even Lampman, assiduously busied with constructing the perfect musical line. Carman’s melody wells out of him in the ‘great outdoors’—natural and spontaneous as the lark’s or linnet’s. By virtue, then, of this spontaneous lyrical melodiousness of Carman’s poetry, a melodiousness *newly based* on the vowel-tones and harmonies in words, simple words of actual humanized speech, and not on modern intricacies of line or stanzaic structure and consonantal systems, Bliss Carman is one of the master-melodists of English poetry.

Thus as a melodist in general. Canada, however, has produced no poet who is Carman’s equal as a lyrist of the Sea and of Love. It is indubitable that he has made a distinct and superb contribution to the authentic Sea Poetry in the English language. His sea ‘speech’ is the native speech of his soul, the expression of an innate personal sympathy with the moods, powers, and deeds of the Sea, a sympathy which is, in Carman, an *identity* of the spirit in Nature with the spirit in the Man or Poet. Melodiously he declares this personal sympathy and identity with the Sea in his autobiographical poem, *A Son of the Sea*:—

> I was born for deep-sea faring;
> I was bred to put to sea;
> Stories of my father’s daring
> Filled me at my mother’s knee.
>
> I was sired among the surges;
> I was cubbed beside the foam;
> *All my heart is in its verges,*

*And the sea-wind is my home*.

All my boyhood, far from vernal
Bourns of being, came to me
*Dream-like, plangent, and eternal*
*Memories of the plunging sea*.

No English poet of distinction so often even mentions the Sea or creates such Homeric epithets for the Sea as does Bliss Carman. A catalogue of Carman's original epithets for the Sea, if complete, would be a poetic phenomenon by itself. Some of the most apt and fetching may be noted—'the hollow sea,' 'the curving sea,' 'the old gray sea,' 'the plunging sea,' 'the shambling sea,' 'the brightening sea,' 'the troubling sea,' 'the lazy sea,' 'the open sea,' 'the heaving sea,' 'the eternal sea,' 'the ruthless noisy sea,' 'the misty sea,' 'the ancient ever-murmuring sea,' and that supreme achievement in English poetry, Carman's inevitable, perfect line:—

The glad indomitable sea!

For lovers of sea poetry Carman's *Ballads of Lost Haven: A Book of the Sea* (1897) is a genuinely unique anthology by itself—'one hundred pages,' as a London critic has said, 'of salt sea without a trace of Kipling, and yet having a sea-flavor as unmistakable as his, and with a finer touch—with less repetition, less of mere technicality, and a more varied human interest.' For Carman the Sea is a *human personality*. Its moods and deeds embrace all the contradictory moods and deeds of human beings. But whatever mood or deed of the Sea is expressed by Carman, he does it with pure and perfect lyricism. Carman is said to have no gifts for spiritual portraiture. Yet what English or American poet has matched Carman's portrait of the Sea as a shambling, fierce, grim, rollicking, burly, cruel, crooked, old man, and at the same time created such a brave and lilting song of the Sea, as in *The Gravedigger*, with its inimitable burly refrain?—

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God, who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more;
But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore,—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

When a poet gives us such realistic portraiture and such inimitable lyrical melody and rhythm as does Carman in *The Gravedigger*, it is a futile criticism to find fault with his sea poems on the side of lack of dramatic elements, and weakness in narrative, since the *strength* of the poems was meant by the poet to be their inherent passional intensity and melody. Carman's sea poems were not meant to be strictly dramatic narrative tales of the sea, but to be ballads or

songs of the *romance* of the sea. We may remark, as a general observation, that as a balladist of the Sea, Carman does not aim at dramatic narration, but at singing, with the freedom and picturesque vernacular and technical slang of sailors, as they would sing their chanteys, the romance, happy or grim, of the sea. As songs, his so-called ballads of the Sea are a supreme achievement in verbal melody, the glory of Canadian sea poetry, and one of the glories of English poetry.

As the master melodist or musician of the Sea, Carman brilliantly achieved, but he is equally the master melodist or musician of Romantic and Spiritual Love. His Love Poetry is best represented in *Songs of the Sea Children* (1904) and in *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics* (1904). Earlier he had written lightly, as it were flirtingly, about love. But in *Songs of the Sea Children*, while he wrote as daintily or delicately as in his earlier poems dealing with the passion, he has at last realized the spiritual intent and meaning of pure devoted love, and has been moved deeply and inspired by the passion. Though copyright restrictions forbid full quotation, the spirit or mood or temper, and the pure melody, of *Songs of the Sea Children* may be gathered from this single stanza:—

> O wind and stars, I am with you now;
> And ports of day, Good-bye!
> When my captain Love puts out to sea,
> His mariner am I.

The rhymeless stanzas of the love poems in *Sappho* are high-minded, but are a poetical *genre* by themselves. They are a *tour de force* in ‘poetical restoration,’ and, perhaps for the first time, we actually observe Carman at work in the study as the technical verbal artist and musician. They have a technical perfection, and a quiet beauty of their own, and though there is in them a large degree of spontaneity, naturally they are not informed with the characteristic Carman lyrical ecstasy and melody. They are, as love poems, perfect as the love poetry of Sappho was fleckless with a Greek perfection of form and grace.

Bliss Carman is not properly called a nature-*interpreter*. To understand his point of view we must contrast his with that of Lampman. For Lampman Nature is one kind of being and Man is another—two separated entities—and Man may only commune with Nature by ‘reciprocal sympathy.’ So Lampman goes out to his Canadian maples and elms, fields and streams, and *talks to* them, *as if* they were human, and can sympathize with him. This is all simulated imaginative sympathy and communion on the poet’s part. The maples and elms, fields and streams, are really dumb, and the poet does but attribute to them what speech or answer he wants back from them for the solace of his spirit. Always with Lampman, Nature and Man are *two*. He does but humanize Nature for his own purposes, by conscious, deliberate *objective*

*symbolism*.

Carman, on the other hand, is a spiritual monist. Nature and Man are not two. There is, in Carman's poetical psychology and metaphysic, no mind *and* matter. The whole universe is spiritual through and through, and the vital spirit which is in Nature is the same spirit which is in Man and which is God. The universe is wholly spirit. We may call this 'the higher pantheism;' but even in pantheistic doctrine, matter does exist as alien to mind or spirit. Carman has no such attitude. He differs from Lampman in conceiving himself as able, by spirit or will, to *identify himself personally with Nature*. This power of personal identification with Nature begets personal sympathy; and the communion which the poet has with Nature is a 'heart-to-heart talk,' for spirit with spirit can meet. This new philosophy of personal identity of the human spirit with Nature is expressly declared by Carman:—

> I blend with the soft shadows
> Of the young maple trees,
> And mingle in the rain-drops
> That shine along the eaves . . .
>
> No glory is too splendid
> To house this soul of mine,
> No tenement too lowly
> To serve it for a shrine.

But specially to be noted is the fact that Carman does not stand apart from Nature, from the woods, and flowers, and hills, and streams, and become an *interpreter* of Nature's moods and emotions. Nay, the poet enters into the tree or flower and becomes one with their soul or spirit, their body becomes his body, and their voice, as heard in his poetry, is but his voice articulating to the world what they are unable to articulate. Nature, in Carman's poetry, is become vocal; and the poet himself is her very Voice. Metaphors in the nature-poetry of Carman are not metaphors at all; they are direct experiences of spirit:—

> Just where one scarlet lily flamed,
> I saw His footprint in the sod.
>
> • • • •
>
> I caught the glory of His robe
> Where the last fires of sunset burned.

This personal identity of the human spirit with the spirit in (or of) Nature, this personal sympathy with the poet's *kin* in wild Nature, and this taking on as a body the matter and form of a tree or flower or bird or other creature of Nature, and becoming vocal for them, and thus uttering *their* thoughts, and feelings, and emotions, is new in Nature poetry, and original with Bliss Carman. It is not Greek; it is not English; but it is Canadian and unique. It is Carman's most notable contribution to world poetry.

This spiritual monism in Carman's poetical attitude to Nature explains the seemingly strange commingling of songs of pure delight in the beauty and bounty of Nature and of joy in existence with poems which are the expression of a poet who has 'kept watch o'er man's mortality.' It explains such contradictions as the joyousness of some poems and the metaphysical questings of others in Carman's From the *Green Book of the Bards* (1903). It explains, in particular, why Carman, who, when he wishes, can surpass Roberts as a nature-colorist and whose poetry is actually rich in idyllic impressionism, never seems to set out, with conscious intent, to be a nature-colorist or word-painter for the sake of sheer impressionism. No other Canadian poet can make or has made such a brilliant use of primary colors or such an exquisite use of delicate tints and evanescent play of light on color as has Bliss Carman. In all his nature description or impressionism, Carman's aim has been two-fold—first, 'to better the world with beauty,' and to compel appreciation of Nature wherever her sweet or solacing spirit abides, to reveal the haunt where Nature affords spiritual communion and refreshment. His aim, in short, is to have men go out and meet Mother Nature. To effect this, not to show how flashily she is dressed, Carman paints her face and garb sometimes brilliantly, sometimes with a grey-eyed loveliness. Carman's poetry of Nature is only Nature herself 'calling' to each vagabond to rise and go out to meet her, 'wherever the way may lead.' This two-fold aim of Carman's nature-painting or poetic impressionism is compellingly expressed in *A Vagabond Song*:—

There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—
Touch of manner, hint of mood;
And my heart is like a rhyme,
With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
Of bugles going by.
And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters on the hills.

There is something in October sets the gypsy blood astir;
We must rise and follow her,
When from every hill of flame
She calls and calls each vagabond by name.

The quiet or subdued call of Nature is winsomely uttered in *The Deserted Pasture* where

The old gray rocks so friendly seem,
So durable and brave . . .

There in the early springtime
The violets are blue,
And adder-tongues in coats of gold
Are garmented anew . . .

And there October passes
In gorgeous livery,—
In purple ash and crimson oak,
And golden tulip-tree.

Though the keynote of Carman's poetry is Joy in the universe, he is no mere hedonist. The beauty he loves is uranian, the Joy he aims to get from Beauty and to share with the world through his poetry is *spiritual* joy. What he has always been sure of was that the dissonances in the world and in existence were resolvable, but he himself gradually had to resolve those dissonances, and win full and complete joy in Nature, in Love, and in Religion. If we call him a Philosophical Poet, we must do so only after we understand that his belief in the supremacy of the Good or of God is intuitively derived. Carman is not philosophical by virtue of having employed the faculty of relational thinking for the attainment of his belief in the moral meaning of life and the universe. He perceived Beauty in the world, and, after much obfuscation of the immediate meaning of Beauty, Carman at length perceived it as a symbol and pledge of the union of the Real and the Ideal. Only in the sense that Beauty is a symbol of perfection does Carman regard Nature as a symbol of God; and only in the sense that God, like Beauty, can be directly or immediately perceived, is Carman a mystical poet. If there is one thing of indubitable ill that science and philosophy have accomplished, it is their dogmatizing that because science and metaphysics with their categories cannot find out God as an actuality, much less can the senses. The pseudo-mystics took science and philosophy at their word, and said the only way to find God is by the use of the religious imagination. Whereupon they so strained the imaginative faculty to achieve what they called mystical union with God that their mysticism only resulted in mystification. Science, with its categories, only cast a veil over Truth, over the face of God. Pseudo-mysticism only placed an opaque void between God and the Sons of God called Men.

It is because Carman was in his early manhood caught on the wheels of agnostic science, transcendental metaphysics and pseudo-mysticism that in his earlier poems this lover of Beauty sings entrancingly of Beauty and winsomely paints her dwelling-places, but while doing this he also mystifies his readers with regard to the meaning of his poetry. The music is all accompaniment to something that Carman himself does not in his own soul clearly understand. Hence the wistfulness and melancholia observable in many of Carman's earlier poems; hence his sad engagement with the problem of death, as in *Pulvis et Umbra* and *The Eavesdropper*.

Carman could not have written *Vestigia* at that period. For that poem is based on an immediate *sense*-intuition of God in Nature and in the heart of Man. It was his gradual negation of the categories of science and metaphysics

and vacuous pseudo-mysticism, and an instinctive return to an intuitive perception of the meaning of Beauty in Nature and Love and Religion that cleared his vision, and gave him a sure and clear understanding of the supremacy of the Good or God, and that thus won for him triumphant spiritual Faith, Joy in existence, and Peace with God. This is the true mysticism, the true union with God.

It is an interesting excursion in spiritual history to trace Carman's gradual escape from 'mystical mystification' into the triumphant faith of true, earth-born, sense-perceived mysticism, as in *Behind the Arras* (1895), *By the Aurelian Wall and Other Elegies* (1898), *Last Songs from Vagabondia* (1901), *From the Book of Myths* (1902), *From the Book of Valentine*s (1905), and *Collected Poems* (1904). It was a 'mystified' Carman who wrote *Pulvis et Umbra*. It was a truly mystical Carman, possessed of a triumphant faith who a full twenty years afterwards wrote *Te Deum*, the concluding verses of which follow:—

> So I will pass through the lovely world, and partake of beauty to feed my soul.
> With earth my domain and growth my portion, how should I sue for a further dole?
> In the lift I feel of immortal rapture, in the flying glimpse I gain of truth,
> Released is the passion that sought perfection, assuaged the ardor of dreamful youth.
>
> The patience of time shall teach me courage, the strength of the sun shall lend me poise.
> I would give thanks for the autumn glory, for the teaching of earth and all her joys.
> Her fine fruition shall well suffice me; the air shall stir in my veins like wine;
> While the moment waits and the wonder deepens, my life shall merge with the life divine.

The immediate sense-perception of God through Beauty and the acceptance of Beauty as a factual proof of the union of the Soul with Nature, of the Real with the Ideal, and thus a proof of the supremacy of Good in the universe—this is the formula of Carman's philosophical 'reading' of Nature and Existence. Always a poet of fine and assured artistry and of lyrical eloquence and spiritual power, Bliss Carman stands alone amongst Canadian poets as a verbal melodist, as a lyrist of love and the sea, and as a mystical interpreter of the moral and spiritual meaning of nature and existence. As an original verbal melodist and poetic impressionist and as an unexampled creator of songs of the sea, Bliss Carman has added significantly to English and to world poetry and to him, therefore, we may apply the distinction Great.

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Quotations in this chapter, with the exception of a few lines, are from *Later Poems*, and from *Ballads and Lyrics*, by Bliss Carman, (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto).

CHAPTER X

# Duncan Campbell Scott

INFLUENCES ON HIS WORK—OLD WORLD CULTURE—AUSTERE INTELLECTUALISM—MUSIC AND PAINTING—ASSOCIATION WITH LAMPMAN—SCOTT, CARMAN, AND LAMPMAN COMPARED—INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH POETS—TECHNICAL EXCELLENCIES—REVELATION OF THE INDIAN HEART—MYSTICAL SYMBOLISM.

IN the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott there is more and finer expression of the pageantry of Nature in Canada and of the essential Canadian spirit than in the verse of any other Canadian poet. But, paradoxically, the genius and poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott are also more informed with an Old World culture and art than are the genius and verse of any other Canadian poet. Unless the reader and the critic of D. C. Scott's poetry first realize that the mind and art of the poet are a product of Canada and of the Old World, a rare commingling of Canadian and European cultures, they will fail to understand how he is at once the least prolific and, to give him his outstanding distinction, the most exquisite artist of Canadian poets, not excepting Lampman and Bliss Carman. In his poem *Frost Magic*, Scott has written the formula of his own exquisite artistry:—

> Silvered in quiet rime and with rare art.

That line, however, rather distinguishes the characteristic excellence of his poetry on the technical side. It does not disengage the quality which makes him unique amongst Canadian poets. His *differentia*—the quality or power which distinguishes his poetic genius and craftsmanship from the mind and the art of all other Canadian poets—is Style. Duncan Campbell Scott is the one Canadian poet of whose verse it may be said that, after the manner of the English tradition, it possesses *Style*. Lampman's and Carman's, Pauline Johnson's and Marjorie Pickthall's, poetry each possess a style. But in their cases the style is imitable; it is a *manner*, original or ingenious no doubt, but not an essential and inevitable expression, of their poets' minds or personalities. Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry has style, quite as individualistic as the others', but it is an essential expression of his personality and character, and is therefore inimitable, or like the man himself, is in 'the grand manner'—which is not at all a manner but just that subtle spiritual quality which distinguishes individuals in species. The genius and poetry or art of Duncan Campbell Scott, then, impose on us a special and somewhat

recondite study in literary psychology.

The key to Duncan Campbell Scott's genius and poetry is this singular, if not anomalous, spiritual fact that his Art always, corresponds with, and never contradicts, his Thought and Life. In this 'tri-unity' of complete 'correspondence' of Thought, Life, and Art, Scott's analogue is Matthew Arnold. The English poet was, above all things, the austere intellectualist. So, too, Duncan Campbell Scott is the austere intellectualist. But, unlike Arnold, Scott's 'austerities and rejections' are not those of the substance of poetry but of its temper and technic. While it is true that Scott is the remorseless idealist as man and active citizen, and while the light that chiefly plays on his poetry is the 'dry light' of the intellect or imaginative reason, it is equally true that in his heart there is the warm fire of love of humanity and Nature and all the humanizing arts, and that the dry intellectual light which most notably illumines his poetry is colored, at times delicately or subtly, at times brilliantly, at other times magically, with the substance and color of Nature in Canada and of modern music and painting. As in the man and citizen, as in his Thought and Life, there is a high plane of refined and serene vision, feeling, and deed, so in his poetic Art and Style the outstanding qualities are serene Dignity and exquisite Beauty. It is always a manly and refined art; and its sensuous Beauty is made spiritual by sincerity, delicacy or nobility of thought and by imaginative truth. Never in it is there sentimentality, or vulgarity, but always *humane* beauty and dignity which derive from delicacy of spiritual vision and sincerity, and from restraint in technical artistry. As an example of these excellences in Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry—of its dignity and beauty, refinement and restraint—we quote this surpassing compliment to woman's spiritual loveliness and charm, *Portrait of Mrs. Clarence Gagnon* (from Scott's *Beauty and Life*):—

Beauty is ambushed in the coils of her
Gold hair—honey from the silver comb
Drips and the clustered under-tone is warm
As beech leaves in November—the light slides there
Like minnows in a pool—slender and slow.
A glow is ever in her tangled eyes,
Surprise is settling in them, never to be caught;
Thought lies there lucent but unsolvable,
Her curved mouth is tremulous yet still,
Her will holds it in check; were it to sleep
One moment—that white guardian will of hers—
Words would brim over in a wild betrayal,
Fall sweet and tell the secret of her charm,
Harm would befall the world, Beauty would fly
Into the shy recesses of the wood—
Be seen no more of mortals, be a myth
Remembered by a few who might recall

A nerveless gesture, a frail color, a faint stress,
Some vestige of a vanished loveliness.

This ‘strong and delicate art’ of Scott’s was itself the outcome of years of training in delicate perception or visioning of Nature and the human Spirit and in the practice of spiritual refinement and restraint in art or technical craftsmanship; and also of assiduous cultivation in the technical appreciation of modern music and painting. Born in 1862, Duncan Campbell Scott did not publish verse till he was some years past his majority, and did not publish his first book of poems till he was thirty-one years of age (*The Magic House and Other Poems*, 1893). For more than forty years he has been in the Civil Service of Canada, and for some years has been Deputy Superintendent General (a title and function equivalent to Deputy Minister) of the Department of Indian Affairs of the Dominion. Archibald Lampman was a contemporary and a close friend of Scott. Lampman was a student of the poetry of Keats and much influenced by the verse of the English poet. In 1894 Scott married an accomplished lady, who was a violin virtuoso. He had published fugitive poems in magazines before 1893. (His poetry was later the subject of a very complimentary critical appreciation by William Archer in *Poets of the Younger Generation*). He had finished his academic studies at the public schools and at Stanstead College by his seventeenth year, and had then entered the Civil Service of Canada. So that the three influences on his mind and art are, first, that which began with his friendship with Lampman; secondly, his marriage with a cultured musician, and, thirdly, his long tenure of office in the Department of Indian Affairs of the Dominion of Canada. To his association with Lampman, rather than to his teachers at school and college, must be attributed his reading of the English poets and the cultivation of poetic technics. It is not until after his marriage and after his long association with certain Canadian painters that we find in his poetry any ‘color’ from music and painting. His connection with the Department of Indian Affairs resulted in those lyrics and legends which have for themes the Indian, the French-Canadian, and the Beauty of Nature. Lampman as co-student of the English poets, especially Keats or the idyllic impressionists, and as a co-worker in creative poetry, especially the poetry of Nature, was the most potent or subtle influence on Scott. This, however, was an influence *ab extra*. The most important *inner* influence on Scott was his own intellectual rigorism and austere respect for chaste or faultless craftsmanship. But for this rare virtue, which was innate in him, Scott would or might have been a more prolific poet, and might have been a close imitator of the English impressionists or Lampman himself as a nature-poet, or of Bliss Carman as a lyrist of Nature and of Love.

There is no denying that Lampman had considerable influence, negative

and positive, on Scott, and that the negative influence was the more important. At any rate, by choice Scott decided to be a poet who, while caring as much for Nature as did Lampman and Carman, would care supremely for refined perfection of technical artistry in his verse. It is easy to observe the general differences between Lampman and Carman and Scott in attitudes, and in methods of poetic conception. Lampman is the more subjective, the more interested in his own emotions; Scott is the more objective, disclosing a delight in the object for its own sake or a philosophical interest in humanity and life. Lampman is the more passionate; Scott the more restrained or austere (without being ascetic). Lampman is the more sensuously luscious (though not always); Scott the more lucid and luminously colorful. Carman is the more naturalistically sensuous, and his pigmentation is limited to the pageant of Spring and Autumn; Scott is the more imaginatively sensuous, and paints every phase of the pageantry of Nature in the cycle of the seasons of the whole year. Carman is more a melodist, basing his melody on vowel-chime in words; Scott is more the musician, the technical virtuoso—or, in other words, Carman *sings* or *lilts*, like the lark; Scott *performs*, like the violin or flute virtuoso, though each in his way is as entrancingly lyrical. Carman is the more vernacular in diction, employing considerably the actual speech of everyday life; Scott is the more recondite, and therefore the more meaningful, in diction —'a word virtuoso.' But it is not true to say, as has been said, that Scott is a 'poet's poet.' He is, when he aims to be, just as lyrical, musical, colorful, and simple in diction as Lampman or Carman, but he is also more delicate or chaste, more fanciful or imaginative, more lucid or luminous, and always more subtle in diction and exquisite craftsmanship. So that whenever Scott envisages or interprets Nature in Canada and the essential spirit of Canada, more than any other native-born poet he puts more of Canada in it and does it with a singular and surpassing beauty of diction, imagery, music, color, and general technical artistry.

Thus, in outline, as regards the Canadian influences on Scott's genius and poetry. It is necessary also to note the influence of Old World culture on his genius and art. For, like Bliss Carman's, there is a challenging quality in Scott's poetry which compels favorable comparison of it with the verse of English and United States poets of distinction. But while influences of certain English poets are remarked, this does not mean that Scott is derivative in inspiration or method of treatment, but that the influence was either on his ideals of what poetry is or on his meticulous practice of technical artistry in verse; or, in a phrase, their influences have been those of inspiring him to distinction in Style and Technic. In Scott's noble monody in memory of his father, *In the Country Churchyard*, the formal structure and the elegiac elevation of thought fill the heart with a serene beauty which discloses the

influence of Gray. There is a distinct Wordsworthian spirit and flavor to *Above St. Irénée*. A haunting beauty, which is of the quality of Tennyson, pervades Scott's title poem of his first volume, *The Magic House*. Unmistakable is the influence of Rossetti on the form and tone-color of Scott's sonnet sequence, *In the House of Dreams*, but there is enough of Scott's own originality and ingenuity in inventing Western-world metaphors and in vowel-melody and alliteration to distinguish it as Scott's or as Canadian or Western. The sonnet form is Rossettian, the mediaeval atmosphere and setting are Pre-Raphaelite, as are also the personages:—

> The Lady Lillian knelt upon the sward,
> Between the arbor and the almond leaves;
> Beyond the barley gathered into sheaves;
> A blade of gladiolus, like a sword,
> Flamed fierce against the gold; and down toward
> The limpid west, a pallid poplar wove
> A spell of shadow; through the meadow drove
> A deep unbroken brook without a ford.

The first line of the octave is, of course, Rossettian, but the fourth line ('A blade of gladiolus, like a sword') is not only Western but the phrase 'like a sword' is a common simile with Scott. In the sestet, quite Western is the picture in the second and third lines:—

> On the soft grass a frosted serpent lay,
> With oval spots of opal over all.

The extraordinary ingenuity of the tone-unisons (not harmonies) in the third line ('With oval spots of opal over all') must have struck the fancy of the poet himself, because he repeats the very same vowel unisons, thus turning art into artifice, in *Spring on Mattagami* (from *Via Borealis*, 1906, reprinted in *Lundy's Lane and Other Poems*, 1916):—

> While like spray from the iridescent fountain,
> Opal fires weave over all the oval of the lake.

Quite Rossettian, at least in word-painting of fabrics and jewelry, is Scott's picture of the drowned lady in his poem *After a Night of Storm* (from *Beauty and Life*, 1921). It is here quoted, not only to show the Rossettian influence, but also to furnish an example of how Scott works as lovingly and as painstakingly as a lapidary at his technic:—

> After a night of storm,
> They found her lovely form
> They said she was a wondrous thing to see,
> All dazzling in her bridal dress,
> A miracle of foam and ivory.
> Her satin gown was smoothened by the wave,
> Her rippled ribbons, all her wandering laces
> Set in their places.

Her hands were loosely clasped without a gem,
But clad with mitts of silken net.
Diamonds in the buckles of her shoon
All fairly set,
And one great brooch the color of the moon
Held her lace shawl.
A snood had slipped back from her hair,
Her face was piteous, so fair, so fair,
And gleaming small
Upon her breast there seemed to float
A wedding ring,
Threaded upon a crimson and green string
Around her throat.

Surely there is the art of a poet who has lingered long in the studios and ateliers, watching painters, lapidaries, and designers at work on pigments, precious stones, and delicate fabrics! Again, whose influence do we find or feel in certain parts of *Spring on Mattagami* and *The Anatomy of Melancholy*? —is it the influence of Keats or of Swinburne? It might be either in these lines from *Spring on Mattagami*:—

She would let me steal,—not consenting or denying—
One strong arm beneath her dusky hair,
She would let me bare, not resisting or complying,
One sweet breast so sweet and firm and fair;
Then with the quick sob of passion's shy endeavor
She would gather close and shudder and swoon away . . .

But there is no mistaking the Swinburnian manner of imaginative color and of alliterative and sensuous music in these lines from *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (from *Beauty and Life*):—

Lifted the dragon-guarded lid—and lo!
Faint and uncertain,
*Frail rose-ghosts of rose-gardens all in blow*
Haunted the room,
*The spangled dew, the shell-tints and the moonlight*
Lived in the fume. . . .

All the English poets mentioned were, however, not formative influences. At best what seems imitations of the manner of Gray, Tennyson, Rossetti, Keats, Swinburne are but recrudescences, quite unconscious and original, in Scott's poetry. Scott is a nature-colorist, or impressionist, verbal musician and metrist, romanticist, and philosophical interpreter of Nature and Life on his own account. The real formative influences in Scott's genius and art were the climate, atmosphere, seasons, and the color and drama of varied Nature and Humanity, of Canada; his compatriot poet of Nature, Lampman, and perhaps Carman, and these three English poets, Browning, Arnold and Meredith; and, finally, his appreciation and knowledge of the technic of music and painting.

Considering his qualities as a verbal musician and metrist, we may note

that while Scott employs all the technical artifices of other Canadian and English poets, such as vowel-melody and harmony, alliteration and consonantal changes, beautiful measures and rhythms, he differs from his compatriot poets by informing, as did Browning, the substance of his poetry with an intimate use of the technical language of music, allusions to musical literature, and the aesthetic values of music. The texts of his poems show that he is acquainted technically with the music of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Grieg, such romantic moderns as Raff and MacDowell and such ultra-moderns as Debussy and Ravel. To anyone who has heard Beethoven's Fifth (C-minor) Symphony, how arresting and emotionally impressive is the allusion to the principal motive of that great work, in these lines from Scott's *The Fragment of a Letter*!—

> Then quick upon the dark, like knocks of fate,
> There fell three axe-strokes, and then clear, elate
> Came back the echoes true to tune and time,
> Three axe-strokes—rhythmed and matched in rhyme.

Again: it is not poetical pedantry on Scott's part when, in his elegiac monody *On the Death of Claude Debussy*, he rhapsodizes the forms, content, properties, color, and musical structure—'the mood pictures'—of Debussy's opera *Pellèas et Mélisande*, his orchestral prelude *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, and his orchestral sketches *La Mer*. No musical journalist or critic, writing in prose, has done this so summarily and with such vividness and veracity as Scott has accomplished it in twenty-five lines of trimeter and tetrameter unrhymed iambics and trochaics. It is for the sake of illumination and the substance of true poetry that Scott thus finely incorporates his knowledge of music into the text of his poetry. And, as Browning made compelling use of the technical language and meanings of musical structure, notably in his *Abt Vogler*, so, in the Debussy monody, Scott twice finely affects the spirit and illuminates the substance of his poem with such recondite musical technology as:—

> And under all, the *pedal-point*
> Of the deep-bas(s)ed ocean,
> Hidden under the mists,
> Chanting, infinitely remote,
> At the foot of enchanted cliffs.
> Then with a turn of illumination,
> An *enharmonic* change of vision,
> Death and Debussy
> Become France and her heroes,
> As if all her sacred heroes
> Were in that one form,
> Clasped in the bosom of France,
> Enfolded with her ideals and aspirations.

The felicity of the phrase ‘the pedal-point of the deep-bas(s)ed ocean’ is apparent to anyone who is musically trained and who immediately hears the sustained stationary bass of the sea reverberating while mingling with its thunder are chords and progressions of wave plashings and wind harmonies, all combining to make the sublime Symphony of the Sea. Still more remarkable and illuminating is Scott’s use of the phrase ‘an enharmonic change . . . . Death and Debussy.’ In music an enharmonic change is but a change in notation of intervals and chords, the sound of them remaining the same. And so how felicitous Scott’s use of ‘an enharmonic change of vision!’—Death, Debussy (who died in the last year of the late war), France, and her war heroes. These terms are all synonymous of ‘one form,’ the spirit of France; there is only an enharmonic change in notation or name.

All this is, on Scott’s part, a brilliant and—as far as Canadian poetry is concerned—a unique achievement in incorporating musical ideas and essences and technics to color, illuminate, and enhance poetic meanings. But Scott surpasses himself in this matter, creating something really unique in poetic literature, in his *Variations on a Seventeenth Century Theme*. It is the most ingeniously conceived poem, if not in English poetry, at least in continental American poetry; and it is a signal illustration of that Old World culture which was remarked as part of the challenging quality in Scott’s poetry. The poem is ‘programmatic’ in scheme, comprising ten sections which are ‘free variations’ on a Nature theme (the yellow of the primrose), inspired by two lines from Henry Vaughan (17th century):—

> It was high spring, and all the way
> Primrosed, and hung with shade.

The ten sections or ‘variations’ or ‘movements’ of the poem are such niceties in imitation of the forms of music that they should be properly indicated with form or tempi nomenclature, inasmuch as the poet has not done this at the head of each section or ‘variation.’ Variation I is a Prelude (in the old style), the diction of which is Chaucerian or early 15th century English. Variation II is a triple-time Vivace movement (old form of the Scherzo)—a fetching bit of lively ballad-song. Variation III is a Largo movement, noble and impressive. A short Nocturne follows in Variation IV, which is succeeded by a movement that may be styled Dramatico, a short poignant ‘play within a play,’ dealing with the tragedy of romantic love. Variation VI is an Intermezzo, a contrasting change on ‘Youth is a blossom yellow at the edge.’ Variation VII is a Funeral March for fairies, and is fairy-like in imagery and music. By itself it is as pretty and winning a poem for children as any in our language:—

> For dead fairies go nowhere,
> Leaving nothing in the air.

Their clear bodies are all through
Made of shadow, mixed with dew.

When they change their fairy state,
They, like dew, evaporate.

But we fairies that remain,
The dead fairy's funeral feign,

Place within a shepherd's purse
Primrose pollen; for a hearse

Lady-birds we harness up
To an empty acorn cup.

This we bury, deep in moss:—
Then we mourn our grievous loss,

Mourn with music, piercing thin,
Cricket with his mandolin,

Many a hautboy, many a flute,
Played by them you fancy mute . . . .

Variation VIII is a very human Burlesca—a '*genre* picture' of the comedy of life in Old London, with the 'motive' of a socially outcast old woman looking at pots of primroses, labelled 'Only a quarter,' and fingering a coin, trying to decide whether to buy primroses or spend it on beer for herself and 'dear old Jerry.' The pathos of its realism is relieved by the piquancy of the spiritual portrait of the outcast old woman, in whose soul there is still a fine redeeming loyalty to a real heart-love. Variation IX is a Folk Song in the manner of Burns. It is followed by a Finale, which returns to the Vaughan theme, and closes with its couplet. The Finale is ennobled with tender reflections or philosophical interpretations of the drama of earth and existence, in which Scott beautifully maintains and expresses Serene Faith in the permanence of Beauty and Love. From this magnificent and genuinely unique poem, we quote Variation IX, as an example of Scott's gifts as a song-writer. If it is in the manner of Burns or an imitation of one of his best-known songs, it is as informed also with the spirit of Herrick, but it is melodious, by vowel-music, alliteration, and rhythm, in a way which was not in the power of Herrick or Burns:—

My Love is like the primrose light
  That springs up with the morn,
My Love is like the early night
  Before the stars are born.

My Love is like the shine and shade
  That ripple on the wood,
(The shadow is her dark green plaid,
  The light her silver snood).

They never meet with eager lips,
  And mingle in their mirth,

They only touch their finger-tips,
  And circle round the earth.

My Love's so pure, so winsome-sweet,
  So dancing with delight,
That I shall love her till they meet,
  And all the world is night.

In that song-lyric we find Scott's characteristic dignity and beauty. But fine and beautiful as it all is, the music of it is not the *natural* melodiousness of Herrick or Burns, of the lark or linnet, but the music of the adroit technical musician who is a ready master of all the resources of modern versification and metrics.

As regards these technical resources of verbal melody and music—vowel—'tone-color' and harmonies, alliteration, assonance, rhythm of line and stanza and other metrical structure, and even what is called in music as such 'suspension'—Scott challenges the art of Keats, Tennyson, Swinburne, Arnold, and the Laureate, Sir Robert Bridges. In one instance, Scott has made the most happy and ingenious use of what musicians call 'chord suspension'—that is, the retaining in any chord some notes (or tones) of the preceding chord. Scott achieves it finely in this cadence:—

With the thrushes fluting *deep, deep,*
*Deep* on the pine-wood hill.

This effect of 'suspension' in verbal music is not new in poetry, but it is infrequent in the poetry of the Anglo-Saxon people. A melodious example is the opening stanza from Collins' *Ode to Evening*:—

If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
  Like thy own solemn *springs*,
  *Thy springs*, and dying gales.

With Collins the 'suspension' is an artifice rather than an inspiration. With Scott, it is, in the example instanced, an inspiration. No other modern poet, certainly no other Canadian or American poet, has Scott's gift of verbally phrasing, with the utmost concreteness, imitative realism, and charm the 'notes' of bird songs and their meaning. In the cadence quoted, the effect of the 'suspension'—'deep, deep, deep'—is a happy realistic imitation of the tone-color of the thrush's flute-like notes, and the triple reiteration affects the imagination with that charm which we distinguish as 'haunting.' Carman has not this gift of concreting bird-songs. Carman uses only the general epithet. One bird simply 'whistles;' another 'flutes.' Carman would have written the lines quoted from Scott not only without 'suspension' but also without any concrete, realistic imitation of the thrush's notes and suspensions, thus:—

With the thrush's fluting
On the pine-wood hill.

Scott not only makes a masterly and felicitous use of concrete tone-color epithets in phrasing the songs of birds, but he also knows how important and eloquent in music as such, as well as in the songs of birds, are pauses or silences, and uses this appreciation of silences exquisitely. Scott's artistry in both these respects is finely shown in these lines:—

> Hidden above there, half asleep, a thrush
> Spoke a few *silver words upon the hush*—
> *Then paused self-charmed to silence.*

Scott, in truth, on the side of exquisite realistic concretion of the notes and cadences of bird-songs, has the ear of a *naturalist*—and a better ear than Thoreau or Burroughs. Scott is the 'bird-musician' *par excellence*. Witness the naturalist's exquisite ear for concrete realism in these lines:—

> She would hear the partridge drumming in the distance,
> Rolling out his *mimic thunder* in the sultry noons;
> Hear beyond the silver reach in *ringing wild persistence*
> Reel remote the *ululating laughter* of the loons.

Carman would have stopped with the general word 'drumming' in the phrase 'hear the partridge drumming'—not so Scott; he must realistically concrete the reverberance of the drumming in the phrase 'rolling out his mimic thunder.' And what realistic concretion is in the phrases 'in ringing wild persistence,' and 'ululating laughter!' Carman half hears. Scott hears with the ear of the naturalist *and* the musician.

Again, only the ear of the naturalist and the musician in Scott could have so exquisitely, veraciously, concreted the 'note' of the white-throat sparrow and the lovely cadences of the vireo as in these lines:—

> While the white-throat never-resting,
> Even in the deepest night *rings his crystal bell*.

And:—

> A vireo turns his *slow*
> *Cadence*, as if he gloated
> Over the last phrase he floated;
> Each one he moulds and mellows
> *Matching it with his fellows*:
> So have you noted
> How the oboe croons,
> The canary-throated,
> In the gloom of the violoncellos
> And bassoons.

Scott knows the 'voices' of instruments as intimately as those of birds and other feathered wild creatures. How finely he combines a concrete use of his two-fold musical knowledge in this respect in the following ingenious and original bit of verbal instrumentation:—

And in the two-fold dark I hear the owl
*Puff at his velvet horn*.

The reader must be a naturalist and, as well, have been a bandsman or orchestral instrumentalist to feel the felicitous realism and descriptive exactitude of Scott's art, or rather inspiration, in inventing that figure of the owl as a musician. The humor of it also is exquisite.

Scott surpasses all other Canadian poets in a genius for inventing single and double terminal rhymes, and he excels in this gift, without ever dropping to impossible or bizarre rhymes, except when the comedy of life in a subject naturally requires the use of a vulgarism as in this couplet from the Burlesca movement (VIII) of *Variations on a Seventeenth Century Theme*:—

But I keeps my quarter,
Though—perhaps I'd orter.

As ready and expert as Carman with such other musical resources as vowel-melody and harmony, assonance, consonantal tone-color and alliteration, Scott is more lyrically melodious than even Carman. Melodiousness—dulcet melody of combined vowel and consonant and rhythm—is the supreme musical quality of Scott's poetry. Not Tennyson nor Swinburne have surpassed the melodiousness of this stanza from Scott's *The Lover to His Lass*:—

Crown her with stars, this angel of our planet,
Cover her with morning, this thing of pure delight,
Mantle her with midnight till a mortal cannot
See her for the garments of the light and the night.

Matching the melodiousness of Scott's poetry is its inimitable 'color-music,' a combination of sensuous color and alliteration, which quite rivals Swinburne. Scott's poetry indeed abounds in the most ingenious and sensuously musical alliterative lines in Canadian verse. Outstanding examples are these:—

One sweet breast so sweet and firm and fair.
• • • •
Dark with sordid passion, pale with wringing pain.
• • • •
Shall find amid the ferns the perfect flower.
• • • •
With stars like marigolds in a water-meadow.
• • • •
The still, translucent, turquoise-hearted tarns.
• • • •
Rubies, pale as dew-ponds stained with slaughter.
• • • •
See Aldebaran like a red rose clamber.
• • • •
The long, ripe rippling of the grain.

• • • •
Flush and form, honey and hue.
• • • •
Still pools of sunlight shimmering in the sea.
• • • •
Languorously floating by the lotus leaves.
• • • •
Frail rose-ghosts of rose-gardens all in blow.

Such magical melody and color are not artifice or even art with Scott. It is all an inspiration, clear spontaneity of genius. If it were artifice or art it would be confined to mere phrases or lines; but Scott as readily and as magically fills stanzas with the same magical melody and color as in *The Voice and The Dusk*:—

The slender moon and one pale star,
A rose-leaf and a silver bee
From some fool's garden blown afar,
Go down the gold deep tranquilly.

There is a sylvan *earthly* music in the poetry of Carman, Pauline Johnson, and Marjorie Pickthall. But the music of Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry is the melody of a fairy fantasy, an *unearthly* lyrical melody suffused with color which is imaginative rather than earth-born. Yet its vowel and alliterative melody, rhythmical refinement, and translucent or sensuous color are never unreal but only serve to etherealize real experience, to transport us with exquisite sensation of ineffable, unimagined beauty. To figure him under the title of one of his own most melodious and romantically imaginative poems, Duncan Campbell Scott is *The Piper of Arll*—and, like Debussy, regales us with:—

The complaint of the wind
In the plane-trees,
The far away pulse of a horn,
Ripples of fairy color,
Rhythms of Spain,
The overtones of cymbals,
The sobs of tormented souls,
Cries of delight and their echoes . . . .
Fauns' eyes in the vapor,
Flutes of Dionysus,
Haunting his ruined fane,
Veils of rain, quenching the tulip gardens,
Sea-light at the roots of islands . . . .
And under all, the pedal-point
Of the deep based ocean,
Hidden under mists,
Chanting, infinitely remote,
At the foot of enchanted cliffs.

It is a question difficult of settlement whether Duncan Campbell Scott is

greater as a verbal colorist and nature-painter than as a melodist. But there can be no doubt that as a verbal colorist and nature-painter he has the eye both of the naturalist *and* the impressionist. And it is indubitable that as a colorist or impressionist he has put more of the pageantry of Nature in Canada into his poetry than has even Bliss Carman. All the Canadian seasons are in it, and every phase of the light, color, and sound of the Canadian year is in it—done by ready, flexible, graphic stroke or exquisite touch, in rich or luminous and translucent coloring, with romantic eye and fantasy, and with singular ingenuity and power. It must be confessed that there is a seeming display of musical theory and technics, of musical learning, which almost savors of pedantry, in those of Scott's poems which contain musical thought and imagery. This would be sophistication, were Scott not sincere and did he not sincerely use it all to enhance the poetic effect of his verse on the tonal sensibilities and the imagination. But there is no sophistication, no mere display of knowledge of pigments and the technic of painting in his work as a verbal colorist. He is a word-painter, a nature-colorist, an impressionist,—by innate genius. As a matter of fact, too, almost all his verbal melody is associated with color. So that, by genius rather than by art, Duncan Campbell Scott may be regarded as the supreme verbal colorist amongst Canadian poets. He is this for three reasons—inclusiveness of the seasons and phases of Nature in Canada, magic of pigmentation, and novelty and imaginative power of coloring and description.

If the poems of Scott abound in arresting and compelling phrases, lines, and stanzas of alliterative beauty, the number of brilliant and luminous color phrases, lines, and whole stanzas in his poems is astounding. The following will serve in illustration:—

Bright as a sun spot in a globe of dew.

• • • •

The leaves dry up as pale as honeycomb.

• • • •

Or peacock tints on pools of amber gloom.

• • • •

Like the curve of a fragile ivory hand.

• • • •

the light slides there
Like minnows in a pool—slender and slow.

• • • •

Blown on a gold black flute.

• • • •

A miracle of foam and ivory.

• • • •

In loops of silver light.

• • • •

The gold moted wood-pools pellucid as her eyen.

• • • •

Snow peaks arise enrobed in rosy shadows.

• • • •

Tawny like pure honey.

• • • •

Fragile as frost pansies.

• • • •

Rubies, pale as dew ponds stained with slaughter.

How luminous, translucent, yet graphic and vivid, are all those colorful lines. They are the ‘painting’ of a poet who has, above all things, the eye of the naturalist and also a fairy fantasy. If in those lines we find in Scott a genius for exquisite and translucent verbal coloring, corresponding to the art of Constable or Corot in imaginative vision or fantasy, we discover the romantic pigmentation of Rossetti (as a painter) and the rich luminous impressionism of Monet, in the lines following the final apostrophe to Beauty in Scott’s noble *Ode for the Keats’ Centenary*:—

For Beauty has taken refuge from our life
That grew too loud and wounding . . .
Beauty is gone, (Oh, where?)
To dwell within a precinct of pure air
Where moments turn to months of solitude;
To live on roots of fern and tips of fern,
On tender berries flushed with the earth’s blood.
Beauty shall stain her feet with moss
And dye her cheek with deep nut-juices
Laving her hands in the pure sluices
Where rainbows are dissolved.
Beauty shall view herself in pools of amber sheen
Dampened with peacock-tints from the green screen
That mingles liquid light with liquid shadow.

It is not necessary to illustrate the variety of Scott’s pigmentation. That is as remarkable as its luminous beauty. What is most compelling in his Nature-painting is the unique ingenuity, power, and romantic beauty of his color phrases, metaphors, and similes. The naturalistic and imaginative intensity of them is a poetic phenomenon by itself. Consider these phrases: ‘Sun, like a gold sword,’ ‘A blade of gladiolus, like a sword,’ ‘A burning pool of scent and heat,’ ‘Within the windless deeps of memory,’ ‘Bent like a shield between the silver seas,’ ‘With gulfs of blue and summits of rosy snow.’ Consider also these lines:—

The west unrolled a feathery wind.

• • • •

The poignard lightning searched the air.

• • • •

Stars like wood daffodils grow golden in the night.

• • • •

and dawn
Tolls out from the dark belfries of the spruces;

and, finally, consider the compelling romantic fantasy of color and simile in this stanza from *The Piper of Arll*:—

> There were three pines above the cone
> That, when the sun flared and went down,
> *Grew like three warriors reaving home*
> *The plunder of a burning town.*

It was said that there is more of Canada in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott than in the verse of any other Canadian poet. So far this appears to be true of Scott's painting of Nature in Canada. Scott, it must be observed, is a Nature *painter*, never a Nature *interpreter*, as were Lampman and Carman. Yet there is in Scott's poetry a decided interpretative or philosophical element. It is on the side of his philosophical poetry that Scott's verse contains more of the Canadian *spirit* than does the verse of any other Canadian poet. As a philosophical poet Scott is, first, an interpreter of humanity and life in Canada —and his interpretations possess highly novel distinction and spiritual import. His philosophical poetry is contained in three volumes, *Labor and the Angel* (1898), *New World Lyrics and Ballads* (1905), and *Via Borealis* (1906).

In his *New World Lyrics and Ballads*, Scott aims to reveal the kind of mind or thought which the strange humanity of the Northwest in Canada—the Indian heart in the wild North of Canada—contains. In the volume Indian themes predominate, and the so called Ballads are more aptly named Legends, because Scott's Ballads are art and the product of a reflective mind *thinking into* Indian mind the thoughts of a civilized man, whereas the genuine Ballad is a spontaneous story told in simple verse. Moreover, Scott's genius is lyrical; but in these so called Ballads he attempts dramatic situation and emotion. It all lands him in recondite psychological symbolism, as, for instance, in *The Mission of the Trees* or in *The Forsaken*, which is later attempted in *The Half-Breed Girl* (from *Via Borealis*), a striking essay in Indian introspection. What we get from these poems is Scott's perception and revealment of spiritual Beauty in loneliness—his half-mystical intuition that the spirit in civilized man, in the Indian soul, and in Nature everywhere is one and the same spirit, and that civilization has only resulted in veiling the face of God and in separating his creatures from one another and from the Creator.

This vague mystical intuition of the mystery and yet identity of spirit in man and Nature is beautifully, perhaps too sensuously, envisaged in Scott's *Spring on Mattagami* (from *Via Borealis*). This poem is seductively musical and highly impressionistic, but shows the influence of Meredith (*Love in a Wilderness*) in its interpretation of the conflict of Love and Law in the universe. What counts and solaces, however, is the Vision or Light of a higher Love and a deeper Law that lie behind the seemingly meaningless conflict of the visible love and law. After all, the poet, like the rest of mortals, can only

‘trust’ in the supremacy of Good in the universe:—

> Vaster than the world or life or death my *trust* is
> Based in the unseen and towering far above.
> Hold me, O Law, that deeper lies than Justice,
> Guide me, O Light, that stronger burns than Love.

This abstract mystical symbolism is Old World, not Canadian, not Scott’s own philosophy of the spirit for the Canadian spirit. His own is found in his poem *Labor and the Angel*. It is original and noble in conception; and, consistently with its serious didactic purpose and ideas, or symbolism, its diction is vernacular, its form and rhythm are suited to plain narrative; and the whole is devoid of Scott’s luxuriant color and sensuous melody. It is a dramatic poem in the sense that it is designed to affect the heart and the imagination with dramatic force and truth. As a criticism of life in the Arnoldian sense, we see in the poem the influence of Matthew Arnold. But its thought and style show more notably the influence of Browning and Meredith, especially in its syntactical ellipses, bald and abrupt lines.

In its way, *Labor and the Angel* is as finely and as impressively achieved as Tennyson’s *Princess*. It answers a question which is particularly pertinent to Canada where work—the gaining of material subsistence—necessarily is paramount, because inevitable and pressing. As with Browning, so with Scott, Woman is man’s life-star and inspiration. In the poem *Labor and the Angel*, the Man and the Girl are common humanity, but the Girl, who is also the Angel of Labor, is the man’s companion and helpmate:—

> Down on the sodden field
> A blind man is gathering his roots,
> Guided and led by a girl;
> Her golden hair blows in the wind,
> Her garments, with flutter and furl,
> Leap like a flag in the sun;
> And whenever he stoops, she stoops,
> And they heap up the dark colored beets
> In the barrow, row upon row.

Labor, the kind which is mere toil and drudgery, is without meaning and unspiritual. But Woman was designed by God as the power which shall inspire men to spirituality in all things. As Man, every man would be ‘blind’ and purposeless and futile. But as Man, companioned and inspired by Woman and idealizing labor for the end of her companionship and love and the spiritual fruits of that love, every man, who is obedient to the ideal, transmutes the lowliest labor into spiritual purpose, meaning and result:—

> She offers no tantalus cup
> To the shrunken, the desperate lips,
> But she calms them with lethe and love
> And deadens the throb and the pain.

For Labor is always blind,
Unless as the light of the deed
The Angel is smiling behind.
‘Effort and effort,’ she cries,
‘Up with the lark and the dew,
Still with the dew and the stars,
This is the heart beat of life,
Feel it athrob in the earth.’

Man and Labor, Woman and Love as the star and inspiration of man in all his work—what nobler dignity could any poet give to Woman, and what other consolation of philosophy could he conceive and sing that would, as it does, for men more surely

Make mortal flesh seem light and temporal!

*Labor and the Angel* is unique amongst poems by Canadians, and its noble philosophy of the spirit challenges poems of similar quality by Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, and Emerson.

Duncan Campbell Scott—austere intellectualist, superb verbal musician, luminous Nature-painter, and impeccable technical virtuoso of verse amongst Canadian poets—it is by him that we are also given in *The Height of Land* the finest expression of the true spiritual mysticism, the immediate perception of God—an intuition in which Life appears

As simple as to the shepherd seems his flock:
A Something to be guided by ideals—
That in themselves are simple and serene
Of noble deed to foster noble thought,
And noble thought to image noble deed,
Till deed and thought shall interpenetrate,
Making life lovelier, till we come to doubt
Whether the perfect beauty that escapes
Is beauty of deed or thought or some high thing
Mingled of both, a greater boon than either:
Thus we have seen in the retreating tempest
The victor-sunlight merge with the ruined rain,
And from the rain and sunlight spring the rainbow.

Seek we in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott for the choice and ineluctable goods of the spirit,—music, color, high thought and serene philosophy—and we shall always be rewarded with Beauty ‘golden and inappellable.’

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The quotations in this chapter are chiefly from *Beauty and Life*, by Duncan Campbell Scott, (McClelland & Stewart).

CHAPTER XI

# Wilfred Campbell

AS AN OBJECTIVE NATURE PAINTER—HUMANIZED SUBSTANCE OF HIS VERSE—PATRIOTISM AND BROTHERHOOD—DRAMATIC MONODY—POETICAL TRAGEDIES AND DRAMAS.

IN the early nineties of the last century three young Canadian poets, who were employed in the Civil Service Departments at Ottawa, were closely associated in a systematic way as men of letters. They were Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, and Duncan Campbell Scott. In the Toronto *Globe* they conducted a department of literary criticism and 'causerie' under the caption 'The Mermaid Inn.' Oddly, these three young Canadian men of letters were singularly dissimilar in poetic temperament, attitudes, vision, and ideals. As a poet Lampman was an interpreter of the inner meaning of the beauty and moods of Nature. He and Nature communed with each other by reciprocal sympathy, and he cared greatly for style and craftsmanship in poetry. Duncan Campbell Scott loved beauty for its own sake as a spiritual delight or source of ecstasy, but perfection of form, style, artistry—'art for art's sake'—pre-empted all other considerations in poetry. Wilfred Campbell occupied a middle ground. He was an objective Nature-painter, with tendencies to be more interested in Nature as a habitat or background of the human spirit which had come from God and was going to God. He was solicitous about form and imagery, color and melody in poetry, but for him these were always a means to an end, never a mere end in themselves. Or, harking back to influences, we may say that Lampman wrote poetry with the eye and the spirit of Keats and Wordsworth; Scott with the eye of Matthew Arnold for naturalistic and moral beauty and chaste artistry; and Campbell in the spirit of Longfellow and Emerson, and, sometimes, of Tennyson.

With Campbell it was the substance or matter,—the ideas, thought, and meanings for the spirit—not the formal elements or manner of poetry, that counted for most. It is the substance of poetry, its meanings for the spirit, that counts always for most with the people. For this reason, though Campbell is not the greatest of the poets of the first Systematic School, he is, and will remain, as he has been called, 'the poet of the people's choice.'

A distinct evolution—and advance in vision—from objective nature-painting of the spirit can be observed in the successive volumes of Campbell's verse. Naturally, until he had reflected on his aims as a poet, he did not

announce his poetic creed in his first volume of verse. He did this in his fourth volume, *Collected Poems* (1905) in his poem *Higher Kinship*:—

There is a time at middle summer, when,
In weariness of all this saddening world,
*The simple nature aspects seem to me*
*As a close kindred*, sweet and kind and true,
*Giving me peace and comfort, and a joy*
*Not of the senses, but of the inward soul*.

The restful day, the sunny leaf and wind,
The path of blue like windows shining down,
*Do give to life a beauty and a calm*
*And a sweet sadness, that this mighty world*
*And all its myriad triumphs cannot give*.

O let me live with Nature at her door,
And taste her home-brewed pleasures, simple, glad,—
The beauty of the day, the splendor of the night,—
Not in the great palace halls, great cloister domes,
The smoke of cities and the thronging din,
But out with air and woodlands, shining sun,—
These my companions, this my roof, my home!

'Not of the senses'—Campbell is not a lover of impressionism for its own sake, but he loves the simple, colorful aspects of Nature for the joy, comfort and peace which they give to '*the inward soul*.' He has his equals as an impressionistic colorist, but he is supreme when he paints a phenomenon or aspect of Nature in monotone or in subdued tones as in pastel, or when he etches a scene with a Whistler-like feeling for atmosphere, shadow, and chiaroscuro, and for line. In 1888, when he was in his twenty-seventh year, Campbell published a booklet of twenty lyrics, *Snowflakes and Sunbeams*. In these first lyrics he disclosed the eye of monotonist and etcher for the beauty of Nature. The verse in this rare little volume is marked, too, by a grace and melody which enhance the pictures. What but a 'symphony in white' is his *Snow*—

Folding the forest.
  Folding the farms,
In a mantle of white,
  And the river's great arms,
Kissed by the chill night
From clamor to rest,
Lie all white and shrouded
  Upon the world's breast.

Thus, through several stanzas, he paints Nature in white, seemingly for the joy of the senses but really for 'the inward soul.' For a moment he obtrudes the 'message' which the snow conveys to the moral imagination—

Falling so slowly
  Down from above,

So white, hushed and holy,
  Folding the city
Like the great pity
  Of God in his love;
Sent down out of heaven,
  On its sorrow and crime,
Blotting them, folding them
  Under its rime.

Beautiful as an original image is the thought of the snow descending hushed and holy, ‘like the great pity of God in his love,’ but it is a sentimental obtrusion, out of character with the snow-picture as such. We find Campbell frequently creating the most engaging Nature pictures, and here or there in a poem recalling the eye from the pure visual delights to let the moral imagination reflect on some suggestion, some similitude, for ‘the inward soul.’ What a pretty pastel, for instance, he paints with spare use of mere tints, in the first two stanzas of *In the Study*:—

  Out over my study,
  All ashen and ruddy
Sinks the December sun,
  And high up over
  The chimney’s soot cover
The winter night has begun.

  Here in the red embers
  I dream old Decembers,
Until the low moan of the blast,
  Like a voice out of Ghost-land,
  Or memory’s lost-land,
Seems to conjure up wraiths from the past.

But Campbell does not continue the strict painting of the objective picture. He introduces something ‘for the inward soul,’ as he does, in the concluding stanza:—

  Then into the room
  Through the firelight and gloom,
Some one steals,—let the night wind grow bleak,
  And ever so coldly,—
  Two white arms enfold me,
And a sweet face is close to my cheek.

This is not a fault in Campbell’s poetry. It is an essential part of his art. As in Longfellow, so in Campbell the *humanized substance* of his verse is consciously designed for the popular heart, and ensures popular acceptance. Campbell would rather do this than to write always for art’s sake, as in these sheer pictorial stanzas from *A Winter’s Night*:—

  Shadowy white,
Over the fields are the sleeping fences,
  Silent and still in the fading light,

As the wintry night commences.

• • • •

*Calm sleeping night*
*Whose jewelled couch reflects the million stars*
That murmur silent music in their flight. . . .

Yet, he can employ delineative line with swift and sure artistry just to make a picture for its own sake, disclosing absolute mastery in economy of means, as in his *Rododactulos*:—

The night blows outward in a mist,
And all the world the sun has kissed.

Along a golden rim of sky,
A thousand snow-piled vapors lie.

And by the wood and mist-clad stream,
*The Maiden Morn stands still to dream*.

That is an exquisite bit of naturalistic etching with a poetic meaning intrinsically in the picture of the Maiden Morn standing and dreaming in the mist. The picture itself delights both the visual faculty and the imagination. Campbell also possessed the faculty of painting vividly, as with a single sweep of the brush, as in his *Lake Huron* (in October) and its memorable lines:—

Miles and miles of lake and forest,
Miles and miles of sky and mist;

and these still more vivid lines:—

Miles and miles of crimson glories,
Autumn's wondrous fires ablaze.

Campbell did not aim or strive to be a word-virtuoso. But what he could achieve as an artist was to make at will a dainty or a glorious *picture*, and so *localize* the picture that one can immediately tell which section of the Canadian land or waters is delineated. He surpassed all his contemporaries in the gift of 'flashing' a vivid picture in a single line, as, for instance:—

The stars came out in *gleaming shoals*

or this tremendous line:—

Where wrinkled suns in awful blackness swim.

The last line quoted also discloses in Campbell a power which is not in any other Canadian poet—the Miltonic power of conveying by description ideated sensations of unending space and movement. Matching almost any piece of sheer description of immensity by Milton is Campbell's compelling panorama of Lazarus in his flight from Heaven to Hell and the sensations of illimitable depths downward that it creates in the reader, as in these stanzas from his poem *Lazarus*:—

Hellward he moved, like a radiant star shot out

From heaven's blue with rain of gold at even,
When Orion's train and that mysterious seven
Move on in mystic range from heaven to heaven.
Hellward he sank, followed by radiant rout.

The liquid floor of heaven bore him up
With unseen arms, as in his feathery flight
He floated down toward the infinite night;
But each way downward, on the left and right,
He saw each moon of heaven like a cup

Of liquid, misty fire that shone afar
From sentinel towers of heaven's battlements;
But onward, winged by love's desire intense,
He sank, space-swallowed, into the immense,
While with him ever widened heaven's bar.

'Tis ages now long-gone since he went out,
Christ-urged, love-driven, across the jasper walls.
But hellward still he ever floats and falls,
And ever nearer come those anguished calls;
And far behind he hears a glorious shout.

Campbell had a gift, too, for vivid color epithets and for vowel and alliterative word-melody. Indeed he was a master of color and verbal melody. Some of his more original and striking alliterative lines are:—

Flooding the silence in a silvern dream.
• • • •
Low flutes the lake along the lustrous sedge.
• • • •
But dawns and sunsets fell on mute dead faces.
• • • •
Belled with bees, a pollened bevy.
• • • •
Out of the murmurous moods of your multitudinous mind.
• • • •
Dim mists of darkness rise from marsh and mere.
• • • •
The waking world leaps to the day's desire.
• • • •
The harmonies that float and melt afar.
• • • •
Deep-sounding and surgent, the armies of storm sweep by.
• • • •

None of Campbell's contemporaries surpassed him in painting a simple but vivid *genre* picture, and enhancing it with verbal melody, as he does, for instance, in his *Canadian Folksong*, beginning:—

The doors are shut, the windows fast;
Outside the gust is driving past,
Outside the shivering ivy clings,
While on the hob the kettle sings;
'Margery, Margery, make the tea,'

Singeth the kettle merrily.

As a poet of humane patriotism, which has regard for international or world relations, and which is not mere ‘drum and trumpet’ patriotism, Campbell stands in a class by himself. He had a Keltic love of place or home. It was a passion with him, but the passion embraced the Anglo-Saxon peoples. So that his patriotic poetry contains a large element of the ideal of Anglo-Saxon unity and of the imperialistic destiny of the British peoples. Thus we find him singing with equal warmth of Scotland, the homeland of his ancestors (as in *The World-Mother*), of England (as in his *To England*), of the United States (as in his *To the United States*), and of Canada, his homeland (as in *Canada*.)

A sincere and profound sense and love of brotherhood is the key-note of his patriotic poetry. There is no magniloquent bombast in it, whereas it must be admitted that Roberts’ *Canada* and his *Ode to the Confederacy* have at least an air of pomp of words which sound like mere magniloquence or bombast. But there is in Campbell’s *Canada* a sincere sense of history, of historical background and heroic origins, as well as of a people whom the vastness of their habitat should impel to a great and noble destiny. Besides, Campbell sings of the homeland in simple octameter couplets, the very simplicity of which impresses the spirit with a deep sense of truth and reality. The poem, with a slight change or two for choral singing would, if set to dignified and sonorous music, be fitted to be an inspiring and inspiriting National Hymn. It is a colorful, lyrical poem, a Song, suffused with the qualities of the Canadian spirit and the beauties of the Canadian habitat. We quote a few excerpts:—

O land, by every gift of God
Brave home of freedom, let thy sod

Sacred with blood of hero sires,
Spurn from its breast ignobler fires.

Keep on these shores where beauty reigns,
And vastness folds from peak to plains,

With room for all from hills to sea,
No shackled, helot tyranny.

Spurn from thy breast the bigot lie,
The smallness not of earth or sky.

Breed all thy sons brave stalwart men,
To meet the world as one to ten.

Breed all thy daughters mothers true,
Magic of that glad joy of you,

Till liberties thy hills adorn

As wide as thy wide fields of corn.

• • • •

And round earth's rim thine honor glows,
Unsullied as thy drifted snows.

Wilfred Campbell, then, appears as a lyrist of Nature and poet of the Spirit, who is an adroit and vivid objective colorist and etcher, but who, for the most part, tinges his lyricism of Nature with meanings for the 'inward soul.' With equal dexterity and truth he painted an impressionistic or a *genre* picture. But in doing this, he was unexcelled by his contemporaries in Canada in economy of means for expression. While, however, he was thus given to painting or delineating Nature in Canada, he also appears as a poet who 'hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.' He gave proof of this in a singular way. Whatever other distinctions belong to him, Campbell has never been equalled, by another Canadian poet, in the Dramatic Monologue. Perhaps, in view of the special meaning which Browning has given to this species of poetry, it were better to use the formula Dramatic Monody. For this phrase better describes Campbell's poignant, compelling *Unabsolved*, *The Mother*, and *Lazarus*. But however categorized, these poems reveal the fact that Campbell's genius was essentially dramatic. This dramatic instinct in him, Campbell developed to a high degree until he essayed the five-act poetic drama. It is as a Poetic Dramatist that Campbell achieved a distinct and fixed place in Canadian creative poetry.

The first poet to attempt nativistic or native poetic drama in Canada was Charles Mair, who published at Toronto, in 1886. *Tecumseh: A Drama*. Many of its characters are Canadian and much of its setting and color are Canadian. Mair had created a work of real interest, of excellent structure and dramatic development, and had used impressively Canadian properties, character, and environment. The verse is genuinely artistic and colorful and dramatic, and the poem as a whole is worthy of critical consideration; but only as the first example of Canadian native poetic drama is *Tecumseh* to be regarded as significant in the literary history of Canada.

Much superior to the dramatic poetry of Mair is that of Wilfred Campbell. It is considerable in quantity, comprising the following (as he called them) 'poetical tragedies and dramas:' *Mordred*, *Hildebrand*, *The Brockenfiend*, *Robespierre*, *Daulac*, *Morning*, *Sanio*, and *The Admiral's Daughter*. The quality of his poetical tragedies and dramas distinguishes him as the first really important creator of poetic drama in Canada.

The titles of his poetic tragedies and dramas clearly indicate that, with one exception, his subjects were derivative and his treatment traditional. With the exception of his *Daulac* he took his subjects from Arthurian legend and European romantic history. He was considerably under the influence of Tennyson. Though he gave us an interesting and arresting poetic drama with

his *Daulac*, it is specially notable as a drama which is Canadian in subject, character, and setting. He was not so successful with it as with his poetic drama based on Arthurian legend and romantic history. The reason is that in a large degree he possessed an 'Old World,' a Keltic imagination, and his imagination was deeply impressed and moved by the romance of mediaeval heroic exploits:—

> Old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago.

The heroism of Daulac, his combats and other heroic exploits were so near in time to the age of Campbell himself that they could not affect the poet's imagination so pervasively and compellingly as do the older mediaeval romances of heroic exploits. Campbell did not feel the *Daulac* story as he had felt the Arthurian or romantic legends of Europe. He, therefore, did not, because he could not, put into his *Daulac* the same power of imagination and dramatic characterization and reality that he put into his other dramas. But *Daulac*, notwithstanding, is a noble poetic drama; and since it is Canadian through and through, in subject, in setting, and in authorship, we may estimate it as the first native poetic drama of genuine art and power in the creative literature of Canada.

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The quotations from Wilfred Campbell's work in this chapter are from *The Poetical Works of Wilfred Campbell* (Hodder & Stoughton, Limited: Toronto).

CHAPTER XII

# Pauline Johnson

HER ANCESTRY AND ITS INFLUENCES—LITERARY AND MUSICAL QUALITIES OF WORK—STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN SPIRITUAL VISION—PICTURESQUE COLOR VERSE.

THE name, life, and poetry of Pauline Johnson affect the heart and imagination with the arresting pathos which attaches to the imperishable memory of a belated and beautiful spirit who came singing new and winning music of earth, and man, and love. She was the most elementally human of all Canadian poets. In some respects Pauline Johnson was the most original and engaging singer in the company of the Canadian lyrists who were born in 1860, 1861, and 1862—Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Campbell, and Duncan Campbell Scott.

Pauline Johnson's grandfather, who attained special glory for his valorous deed of setting fire, with his own hands, to the city of Buffalo in the War of 1812, was distinguished, in times of peace, by his tribesmen with the honorable and poetic sobriquet, 'The Mohawk Warbler,' not because he could actually 'warble' like a present-day lyric tenor, but because he possessed a ready flow of language which he used with impassioned and dramatic eloquence. The old warrior's granddaughter, in her ballads and poems of Indian wrongs and Indian heroic deeds, wrote with the same dramatic intensity and the same gift for dramatic picture; and in her songs of Nature and of love sang with a lyrical lilt as natural, musical, free, and passionate as the warblings of the thrush or lark or linnet.

The distinctive qualities of Pauline Johnson's genius and poetry are here noted summarily. In general: As a story-telling balladist she must be ranked with the best Canadian poets who have essayed the same *genre*, though in some of her ballads there are lines which are rhetorical and melodramatic. On the whole, however, her story-telling ballads are unsurpassed by her Canadian *confrères*, in emotional intensity, rapid movement, terse phrasing, and dramatic pictorial vividness.

As a verbal musician, and as a nature-painter and etcher, Pauline Johnson again must be given a very high place. Some of her poems are marked by absolutely avian *abandon*; others by haunting melody; and others by sweetly flowing rhythm and winning cadences, and by sensuous vowel-harmonies and faultless rhymes. Many of her poems disclose the gift to paint in words a

picture from Nature with the impressionist's mastery of sensation and color. Some of them are low-keyed and full of shadows, suggested sensations, and mystery. Others are dainty word-etchings, picturesquely or subtly drawn and subdued in tone.

In particular: Pauline Johnson has yet, by other Canadian poets, to be equalled as a lyrist of the passion and pathos of romantic love, and as an inventor of picturesque, veracious, vivid, beautiful, and compelling poetic figures and images. Her love poems are full of the most poignant passion and pathos. It would be easy to make a catalogue of a half hundred or more poetic figures and images which are unique in descriptive aptness or in emotional 'tang.'

In short, the supreme spiritual and aesthetic qualities of Pauline Johnson's poetry are its real sincerity, its naiveté of thought, its simplicity of structure, its lovely color images, its winning music, its passion, pathos, and womanly tenderness. But first place must be given to its dulcet and insinuating music and to its original and arresting poetic figures and images.

Pauline Johnson, taking the date engraved on the monument to her memory at Vancouver, was born in 1861. She died at Vancouver in 1912. She was the youngest child of a family of four born to the late G. H. M. Johnson (Onwononsyshon) of Brantford, Ontario, Head Chief of the Six Nations Indians, and his wife, Emily S. Howells, who was of English parentage and born at Brixton, England. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) was born on her father's estate, which is on the Reserve apportioned the Mohawk Tribe by the Canadian government. It must, therefore, pique the imagination to know that Pauline Johnson was of pure Indian and pure English descent, but that though she travelled from coast to coast in Canada and the United States and twice to England, her freedom of movement was 'privileged' and she was always, wherever she went, a 'ward' of the Canadian government.

In Pauline Johnson's case there are nice, though not recondite, problems in literary psychology and interpretive criticism. For instance: Was Pauline Johnson's genius Indian, or English? Was it inherited, or was she a 'born' poet, or how else may her gifts and tastes be explained? The poet herself always insisted, with considerable pride, on her Indian origin. Some critics, reasoning by quasi-inductions, abetted her in this belief. Yet, so far as her genius is concerned, the only one of her Indian ancestors who had anything like literary gifts was her grandfather, 'The Mohawk Warbler,' and his gifts were those of the 'tongue' in compelling eloquence rather than aesthetic sensibility and the power of expressing in words the beauty and the music in Nature. On the other hand, Pauline Johnson's English ancestors were a family who possessed distinct literary tendencies and habits. The most distinguished member of the branches of that family was W. D. Howells, the American

novelist, poet, and essayist. It is most probable that she inherited her literary gifts from her English ancestors. For in *Flint and Feather*—her complete poems—there is not one concept, or bit of color, or rhythm, or anything else, that may be described as specifically Indian. Rather it is all British or Universal. We do find in her poems Indian themes, protests against British ruthlessness in governmental treatment of the Indian, and the celebration of Indian valor and love. But these are human utterances. Moreover, of the ninety poems in *Flint and Feather*, only eight concern the Indian, and these only on the side of episodes which formed good material for romantic story-telling in verse. In these fine ballads Pauline Johnson became indeed the 'Voice' of her inarticulate Indian fellows, but the voice itself was that of a woman cultured in the forms and music of English poetry. Pauline Johnson's loyalty to the Indian side of her ancestry, and her pride in it, were admirable; but, if heredity is to be accepted as a real cause of genius, her taste for literature, and her bent towards literary expression, must have come from her mother's side. For her mother was both a cultured and a romantically-minded woman. If, however, we are to grant the poet any gift from her Indian ancestry, we must remember her brilliant career as a reciter or dramatic reader. If she inherited this dramatic gift, then she got it from her eloquent grandfather, 'The Mohawk Warbler.' Though she used it conspicuously in her dramatic readings, the gift is also observable in the vividly graphic qualities, and in the emotional intensity, of her story-telling ballads.

Pauline Johnson was the first genuinely Canadian 'daughter of the soil' who indubitably was born a poet; and her poetic development was one not in artistic craftsmanship, but in vision. The first important fact in her spiritual history is that at a very early age the future poet evinced an original and intense taste for verse, expressing this taste both by a fondness for memorizing verses read to her and for composing childish jingles about familiar domestic objects. A pretty illustration of Pauline Johnson's early predilection for poetry is furnished in the Biographical Sketch to *Flint and Feather*, in which it is related that when she was but four years old (1865) she was asked by a friend who was going to a distant city what he should bring her as a gift, and that the child-poet replied, 'Verses, please!'

The second important fact in Pauline Johnson's spiritual history is that from the time she could pen words intelligently up to the close of her public-school days she devoted much of her leisure to self-cultivation in the appreciation and the writing of verse. Before she was twelve years old (1873), Pauline Johnson had thoroughly read Shakespeare and the British romantic poets, Scott and Byron, and with their texts cultivated her native sense of poetic diction and imagery, of verbal rhythm and music (vowel-harmony, rhyme, consonance, assonance, alliteration), and of color-epithets for brilliant

and subtly impressionistic word-painting.

Pauline Johnson, with rare good sense, did not publish any of her verses till considerable time after she had completed her formal schooling and her personally conducted studies of versification, verbal music, and poetic imagery. But as soon as she began to offer her verses to editors, she seems to have found ready acceptances. The first periodical to welcome her verse was a small New York magazine, *Gems of Poetry*, published, presumably, in the early ’80’s of the last century. This, however, can not be regarded as a significant event. Really significant was the fact that *The Week* (founded by Goldwin Smith) was the first Canadian magazine to publish her verse. This fact assured her the recognition and sponsorship of Goldwin Smith, himself an eminent man-of-letters and a poet, and also, possibly, of Charles G. D. Roberts, who was literary editor of *The Week* in 1883-1884, and who was the first editor to stand sponsor for Archibald Lampman. The imprimatur of *The Week*, or the sponsorship of Goldwin Smith and Roberts, automatically elected Pauline Johnson to the company of the Systematic Group of Canadian poets born in 1860, 1861 and 1862, and introduced her to the English-speaking world as a new and authentically gifted singer, in whose music, though formally composed in the English manner of versification, would, in due time, be heard the hitherto unheard melancholy over-tones and wildwood notes of the aboriginal Canadian spirit.

The next important date in Pauline Johnson’s history is the year 1892, when a happy social and literary *soirée* launched the Indian poet on a public career which, seemingly, would not affect, save negatively, Pauline Johnson’s function and art as a lyrist. From that date and for sixteen years (1892-1908), Miss Johnson assiduously applied her gifts as a reciter and dramatic reader in Canada, the United States, and England, all the while publishing intermittently in the periodical press her best verse.

In 1895, simultaneously at London, England, Boston, and Toronto, appeared her first volume of poems, *The White Wampum*. In 1903 her second volume of poems, *Canadian Born*, was issued at Toronto. In 1912, also at Toronto, there was published the definitive and inclusive edition of her collected poems, *Flint and Feather*. All three, upon their appearance, were highly praised in reviews by the critics of England, the United States, and Canada.

It is important to appreciate the significance of Pauline Johnson’s sixteen years of travelling over Canada, the United States, and England, as a reciter and dramatic reader. Possibly they reduced the amount of her poetic output. But there are no evidences in *Flint and Feather* that the experiences gained during these years diminished or increased her powers of poetic vision or craftsmanship. Pauline Johnson was self-deceived when, in a letter, she

expressed her belief that the fugitive verses published in *Flint and Feather*, pages 135-156, surpass her poems in *The White Wampum* and in *Canadian Born*. ‘My later fugitive verse,’ she declared, ‘is, of course, my best work, as it is more mature.’ There are only fifteen of these so-called fugitive poems; but imaginative, musical, and tender as they are, notably *In Grey Days*, *Autumn’s Orchestra*, *The Trail to Lillooet*, *The Lifting of the Mist*, *The King’s Consort*, and *Day Dawn*, they are all in the early manner of the poet. They are lovely and winning poems, pervaded with seductive music, tone-color pictures of nature and of life, tinged with a tender pathos. But they show no advance in technique, verbal music, imagery, or emotional nuance—no lately acquired powers to express rhythmic ecstasy with a newer and more musical lilt than obtains in *The Song My Paddle Sings* (1892); or to paint with more suggestive impressionism a nature picture full of color, half-lights, or mystery, or more finely to etch a verbal portrait than she has done in *Erie Waters*, *Marshlands*, *Shadow River*, and *Joe*; or to catch and envisage a mood or emotional nuance with subtler spirituality than she accomplished in *The Camper*, *Lady Lorgnette*, *Lullaby of the Iroquois*, *Prairie Greyhounds*, *Lady Icicle*, and *The Prodigal*.

All these poems, whose titles have just been quoted, were composed in the decade from 1892 to 1902, and belong to Pauline Johnson’s first two volumes which together contained sixty-seven poems of indubitable lyric and imaginative quality. Of the poems composed by Pauline Johnson in the decade from 1902 to 1912, only twenty-three were deemed by the poet worthy to stand beside her poems from *The White Wampum* and in *Canadian Born* which, with the later twenty-three, form the contents of the original edition of *Flint and Feather*. Five posthumously published poems were added to the later editions.

If, then, in *Flint and Feather* we discover no advance in the technique of Pauline Johnson’s art, wherein did her new experiences gained by travel, by meeting men and women of foreign lands and by learning the ways of the world, work changes worth while? Solely in the poet’s heart and imagination. Here was a development, not in craftsmanship and art, but in spiritual vision. It was, too, an evolution simple and natural in its stages, and is readily traceable in the poems contained in *Flint and Feather*. Mr. Melvin O. Hammond, an observant and judicious Canadian critic, in a review of *Flint and Feather* (*The Globe*, Toronto, Nov. 9th, 1912), was the first to disclose these stages of Pauline Johnson’s development in spiritual vision. They are four:—

First, Pauline Johnson appeared as the ‘voice’ of the Indian people, who before her coming had been dumb or inarticulate. Her point of view was, at this stage, Indian, and she passionately protested against the abuses the Indians of Canada have suffered (as in *The Cattle Thief* and *A Cry from An Indian*

*Wife*) or, as passionately, sang of Indian valor and love (as in her *Ojistoh*).

Next, her point of view became Canadian. She turned from lamenting the free and glorious past of her Indian ancestors to paint in verse the land of her birth, 'Canadian life and scenery in the broad outdoors of the North and West,' not merely impressionistically picturing woods, skies, plains, but also apostrophizing and humanizing both natural creatures and objects, as if they were conscious of their estate, function, and value to man, and had moods of their own, as, for example, *The Sleeping Giant* (Thunder Bay), and the dainty, fetching lyric *The Homing Bee*.

The third stage in Miss Johnson's development in vision was also Canadian. But, in this stage, her point of view became broadened in scope. She turned to remark the progress of the Canadian national spirit and the civilization which binds the Dominion from ocean to ocean. This she accomplished with extraordinary virility in rhythm, with apt descriptive epithet, and with pictorial suggestiveness in her *Prairie Greyhounds*—a song represented as sung by the trans-continental trains in their passage from East to West, and West to East. The poem gives the reader vivid ideated sensations of the swish and roar and onward rush of the trains, the sweep of the vast territory of the Dominion, and the vision of the Greater Canada that is to be.

The final stage in Pauline Johnson's increase in scope of spiritual vision was marked by cosmopolitanism, pure humanity, and by mysticism. She had lost the Indian and the Canadian points of view when she composed *Give us Barrabas* (commemorative of the exile of Dreyfus). She was wholly a human being and sexless when she composed her subtly sympathetic *The City and the Sea*, and *Fasting*. She was genuinely mystical when she composed her *Penseroso* wherein she sang persuasively:—

> Soulless is all humanity to me
> To-night. My keenest longing is to be
> Alone, alone with God's grey earth that seems
> Pulse of my pulse and consort of my dreams.

To authenticate the claim that Pauline Johnson's genius, art, and poetry are highly original and sometimes unique, it is only necessary to cite such of her poems as represent the stages of her development and the special qualities of her poetic vision and artistry.

Beginning with the first stage, we must observe that her passionate protesting against the abuses which the Indians of Canada had suffered as, for instance, in her poems *The Cattle Thief*, and *A Cry from an Indian Wife*, is no proof that the fierce intensity of her utterance is a recrudescence of ancestral Indian fire of spirit or ferocity in herself. The poems in which this so-called Indian emotional intensity was expressed by her did, no doubt, spring out of imaginative sympathy with her father's race, but these poems could have been

written with the same show of emotional intensity by any other poet who realized with equal imaginative sympathy the wrongs that the Indians of Canada had suffered and who had the gift of fiery expression.

Pauline Johnson is fundamentally Indian when she is most pagan; that is, when, first, she realizes and expresses poignantly her racial sense of haunting presences in the natural world, and when, secondly, she expresses a melancholy regret for the passing of her Indian race and a yearning for free and pagan communion with the moods of Nature, with the wild creatures of Nature, and with the spiritual presences, which, to the imagination of the aboriginal Indian, haunted the woods, the streams, the mists, the clouds, and the sunsets before the hated British race destroyed the Indian's ancestral habitat and robbed him both of his material and spiritual birthright. Moreover, in the two or three poems in which she protested against the wrongs which the Indians of Canada had suffered, Pauline Johnson was really, if unconsciously, *affecting* to be the 'voice' of her Indian race. For she soon turned from such affected poetic frenzy to expressing her admiration of the British and her love of Canada as a free commonwealth under British allegiance and protection, and to revealing in colorful and musical verse the spirit and beauties of the land of her birth.

Pauline Johnson, then, is essentially Indian, not when frenzied, but only when she expresses in verse the inner secrets of the joy and the pathos of her imaginative communion with past and contemporary Nature in Canada,—when she sings, with free and infectious lilt, outdoor life in Canada or impressionistically paints Canadian woods, skies, plains, snow, waters, or apostrophizes and humanizes the creatures and objects of nature as if they had a psychology of their own.

All the world knows Pauline Johnson's lilting and infectious lyric of Canadian outdoor life, *The Song My Paddle Sings*. It is unsurpassed for suggested or ideated sensations of wind and stream, of the spirit of motion, of free life in the open, and wins one both by its vivid pictures of outdoor life and by its simple but musical *abandon*. After a two-stanza apostrophe to the West wind, closing with

> Now fold in slumber your laggard wings
> For soft is the song my paddle sings—

we hear the poet lilting the inspiriting song itself, opening

> August is laughing across the sky,
> Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
> Drift, drift,
> Where the hills uplift
> On either side of the current swift.

Specially to be noted in this poem is the descriptive and musical realism

which the poet effects by a sort of refrain in the third line of each stanza, a monosyllabic accent which precisely conveys to the sensibility the actual sensations experienced in canoeing through slow-moving and rushing or weltering waters—‘drift, drift,’ ‘dip, dip,’ ‘swirl, swirl,’ ‘dash, dash,’ ‘reel, reel,’ ‘sway, sway,’ ‘swings, swings.’ This is supreme in descriptive and imitative naturalism.

For examples of Pauline Johnson’s poetic power to humanize objects and creatures in Nature *The Sleeping Giant* and *The Homing Bee* may be cited. The latter is also notably suffused with delicate color, moves with a light, tripping music, and is dainty in structure, thus exemplifying several of the other qualities of her art. The opening lines indicate the ‘key’ in music and color:—

> You are belted with gold, little brother of mine,
> Yellow gold, like the sun
> That spills in the west, as a chalice of wine
> When feasting is done.

In the Canadian idyll, Pauline Johnson displayed a delicate sense of color values, and sang as well of airy things in Nature with an airy music, sometimes touched with a reflective melancholy, as, for instance, in *Shadow River*.

The tones of melancholy, of sadness, observed sometimes in Pauline Johnson’s poetry were not all born of a mystical yearning for union with Nature. Sometimes they were the expression of a poignant sense of the defeat of romantic love. Hers was a simple, warm or passionate, confiding, sensitive, but strong nature; and sensitive and passionate but strong natures, if they belong to poets, tend to express poignantly, rather than bitterly, any spiritual cataclysm in their lives, and, for solace or support, to turn to Nature or to religion. It was so with Pauline Johnson.

Charles Mair, author of *Dreamland and Other Poems*, and *Tecumseh: A Drama*, is the authority for the belief that Pauline Johnson went through an experience of romantic love which, in its joy, gave wings of ecstasy and a warm emotional coloring to her nature-poetry, but which, when her love suffered a defeat that meant a spiritual cataclysm for her, drew from her the most poignant expression of yearning for union with Immortal Love. The important truth is that whichever emotion she expresses, she remains unequalled as a lyrist of the ecstasy and the pathos of romantic love. But her poems of the ecstasy of love are never merely the expression of subjective emotions. They also have an idyllic or nature setting which so colors her nature-poetry itself with the passion of love as to distinguish it, both as nature-poetry and as love poetry, from anything else of the kind in Canadian Literature. The ecstasy is somewhat subdued in *Idlers*; but is passionate and transporting, warmly colored with the light and tints of Nature, and set to verbal music in perfect harmony with the emotion and the nature-setting in

*Wave-won*.

The fact of the defeat of love, in Pauline Johnson's case, may be observed in her *Overlooked*, a poem which is notable for the invention on her part of a metaphor that, for originality and beauty, is worthy of the Greek idyllists or of Catullus, namely:—

> O Love, thou wanderer from Paradise.

At length Pauline Johnson's merely human passion of yearning for union with the mortal companion is transmuted into a spiritualized yearning—which, however, has not in it the sad wistfulness of the poetry of Marjorie Pickthall—for union with Immortal Love. Defeat of romantic love in Pauline Johnson's case passed, first, into renouncement, and, at last, into resignation and the total giving of self to Immortal Love, as in *Brier*—

> Because, dear Christ, your tender, wounded arm
> Bends back the brier that edges life's long way,
> That no hurt comes to heart, to soul no harm,
> I do not feel the thorn so much to-day.
>
> Because I never knew your care to tire,
> Your hand to weary guiding me aright,
> Because you walk before and crush the brier,
> It does not pierce my feet so much to-night.
>
> Because so often you have hearkened to
> My selfish prayers, I ask but one thing now,
> That these harsh hands of mine add not unto
> The crown of thorns upon your bleeding brow.

Pauline Johnson possessed extraordinary, if not quite unique, gifts as a story-telling balladist. Examples of her art in this species are her compelling story of Indian love and revenge, *Ojistoh*, her melodramatic Indian tale, *The Cattle Thief*, and her *Wolverine*, a poem of Western *chevalerie*, in which species, however, she does not rank with Isabella Valancy Crawford.

Her poetry of the development of the Canadian national spirit and civilization, by which she marks a broadening in her own spiritual vision, is notably exemplified in two poems, *The Riders of the Plains* and *Prairie Greyhounds*. In the former, however, she is more British than Canadian. But she is Canadian in her *Prairie Greyhounds*. In this poem she achieves an extraordinary virility of rhythm, employs apt and dramatic epithets and fills the picture with a vivid suggestiveness of the vastness of Canada and the vision of the greater autonomous and powerful Dominion that is to be. *Prairie Greyhounds*, moreover, is a supreme achievement in suggested or ideated sensations of motion. The reader feels himself as if actually aboard the west-bound and east-bound Canadian Pacific trains, experiencing, as does a living passenger on a 'fast express,' the swish, and roar, and onward rush of the trains.

As a verbal musician Pauline Johnson must be given a very high place amongst Canadian poets. There is an avian *abandon* and ecstasy, an avian lilt and warbling, in *The Birds' Lullaby* and in *The Songster*. There are flowing rhythm and haunting melody of rhyme, vowel-harmony, alliteration and cadences in *The Trail to Lillooet*:—

> Song of fall, and song of forest, come you here on haunting quest,
> Calling through the seas and silence, from God's country of the west.
> Where the mountain pass is narrow, and the torrent white and strong,
> Down its rocky-throated canon, sings its golden-throated song.
>
> You are singing there together through the God-begotten nights,
> And the leaning stars are listening above the distant heights
> That lift like points of opal in the crescent coronet
> About whose golden setting sweeps the trail to Lillooet.

Pauline Johnson has also achieved what may be noted in literary history as the first strictly Canadian 'cradle-song'—Canadian in music and in setting—her *Lullaby of the Iroquois*.

As a nature-colorist and etcher Pauline Johnson again must be given a very high place. For a *genre* etching of the human figure against a background of nature her *Joe*, which she herself sub-titles 'An Etching,' is as vividly presented and as fetching as a *genre* drawing by Murillo. Her *Lady Lorgnette* is as daintily graphic and colorful and piquant and romantic as anything done by the brush of Romney or Gainsborough or by the later modern 'society' miniaturists. She had the pictorial artist's eye to spy out a picture in Nature, as in *At Husking Time*. She had the impressionist's mastery of sensuous pigmentation, as in *Under Canvas*. She could make a picture low-keyed, full of shadows and suggested sensations and mystery, as in *Nocturne* and in *Moonset*.

Finally: Pauline Johnson is certainly not surpassed, if equalled, by any other Canadian lyrist as an inventor of beautiful color epithets and of picturesque, vivid, and compelling metaphors. They are to be found everywhere in her poetry. Consider these as examples—'Russet needles as censers swing to an altar,' 'The sea-weeds cling with flesh-like fingers,' 'Beaten gold that clung like coils of kisses love inlaid,' 'The brownish hills with needles green and gold,' 'O Love, thou wanderer from Paradise,' 'Swept beneath a shore of shade, beneath a velvet moon,' 'Like net work threads of fire,' and this,

> Purple her eyes as the mists that dream
> At the edge of some laggard, sun-drowned stream

and many more as novel, colorful, musical, veracious and compelling.

As a woman Pauline Johnson was a rare and beautiful spirit. As a poet she was of all Canadian poets the most pervasively true to her Canadian origin and

habitat. She is not to be given always the status of Lampman and Carman and Duncan Campbell Scott, yet to her unquestionably belongs a place beside these Canadian singers. Her poetry had a magic of music and a color of leafy lawns and lovely grey-eyed and tawny dusks and clear ecstatic morns, which were all her own. She was indeed a ‘Mohawk Warbler,’ and her songs are

> Free and artless as the avian lays
> Heard in Canadian woods on April days.

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The quotations in this chapter from Pauline Johnson’s poems are from *Flint and Feather*, by E. Pauline Johnson, (Musson Book Co., Limited: Toronto).

CHAPTER XIII

# Parker *and* Scott (F. G.)

PARKER AS A SONNETEER OF SPIRITUAL LOVE—ORIGIN AND THEME OF A LOVER'S DIARY—MUSICAL AND COLORFUL LYRICAL VERSE—SCOTT'S POETRY A REFLECTION OF HIS PERSONALITY—DISTINGUISHED AS THE 'POET OF THE SPIRIT'—CHIEF QUALITIES OF HIS POETRY.

IT was as a poet, not as a creator of historical romances, that Sir Gilbert Parker first appeared as a man of letters and first appealed to the literary public. As a poet he was appreciated in Australia and in England, but not in Canada. That as a poet he has been unknown and unappreciated in his homeland, Canada, is due to the fact that he was expatriate when he published his two volumes of poems, the second of which was 'privately printed,' and that his greater reputation as a novelist, particularly of old romantic Canada, made him known in the Dominion exclusively as a writer of fiction. Sir Gilbert Parker, however, ranks high as a sonneteer of spiritual love, and as lyrist in *genre* verse which has attained special reputation, particularly as texts of songs for *salon* and recital repertory.

Sir Gilbert Parker was born in Ontario, in 1862. Never robust, he left Canada in 1886 to seek recovery of health in the warmer and more salubrious climate of Australia. While in Australia he began publishing sonnets and lyrics in magazines. The sonnets were collected and published in a volume entitled *A Lover's Diary*; first edition, 1894; second edition, 1898. Before the publication of *A Lover's Diary* Parker had removed to London. While in England he privately printed a volume of lyrics entitled *Embers*. These two volumes, the first revised, and enlarged with twenty-five sonnets, and the second, with the addition of other lyrics, were collected and published as Volume 17 of *The Works of Gilbert Parker* (1913). The volume containing his collected poems is distinguished by a critical Introduction by Sir Gilbert Parker himself.

In the Introduction Parker explains the origin and theme of *A Lover's Diary*. It is a sonnet-sequence, the composition of which was begun when the poet was twenty-three and still resident in Canada. The sequence is a 'hopeless love, in form of temptation, but lifted away from ruinous elements by self-renunciation, to end with the inevitable parting, poignant and permanent, a task of the soul finished and the toil of the journey of understanding paid.' He adds: 'The six sonnets . . . beginning with *The Bride*, and ending with *Annunciation*, have nothing to do with the story further than to show two phases of the youth's mind before it was shaken by speculation, plunged into sadness of

doubt and apprehension, and before it had found the love which was to reveal it to itself, transform the character, and give a new impulse and direction to personal forces and individual sense.'

As a poet of romantic love Parker is concerned with the spiritual *meaning* of it. *A Lover's Diary* is not concerned with the mere emotions of romantic love but with its spiritual thrall, and with it as a process of spiritual redemption and exaltation. As an interpreter of spiritual love, Parker contrasts with Robert Norwood whose sequence, *His Lady of the Sonnets* (1915), though having a spiritualizing intent, is highly sensuous and impressionistic in diction and imagery. Parker breathes a less earthly air. His sonnet-sequence is addressed more to the imaginative reason than to the aesthetic imagination. It is much more mystically conceived and much more chastely lovely with the 'white beauty' of the spirit than is Norwood's sequence. Both sequences, however, are authentic and noble poetic creations.

In pure beauty of conception, imagery, and artistry, and in the spiritual exaltation of love, the following sonnet from Parker's *A Lover's Diary*, is characteristic of the whole sequence:—

It is enough that in this burdened time
The soul sees all its purposes aright.
The rest—what does it matter? Soon the night
Will come to whelm us, then the morning chime.
What does it matter, if but in the way
One hand clasps ours, one heart believes us true;
One understands the work we try to do,
And strives through Love to teach us what to say?
Between me and the chilly outer air
Which blows in from the world, there standeth one
Who draws Love's curtains closely everywhere,
As God folds down the banners of the sun.
    Warm is my place about me, and above,
    Where was the raven, I behold the dove.

Parker's lyrical verse, like his sonnet-sequence, is the poetry of a young man who still possesses the enthusiasms of youth for all the lovelier and happier things in existence, and who rejoices in living. From the text of Parker's lyrics it is plain that he had the gifts of a lyrist in the original Greek meaning, of one who wrote poems to be *sung* to the accompaniment of the lyre. He was gifted to turn a sentiment either seriously or playfully with simplicity and directness of diction and with winning musical lilt.

In truth, if he had turned to song composition, he was more ideally equipped to write the texts of poems for songs than was the greatest of American song composers, the late Edward MacDowell, who, for lack of singable lyrical texts, was compelled to compose his own poems as well as their musical settings.

There is a spontaneity of lyrical lilt, lyrical verve, in Parker's lighter poems, which he composed both in literary English and in 'Irishy.' As an example of the musical and colorful qualities of his lyrics in literary English, the following poem from *Embers* will aptly serve:—

I heard the desert calling, and my heart stood still—
  There was winter in my world and in my heart;
A breath came from the mesa, and a message stirred my will,
  And my soul and I arose up to depart.

I heard the desert calling, and I knew that over there
  In an olive-sheltered garden where the mesquite grows,
Was a woman of the sunrise with the star-shine in her hair
  And a beauty that the almond-blossom blows.

I hear the desert calling, and my heart stands still—
  There is summer in my world, and in my heart;
A breath comes from the mesa, and a will beyond my will
  Blinds my footsteps as I rise up to depart.

As an example of his musical quality and humor in 'Irishy,' the following lyric from *Embers* is apt and fetching:—

It was as fine a churchful as you ever clapt an eye on;
  Oh, the bells was ringin' gaily, and the sun was shinin' free;
There was singers, there was clargy—'Bless ye both,' says Father Tryon—
  They was weddin' Mary Callaghan and me.

There was gatherin' of women, there was hush upon the stairway,
  There was whisperin' and smilin', but it was no place for me;
A little ship was comin' into harbour through the fair-way—
  It belongs to Mary Callaghan and me.

Shure, the longest day has endin', and the wildest storm has fallin'—
  There's a young gossoon in yander, and he sits upon my knee;
There's a churchful for the christenin'—do you hear the imp a-callin'?
  He's the pride of Mary Callaghan and me.

As a composer of song texts, Parker is rivalled only by his Canadian compatriot, Arthur Stringer, whose poems in 'Irishy' have been most winningly and humorously set to music by their compatriot, Gena Branscombe (Mrs. J. F. Tenney). It is indeed as a poet, whose lyrics are inevitable texts for songs which have literary charm and simple humanity that Sir Gilbert Parker has been most admired and appreciated.

For this view we have the authority of Sir Gilbert himself. In the Introduction to the volume of his poetry in his Collected Works, he says: '*Mary Callaghan and Me* has been set to music by Mr. Max Muller, and has made many friends, and *The Crowning* was the Coronation ode of *The People*, which gave a prize, too ample I think, for the best musical setting of the lines. Many of the other pieces in *Embers* have been set to music by distinguished composers, like Sir Edward Elgar, who has made a song-cycle of several, Sir

Alexander Mackenzie, Mr. Arthur Foote, Mrs. Amy Woodforde Finden, Robert Somerville, and others. The first to have musical setting was *You'll Travel Far and Wide*, to which in 1895 Mr. Arthur Foote gave fame as *An Irish Folk Song*. Like *O Flower of All the World*, by Mrs. Amy Woolforde Finden, it has had a world of admirers, and such singers as Mrs. Henschel helped to make Mr. Foote's music loved by thousands, and conferred something more than an ephemeral acceptance of the author's words.'

Both, then, as a poet of mystical vision and sublimated emotion, and of human sentiment and instincts which add to the humanity and gaiety of life, Sir Gilbert Parker appears as a poet who has authentic creative gifts and who is a master craftsman in the 'art' of verse. In novelty and variety his sonnets and lyrics have significantly enhanced the quality of Canadian poetry, and have in their own degree and way given the work of the poets of the Systematic School and Period the character of a genuine 'renaissance.'

Another poet who rightfully belongs to the Systematic School and Period of Canadian Literature is Frederick George Scott. In 1888, or in the year following the publication of Roberts' *In Divers Tones* (1887), Canon Scott published his first book of verse, *The Soul's Quest and Other Poems*. This volume was succeeded by five other volumes of verse, up to 1907, in which year he published *The Key of Life: A Mystery Play*. In 1910 appeared his *Collected Poems*. During the World War he published a booklet of war verse, *In the Battle Silences* (1916).

The forms and qualities of Canon Scott's poetry were determined by his own moral personality and by his conception of the 'end' of poetry. It is a fact that in no other verse written by a Canadian is there such an absolute identification of the man and the poet as in the poetry of Canon Scott. The poetry reflects the whole personality of the man. In the world, Canon Scott is a distinguished example of the 'Christian gentleman'—'a man of liberal culture and wide sympathies whose life has thrilled with the larger life, political, social, and religious, a man of strong courage born of reverent unquestioning faith.' To Canon Scott, therefore, the aim of poetry is not 'art for art's sake,' but the inspiration and consolation of the people in their hour of doubt or darkness. His conception of the 'end' determined the forms and manner of Canon Scott's poetry. For if, like the ancient Hebraic poets, he was to inspire and console his people, he must present his thoughts in simple forms and in diction and imagery readily understood by the people.

Canon Scott stands out from the rest of the members of the Systematic School and Period as *par excellence* the Poet of the Spirit; and his verse is distinguished from the bulk of the verse of his colleagues in the Systematic

School as the Poetry of Faith and Consolation. There is nothing original and distinctive in his forms: they are traditional and simple. There is nothing original and distinctive in his message: it, too, is traditional and simple—a message of faith and courage and of joy in existence. His distinction is in his 'art,' his power to convey beautifully, sweetly—and above all, convincingly—to the human soul noble or profound thoughts for its sustenance, refreshment, and consolation. But while the ethical and spiritual 'notes'—which must be distinguished from didacticism—are supreme in his poetry, Canon Scott is also solicitous about the craftsmanship in his verse. Though his verse forms are thoroughly socialized and though he never aims to be a 'word virtuoso,' nevertheless he is always the 'artist' in verse technique.

The chief qualities of Canon Scott's poetry are piquant phantasy rather than imagination, ingenious imagery, sympathy with his kind, tenderness, wistfulness, simple or profound thought expressed in simple diction and in simple but dulcet verbal melody. Also in his verse is a two-fold *Canadianism*. The self-reliant faith and courage in it is Canadian, and the color and the naturalistic imagery are derived from the woods, and fields, and streams, and hills of his Canadian homeland, more particularly from Nature in the Laurentian district. Indeed, Canon Scott has been given the sobriquet of 'the Poet of the Laurentians.' But while he impregnates and suffuses his verse with color and naturalistic imagery from Nature in the Laurentians, he always transmutes his naturalistic perceptions into spiritual imagery and import. He does not do this with bald and stark didacticism, but with exquisite artistry, and yet with an intimacy, apt felicity, and naturalness that make it all an achievement in winning a reader to see the beauty and dignity of the familiar and commonplace in Nature. Canon Scott's poetry, in a phrase, is the acme of *spiritual realism*.

Of his diction, rhythm, and melody, and his Canadian imagery in verse, Scott's *Dawn* furnishes a short and impressive example:—

> The immortal spirit hath no bars
> To circumscribe its dwelling-place;
> My soul hath pastured with the stars
> Upon the meadow-lands of space.
>
> My mind and ear at times have caught
> From realms beyond our mortal reach,
> The utterance of Eternal Thought
> Of which all nature is the speech.
>
> And high above the seas and lands,
> On peaks just tipped with morning light,
> My dauntless spirit mutely stands
> With eagle wings outspread for flight.

How lowly, and yet how beautiful and compelling, are these figures in the

first stanza of that poem—‘pastured with the stars,’ ‘meadow-lands of space.’ But both are derived from Canon Scott’s boyhood days in his homeland. They are Canadian.

There is a Wordsworthian humanity in his poem *The Cripple*, a sympathy with his kind and a tender wistfulness in his *Van Elsen*. There is nobility of thought in his *Samson*, and in *Thor*, and a grandeur of vision in his *Hymn of Empire*, which is a Canadian imperial and patriotic poem in a kind by itself. But in one poem—a sonnet—Canon Scott has achieved what is perhaps the most ingenious imagery in Canadian poetry, and one of the most extraordinary in English literature. This is his sonnet *Time*:—

> I saw Time in his workshop carving faces;
> Scattered around his tools lay, blunting griefs,
> Sharp cares that cut out deeply in reliefs
> Of light and shade; sorrows that smooth the traces
> Of what were smiles. Not yet without fresh graces
> His handiwork, for oftimes rough were ground
> And polished, oft the pinched made smooth and round;
> The calm look, too, the impetuous fire replaces.
>
> Long time I looked and watched; with hideous grin
> He took each heedless face between his knees,
> And graved and scarred and bleached with boiling tears.
> I wondering turned to go, when lo, my skin
> Feels crumpled, and in glass my own face sees
> Itself all changed, scarred, careworn, white with years!

So far as derivative influences may in general be observed in the poets of the Systematic School and Period of Canadian Literature, Roberts, Lampman, and Carman are Hellenistic and impressionistic in feeling and thought. They were devoted to creating poetry that would delight the aesthetic senses and sensibilities. But Frederick George Scott is Hebraic in feeling and thought. He created poetry to satisfy the heart and the religious imagination, and to sustain and console the human spirit in its sojourn on earth. He achieved these ends simply yet beautifully. His poetry is pervaded with the most elemental and enduring ‘heart’ qualities. They give it such a direct and compelling human appeal as to win a significant and distinctive place for it in the authentic native and national poetry of Canada.

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The quotations in this chapter are from *A Lover’s Diary* and *Embers*, by Sir Gilbert Parker, (Copp, Clark Co., Limited: Toronto); and from *Poems*, by Frederick George Scott, (Constable & Co.: London).

CHAPTER XIV

# Minor Poets

THE TERM 'MINOR' DEFINED—ETHELWYN WETHERALD—JEAN BLEWETT—FRANCIS SHERMAN—A. E. S. SMYTHE—S. FRANCES HARRISON—ARTHUR STRINGER—PETER MCARTHUR—ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY.

IT is proper to distinguish Roberts, Lampman, Carman, Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott, Frederick George Scott, and Pauline Johnson as the 'major' poets of the First Renaissance in Canadian Literature. Though of necessity with them the writing of verse was in a sense an avocation, in another sense it was a vocation. They were systematic both in the writing and the quantitative publishing of it. Contemporary with them, but, for the most part, later in production and publishing, were other poets who wrote with beauty and distinction in poetic style. They followed the aesthetic and artistic ideals of the 'major' poets, but they were not as systematic as Roberts and his *confrères* in writing or in quantitative publishing. These are denoted in this work the 'minor' poets of the Systematic School or Period. But nothing invidious as to quality of verse is intended by the distinction. For a few of these so-called 'minor' poets of the Systematic Period wrote some poetry as fine in aesthetic substance and artistic finish as the poetry of Roberts and his colleagues. The term 'minor' is meant to distinguish these poets as being, first, *later*, for the most part, than Roberts and his *confrères*, and as being, secondly, *less eminent* than the early systematic group of Canadian poets. The number of these so-called minor or later poets is legion. They 'flourished' from 1887 to 1907, or from the publication of Roberts' *In Divers Tones* to the appearance of Robert Service's *Songs of a Sourdough* (the beginning of the Decadent Interim). Detailed appreciation of the minor poets of the Systematic Period would, therefore, require a volume by itself. Here we may only recall the salient names, and specially remark the verse, of some of the minor poets whose lyrical poetry is particularly representative or noteworthy, or has become genuinely popular.

Worthy of a place beside the major poets of the Systematic Period is Ethelwyn Wetherald. In 1895 she published *The House of the Trees and Other Poems*; in 1902, *Tangled in the Stars*; in 1904, *The Radiant Road* and in 1907, an edition of her collected poems, *The Last Robin*; *Lyrics and Sonnets*. Perhaps the outstanding aesthetic quality of her poetry is a tender, subdued, melancholy, spiritual grace, 'a grey-eyed loveliness,' which undoubtedly

derives from the characteristic pensiveness of her Quaker ancestry. But in all her verse, which is authentic poetry, she discloses pretty sentiment, reflective beauty, ingenious imagery, and fine craftsmanship. *The Hay Field*, which is Canadian in inspiration, setting, and color is an apt example of Ethelwyn Wetherald's art:—

With slender arms outstretching in the sun
  The grass lies dead;
The wind walks tenderly and stirs not one
  Frail, fallen head.

Of baby creepings through the April day
  Where streamlets wend,
Of child-like dancing on the breeze of May,
  This is the end.

No more these tiny forms are bathed in dew,
  No more they reach
To hold with leaves that shade them from the blue
  A whispered speech.

No more they part their arms and wreathe them close
  Again, to shield
Some love-full little nest—a dainty house
  Hid in a field.

For them no more the splendour of the storm,
  The fair delights
Of moon and star-shine, glimmering faint and warm
  On summer nights.

Their little lives they yield in summer death,
  And frequently
Across the field bereaved their dying breath
  Is brought to me.

A poet who has won a distinct and fixed place in the popular heart and imagination of Canadians is Jean Blewett. Her first volume, *Heart Songs*, appeared in 1897 and immediately won a wide popularity. This was increased by her next volume, *The Cornflower and Other Poems* (1906). Her Collected Poems were published in 1922. Jean Blewett is essentially a 'woman's poet.' By this is meant that she appeals to the domestic heart and the imagination, that she sings of the joys of home, the ways of children, the love of husband and wife. But Jean Blewett does this in an extraordinary way. She treats homely subjects indeed, but while she treats them in a homely or rather home-like way she does it with a simple and ingratiating sincerity and charm of sentiment and artistry which are quite her own and in the employment of which she is alone in Canada. If her poems deal with homely subjects, her artistry is by no means bourgeois. She rises and falls with the inherent dignity of her subject. But her human treatment of a homely subject never issues in vulgarity, or vivid 'vaudeville' verse. As an example of her genuine artistry

and dignity of treatment in a high or serious subject we quote her *Quebec*:—

> Quebec, the gray old city on the hill,
> Lives with a golden glory on her head,
> Dreaming throughout this hour so fair, so still,
> Of those days and her beloved dead.
>
> The doves are nesting in the cannons grim,
> The flowers bloom where once did run a tide
> Of crimson when the moon rose pale and dim
> Above a field of battle stretching wide.
>
> Methinks within her wakes a mighty glow
> Of pride in ancient times, her stirring past,
> The strife, the valour of the long ago
> Feels at her heart-strings. Strong and tall, and vast
> She lies, touched with the sunset's golden grace,
> A wondrous softness on her gray old face.

When her subject gives her a chance for sweep of imagination and for a pearly beauty of imagery, Jean Blewett rises brilliantly to her theme, as in *What Time the Morning Stars Arise*, a really splendid war poem commemorating the heroic deed of Lieutenant Reginald Warneford, aviator, who unassisted destroyed a German armed Zeppelin, containing 28 men, on June 7th, 1915. We quote the first and last stanzas:—

> Above him spreads the purple sky,
> Beneath him spreads the ether sea,
> And everywhere about him lie
> Dim ports of peace and mystery.
>
> • • • •
>
> He sees the white mists softly curl,
> He sees the moon drift pale and wan,
> Sees Venus climb the stars of pearl
> To hold her court of Love at dawn.

Jean Blewett is chiefly loved by the people for her *forte*—her sincere, simple singing of true love and faith, of childhood, and the field flowers, and the joys of the Canadian Spring and Winter. But, as a *genre* poet, she is gifted with a whimsical humor which is quite unique in the poetic literature of Canada. *For He was Scotch and So Was She* is a fetching example of Jean Blewett's humor and humorous treatment of a simple or homely subject and is to be found in many Canadian anthologies.

Francis Sherman, one of the truest and most individual poets that Canada has produced, is a relative of Charles G. D. Roberts and Bliss Carman. His literary output has been meagre, comprising only one regularly published volume, a small, thin booklet, *Matins* (1896), and three or four privately printed pamphlets of verse. But the quality is sufficient to fix his place in the company of the authentic Canadian poets of the First Renaissance.

Sherman's poetry shows a distinct tendency to mysticism. He was,

evidently, influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite School. But he had an independent individuality. He possessed, as a poet, eyes and feelings of his own; and could express what he saw and felt, with ready and confident artistry. The Pre-Raphaelite influence on Francis Sherman and his own natural gifts for individual expression are disclosed in *Between the Battles* (from *Matins*):—

Let us bury him here
Where the maples are!
He is dead,
And he died thanking God that he fell with the fall of the leaf and the year.

Where the hillside is sheer,
Let it echo our tread
Whom he led;
Let us follow as gladly as ever we followed who never knew fear.

Ere he died, they had fled;
Yet they heard his last cheer
Ringing clear,—
When we lifted him up, he would fain have pursued, but grew dizzy instead.

Break his sword and his spear!
Let his last prayer be said
By the bed
We have made underneath the wet wind in the maple trees moaning so drear:

'O Lord God, by the red
Sullen end of the year
That is here,
We beseech Thee to guide us and strengthen our swords till his slayers be dead!'

Many of Sherman's poems have the 'great out-of-doors' world in Canada as their theme, and are marked by grave, meditative beauty, disclosing, on his part, intimate communing with and brooding on Nature's moods. These qualities of Francis Sherman's mind and art are observed in the following sonnet, quoted from his *In Memorabilia Mortis*:—

I marked the slow withdrawal of the year,
Out on the hills the scarlet maple shone—
The glad, first herald of triumphal dawn.
A robin's song fell through the silence—clear
As long ago it rang when June was here.
Then, suddenly, a few grey clouds were drawn
Across the sky; and all the song was gone,
And all the gold was quick to disappear.
That day the sun seemed loth to come again;
And all day long the low wind spoke of rain,
Far-off, beyond the hills; and moaned, like one
Wounded, among the pines; as though the Earth,
Knowing some giant grief had come to birth,
Had wearied of the Summer and the Sun.

A rare spirit and exquisite craftsman, as a poet, is Albert Ernest Stafford Smythe. He was born in Ireland in 1861. He is Keltic through and through; and

because he is Keltic in his reactions to the universe, in his perceptions of spiritual meanings in all things, he divines God in men and God in Nature, or God *as* man and God as Nature—spiritual presences everywhere. In a word, Albert E. S. Smythe exemplifies in his genius and art, as notably and profoundly as Lampman in his, but in a different way, what Wordsworth called *natural piety*. Smythe's spiritual perceptions of divinity everywhere rise to a refined mysticism which he expresses with a 'white beauty' in exquisitely finished verse. As contrasted with other Canadian mystical poets Smythe is the poet of the *Cosmic* Spirit and Beauty.

In 1891 he published *Poems; Grave and Gay*, and in 1923, *The Garden of the Sun*. A sonnet (*The Seasons of the Gods*) and a lyric (*Anastasis*) from the second volume suffice to disclose his qualities in his role as the poet of the Cosmic Spirit and Beauty. As a sonneteer, Smythe is not surpassed by any of his older or younger contemporaries. *The Seasons of the Gods* is lofty in conception, noble in thought, rich in naturalistic imagery, dulcet in verbal melody, and perfect in formal artistry. It is music of a soul 'in tune with the Infinite':—

I sat with May upon a midnight hill
Wrapped in a dusk of unremembered years
And thought on buried April—on the tears
And shrouds of March, and Youth's dead daffodil
All withered on a Mound of Spring. And still
The earth moved sweetly in her sleep, the Spheres
Wrought peace about her path, and for her ears
Climbed the high music of their blended will.

The God who dreamed the Earth, as I this frame
That makes me thrall to death and coward of birth—
Dreamed He not March below some vanished Moon—
Under an earlier Heaven's auroral flame
The cosmic April flowering into mirth
Of May and joy of Universal June?

With what lyrical eloquence, subdued, yet direct and compelling, Smythe calls the soul, in pure poetry, to achieve its spiritual destiny, in this lyric, simple in diction and structure, but sublimated, in thought:—

What shall it profit a man
To gain the world—if he can—
And lose his soul, as they say
In their uninstructed way?

The whole of the world in gain;
The whole of your soul! Too vain
You judge yourself in the cost.
'Tis you—not your soul—is lost.

Your soul! If you only knew—
You would reach to the Heaven's blue,

To the heartmost centre sink,
Ere you severed the silver link,

To be lost in your petty lust
And scattered in cosmic dust.
For your soul is a Shining Star
Where the Throne and the Angels are.

And after a thousand years,
With the salve of his bottled tears,
Your soul shall gather again
From the dust of a world of pain

The frame of a slave set free—
The man that you ought to be,
The man you may be to-night
If you turn to the Valley of Light.

The number of women poets in the period under review is noteworthy. Along with Ethelwyn Wetherald and Jean Blewett must be mentioned appreciatively the names and poetry of Virna Sheard, Helena Coleman, Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald (sister of C. G. D. Roberts), Helen M. Merrill, Annie Campbell Huestis, Agnes Maule Machar (*pseud.* 'Fidelis'), Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, Alma Frances McCollum, and S. Frances Harrison (*pseud.* 'Seranus'). Their outstanding contemporaries amongst the men were Arthur Stringer and Peter McArthur. It is impossible to review in detail the poetry of all these lyrists. They followed the ideals of the older systematic group as regards original inspiration and artistic craftsmanship. But the work of some of them may briefly be remarked.

In 1891 S. Frances Harrison published *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de Lis*, a volume of really poetical verse. She is, however, more to be noted as the compiler of the first noteworthy anthology of Canadian verse (*A Canadian Birthday Book*, 1887), which is distinguished by the fact that it contains a poem by the Indian Chief Tecumseh, the first French-Canadian poem, and some of the earliest poems of Bliss Carman (a series of quatrains). Arthur Stringer is a lyrical poet and a poetic dramatist. His art in the latter respect is appreciated in another chapter. In 1907 he published *The Woman in the Rain and Other Poems*, and in 1911, *Irish Poems*. His lyrical poetry in general is distinguished by a warm humanity and by careful craftsmanship. But he achieved a special distinction with his poems in 'Irishy.' Many of them have been set to music, and, amongst Canadian-born poets, his only rival in that field is Sir Gilbert Parker. By themselves Stringer's poems in 'Irishy' are a novel and real, if not important, contribution to the *genre* and humorous poetry of Canada. In 1907 Peter McArthur ('The Sage of Ekfrid') published *The Prodigal and Other Poems*. He is never a mere aesthete in form, but he is a rare Nature and humorous poet—with the lightest and happiest touch in both departments, as in his *Corn-Planting* and in *To the Birds*. He humanizes

Nature in a way altogether different from other Canadian poets, perhaps whimsically but always with an intimate, colloquial quality of diction, and a piquancy which makes his Nature poetry spiritually refreshing, even to formalists and dilettanti.

Properly Isabel Ecclestone Mackay belongs to the minor poets of the Systematic Period. For in 1904 she published her first volume of verse, *Between the Lights*. But with that, she turned to writing fiction, and did not publish any books of verse till the appearance of *The Shining Ship and Other Poems* (1919) and *Fires of Driftwood* (1923). Her first venture in verse was not better than passable or than good journalistic verse. But in *Fires of Driftwood* she disclosed a real mastery of form, color, and music, along with a spiritual sentiment which is new in Canadian poetry. She is occupied most with the vicissitudes and meaning of life, but occasionally she paints objective Nature with winning color and music. It is, however, in her poetry *of* childhood (rather than *for* children), as in *The Shining Ship*, that Isabel Ecclestone Mackay most displays original genius and has achieved genuine distinction. The poems in *The Shining Ship* are marked by the rarest of psychological gifts in a poet—insight into the real heart and mind and imagination of children, and by a diction and phrasing which appeal to the child mind as immediately and as winningly as do the child poems of Eugene Field and R. L. Stevenson. In fact, as Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verse* is to English Literature, so Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's *A Shining Ship and Other Poems* is to Canadian Literature.

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Sources of quotations in this chapter:

*The Hayfield* is found in *The Last Robin*, by Ethelwyn Wetherald (Ryerson Press: Toronto).

Quotations from Jean Blewett's work, in *Jean Blewett's Poems* (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto).

From Francis Sherman's *Matins* (Copeland and Day: Boston).

From Albert E. S. Smythe's *Grave and Gay*; and from *The Garden of the Sun* (Macmillan Co.: Toronto).

CHAPTER XV

# Elegiac Monodists

THE ELEGIAC MONODISTS OF CANADA—CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS—BLISS CARMAN—WILFRED CAMPBELL—DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT—WILLIAM MARSHALL—JAMES DE MILLE.

CANADIAN Literature is rich—not relatively but absolutely—in Dirges, Epicedes, Elegies, Threnodies, and Elegiac Monodies. That Canadian Elegiac Monodies, or long 'In Memoriam' poems inspired by the death of a real, not a mythical or imagined, person, have genuine distinction, is indisputable. In number they equal the monodies of English Literature; and in manner, in variety of form, and in several qualitative excellences they surpass the monodies of American Literature. Modern English literature possesses five great threnodies or monodies; Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Arnold's *Thyrsis*, and Swinburne's *Ave atque Vale*. American Literature has to its credit two fine and noble monodies: Emerson's *Threnody* (for his son) and Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (for Lincoln). Canadian Literature boasts of six threnodies or monodies, which all enhance New World Literature and at least two of which are a distinct contribution to the elegiac poetry of English Literature. The Canadian monodies are Roberts' *Ave!* (to Shelley), Carman's *A Seamark* (to Stevenson), Campbell's *Bereavement of the Fields* (to Lampman), Duncan Campbell Scott's *Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris* (a Canadian painter), William E. Marshall's *Brookfield* (to R. R. MacLeod), and James De Mille's *Behind the Veil* (which is sort of Dantean 'Vision' of the Beloved in Heaven).

That Canadian poets should have essayed the Elegiac Monody and have excelled in it is consistent with the genuine, the essential mood, the spiritual attitudes of the Canadian people. For while the literary traditions, forms, and methods of Canadian poets are English, the bases of Canadian culture and civilization are much more New England and Scots than English, or, in short, Puritan and Calvinistic. It was as natural for the 19th century native-born Canadian, as it was for an 18th century New England Puritan and Loyalist and a Scots Calvinist, to be preoccupied with thoughts of 'otherworldliness.' The meaning of life and death is almost a *congenial* subject of reflection to the characteristic Canadian. Fortunately the *habitat* of the Canadian mind, Nature in Canada, recalled Canadian poets from exclusive occupation with spiritual prosperities and great departures to thoughts of 'the soul's inherent high

magnificence' in daily mundane life and to the joys, consolations, spiritual transports, and peace which Nature affords the distracted human spirit. Another factor saved Canadian poets from moralistic preachments when they were moved to express in verse their sorrow over some great departure. They had the example of the form and color of the English elegies, from Milton to Swinburne, to save them from chill gravity and barren moralism. The Canadian monodists, on their own account, also loved fine technic in verse, and strove to achieve it according to their capacity. It was therefore natural that Canadian poets not only should essay the elegiac monody but also write that species of poetry with genuine distinction.

The subjects of all Canadian elegiac monodies are either presented against a background of Nature or are suffused with 'the color of life' and the beauty of Nature. The first, and in many ways the noblest, Canadian monody is Charles G. D. Roberts' *Ave!* (sub-titled *An Ode for the Centenary of Shelley's Birth*). It is a poem of thirty-one ten-line stanzas, in decasyllabics, closing with a rimed couplet, iambic pentameter. The poem is not so much, as Roberts called it, an 'ode' as an elegiac monody, with the subject presented against a pastoral background. That it was written ostensibly to commemorate Shelley's birth, not his death, must not cause us to conceive the poem as other than an elegy. The centenary of Shelley's birth occurred in 1892, when Roberts was 32 years of age. Naturally he seized the opportunity to memorialize in verse the spirit of one of his masters, but he also laments the passing of Shelley and his influence, after the manner of the true elegiac monody. The poem divides not strophically but symphonically. The first theme is a picture of the naturalistic beauties of the Tantramar marshes and the tides that rush in over it from the Bay of Fundy, and the influences that Nature about Tantramar had on Roberts as a poet. He develops this theme by marking how 'strangely akin' Tantramar's marshes seem

to him whose birth
One hundred years ago
With fiery succor to the ranks of song
Defied the ancient gates of wrath and wrong;

and how, like these marshes, with the incoming and the outgoing floods of Fundy's tides, Shelley's

compassionate breast,
Wherein abode all dreams of love and peace,
Was tortured with perpetual unrest.
Now loud with flood, now languid with release,
Now poignant with the lonely ebb, the strife
Of tides from the salt sea of human pain
That hiss along the perilous coasts of life
Beat in his eager brain;
But all about the tumult of his heart

Stretched the great calm of his celestial art.

A few stanzas are devoted, as they say in symphonic music, to the ‘working out’ of this similitude in all its aspects. Then in stanza XXII Roberts formally announces the elegiac theme as such:—

Lament, Lerici, mourn the world’s loss!
Mourn that pure light of song extinct at noon!

Roberts develops the lyrical genius of Shelley in eight stanzas, and in the final two stanzas returns to the original theme of the Tantramar marshes where on the inner ear of the Canadian poet

once more
Resounds the ebb with destiny in its roar.

It was remarked, in a preceding chapter, that we miss the ethical note in Roberts’ genius and poetry. Here is the exception. In his *Ave!* he became morally or religiously, as well as imaginatively, sublimated. In that poem he treats life and death with the moral beauty and significance of his exemplars and models, Shelley’s *Adonais*, Arnold’s *Thyrsis*, and Swinburne’s *Ave atque Vale*. In form and substance Roberts’ *Ave!* is a true elegiac monody.

But is it a great poem? Fault has been found with it on the side of structure or coherency. The poem appears coherent when it is remembered that the structure is symphonic rather than strophic. For though the poem begins with a Canadian setting, which on the face of it is as far away as possible from Shelley and Shelley’s England where he was born and the Italy where he died, it is the thought of the Canadian marshes and the floods and unrest of the tides that suggests to Roberts the inner spirit and genius and life and death of Shelley. So that naturally Roberts passes from the Canadian setting and its suggestions to the subject proper of his poem, namely, Shelley; then to memorializing Shelley’s genius and lamenting his passing, and, finally, back to the Canadian setting which suggested the whole poem. Surely that is coherent logic, unity in variety of structure!

Nor is there any real contradiction between the diction and imagery of the poem and the high magnificence of the soul which the poem commemorates. The ‘properties,’ of course, are not classical—heroes and nymphs, and all the mythical personages of the Greek pastoral poets. There is genuine spiritual dignity in the Canadian setting of the *Ave!*—the atmosphere and color of the grassy Canadian flatlands, and tides, and mists, and air, and life, and sky. The poem, too, is in the grand manner and is marked by a spiritual sweep and lyrical eloquence which convey to the heart and the imagination of the reader the sense of profound emotion and of sincerity on the part of the poet. So that, in spite of alleged structural and dictional faults, Roberts’ *Ave!* is distinguished by sensuous beauty and splendor, by imaginative sweep, by emotional

intensity and moral and spiritual dignity. But above all it is, as a pastoral elegy or monody, much more Canadian than English. As such, it is a really fine and distinctive contribution to Canadian creative literature. If it is not a great poem, it is a magnificent, compelling, and noble achievement in great poetry—a poem which surpasses any monody in American Literature and which indubitably takes an important status amongst the elegiac monodies of England.

In 1895 Bliss Carman published *A Seamark*[1] (sub-titled *A Threnody for Robert Louis Stevenson*). It is a poem of thirty-eight stanzas in rimed iambic tetrameter. It is all in the inimitable lyric manner of Carman, and commemorates Stevenson as 'the master of the roving kind.' Altiloquence is never a quality of Carman's poetry, as it is of Roberts.' Subtlety in simplicity is the formula of Carman's genius. And he will color all his homely or simple images with the most apt felicity of phrase and the most insinuating verbal melody. For this reason, some miss the high spiritual, mystical, and religious note in poems which are even more sublimated, though less grandiloquent, than Roberts' verse. On the face of *A Seamark*, it seems as if Carman, in commemorating the death of Stevenson 'as the master of the roving kind,' composed a colorful musical lyric, but not a highly spiritualized poem. How simple or homely, and yet how felicitous and colorful, are the images in Carman's musical lines, announcing the death of Stevenson on the island of Vailima:—

> Our restless loved adventurer,
> On secret orders come to him,
> Has slipped his cable, cleared the reef,
> And melted on the white sea-rim.

The hasty reader does not suspect or surmise the deeper meaning that is to come. But Carman and Stevenson were kin of mind and heart, and their kinship was a kinship of the love of searching out the haunts and ways of the joy and beauty that are on the face and in the heart of Nature. So that these master rovers are not careless, irresponsible vagabonds, but are spiritual nomads with a spiritual function and bent on a divine errand. Thus does Carman magnify their office:—

> O all you hearts about the world
> In whom the truant gypsy blood,
> Under the frost of this pale time,
> Sleeps like the daring sap and flood
>
> That dream of April and reprieve!
> You whom the haunted vision drives,
> Incredulous of home and ease,
> *Perfection's lovers* all your lives!

What it was given to Carman to discern in the universe was the eternal

meaning of youth and to hear the ever-young voice of earth singing in the heart of man and in the earth, in everything, and to be himself the lyric voice of the world. Stevenson was also such a lyric voice of earth. Carman, then, does highly spiritualize his subject when he first presents Stevenson in the manner of the outward aspect by which he was commonly conceived, a restless loved adventurer, who when he died was laid down, as Carman puts it in novel and arresting paradox:—

> Beyond the turmoil of renown,

and, next, discloses the inner meaning of the 'wander-biddings' that were in the soul of Stevenson who, even in death, still kept

> The journey-wonder on his face.

For when Stevenson died, men sorrowed and surmised not why they grieved. But Carman in *A Seamark* reveals why. Men thought a prince of joy had passed forever. But Carman discloses the higher spiritual truth:—

> He 'was not born for age.' Ah no,
> For everlasting youth is his!
> And part of the lyric of the earth
> With spring and leaf and blade he is.

In form, and in musical, colorful, simple yet subtle, spiritualization of the meaning and value of men in whom the lyric spirit of earth is supreme and vocal, there is not another elegiac monody in English like, or comparable to, Carman's *A Seamark*. It, too, like Roberts' *Ave!* enhances both the quality and quantity of the Canadian and the English elegy.

Wilfred Campbell was a myriad-minded man and had an inherited Keltic imagination which felt acutely the magic and mystery of earth and existence. He conceived, most beautifully and nobly, the passing of Archibald Lampman not as a bereavement suffered by mere persons but rather by the great and constant 'companion' of Lampman, namely, Nature. With a peculiar and lovely sense of the poetic significance of death, Campbell ennobled the spirit of Lampman, and perpetuated the meaning of his poetry, in an elegiac monody which bears the felicitous title *Bereavement of the Fields*.

The poem is in a seven-lined pentameter stanza, and is infused with Canadian Nature-color throughout. The diction and the structure are simple, and there is no attempt at sublimated imagination. The poem is rather in the subdued and gentle manner of Lampman himself. That is to say, there is a gentle melancholy running through the poem, but the melancholy is relieved by a simple spiritual beauty which conveys the rare essence of the spirit of Lampman, who passed from earth:—

> Leaving behind him, like a summer shower,
> A fragrance of earth's beauty, and the chime

Of gentle and imperishable rhyme.

If poetry can be accepted as literary criticism, then Campbell has estimated better than the best prose critic the significance and worth of Lampman as a poet and his place in the company of the great:—

Outside this prison-house of all our tears,
Enfranchised from our sorrow and our wrong,
Beyond the failure of our days and years,
Beyond the burden of our saddest song,
He moves with those whose music filled his ears,
And claimed his gentle spirit from the throng,—
Wordsworth, Arnold, Keats, high masters of his song.

Campbell's threnody is simple, sensuous, and impassioned, without being impressionistic and rhetorical. It is a sincere and noble affirmation of the supremacy of the spirit of beauty in the world, wherein, as Lampman's exemplar, Keats, once said, imperishably:—

Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.

Altogether in another form and with a fresh and novel poetic conception and impressive artistry, Duncan Campbell Scott wrote his *Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris*[2]. Scott's art is singularly informed by a color and beauty derived from his intimate and exquisite appreciation of the fine arts, especially music and painting. More than any other Canadian poet, Scott is the 'artist in words.' He is concerned above all things to employ poetic diction and imagery with the same love of refined expressiveness and emotional nuance as inspired such musical composers or tone-painters as Ravel, Debussy, and MacDowell, and such painters as Constable, Watteau, and Monet. Or to borrow from musical criticism, Scott loves his performance, his executant artistry with words and imagery, more than he loves his poetic ideas.

Edmund Morris was a Canadian painter and his spirit perceived in Canadian Nature and in the Indian aborigines in Canada something which no other painter had perceived or attempted to envisage. Scott and Morris were companions and kindred spirits—the one an artist in words; and the other an artist in pigments. It was natural, then, that Scott, on the tragic death of his friend, should commemorate the loss which both the living friend and the country suffered by the passing of Edmund Morris. But it was impossible for Scott to write any conventionalized elegiac monody. Under inner compulsion, he wrote of life and death with all his original genius for conceiving, as he phrases his mode of conception,

Meanings hid in mist;

and with all his gifts in exquisite craftsmanship:—

Silvered in quiet rime and with rare art.

Scott's *Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris* is in some respects unique, but particularly in form, and its simple, intimate, direct address to the spirit. It is not a pastoral elegy in the third person but a dramatic monologue, or an epistle in verse from one spirit to another. There is nothing like it in all English Literature, not even in Browning. But intimate, even familiar, and colloquial as it is, the poem is radiant with a 'white beauty' of imagery and chaste artistry. More notably still, it subdues the turbulence of our souls in the presence of a great loss by death, transports the imagination to the mount of spiritual vision, refines faith, sustains hope, and fills the spirit with a serene peace. It leaves upon us imperishably the inward sense that 'it is not death to die':—

> Just as the fruit of a high sunny garden,
> Grown mellow with autumnal sun and rain,
> Shrivelled with ripeness, splits to the rich heart
> And loses a gold kernel to the mould,
> So the old world, hanging long in the sun,
> And deep enriched with effort and with love,
> Shall, in motions of maturity,
> Wither and part, and the kernel of it all
> Escape, a lovely wraith of spirit, to latitudes
> Where the appearance, throated like a bird,
> Winged with fire and bodied all with passion,
> Shall flame with presage, not of tears, but joy.

All through this elegiac monody there is a singularly sweet humanity and yet in it are heard the constant overtones of 'the soul's inherent high magnificence,' and the whole is suffused or informed with the color of Canadian Nature and character and life. So that the poem is a novel and important contribution to the elegiac monody in English.

In another style and with another but winning effect upon the heart and the imagination, is William Edward Marshall's monody *Brookfield*. It is a poem of forty-five stanzas in the Spenserian form. Structurally viewed, however, his *Brookfield* is considerably an achievement in that form. Its theme is the heart and mind of a simple man, a friend of the poet, who taught the poet to love communion with the simple creatures and the life of Nature, and to observe in Nature, not the garment, but the very spiritual presence of God. There is no metaphysic of Nature in *Brookfield*. There is but the apprehension of divinity in the little wild creatures and in the streams and hills, and in the mists, and in all the varied life of the universal mother. Marshall's master was Keats, and while *Brookfield* cannot critically be called an example of sensuous impressionism, yet it is warmly colored with pigmentation from the palette of Nature. But the loveliest strands running through the warp and woof of the poem are those of love and the heavenly vision. The sweet, gentle, even tender, Nature-quality as well as the spiritual note in the poem, may be apprehended from the following stanza:—

Ah, he was richly dowered of the earth!
The grain of sand, the daisy in the sod,
Awoke his heart; and early he went forth,
Through field and wood, with young eyes all abroad;
And saw the nesting birds and beck and nod
Of little creatures running wild and free,
(Which know not that they know, yet are of God)
And kept his youth, and grew in sympathy,
And loved his fellows more, and had love's victory.

Literary critics in the United States, in reviewing Marshall's *Brookfield* signalized both its sensuous and spiritual beauty as extraordinary, and in line with the quality of the best English elegiac monodies. In Canada it received high praise from Sir Andrew MacPhail, who sponsored it by publishing it in *The University Magazine*, and from Dr. Archibald MacMechan. 'No such poem,' said the latter, 'has appeared in Canada since Roberts' *Ave!* In dignity and depth of feeling the *Ave!*, De Mille's *Behind the Veil*, and *Brookfield* stand together—a noble trio.' Marshall's *Brookfield* is Canadian in subject and setting and is indeed a beautiful and noble application of ideas to life—a genuinely original contribution to the creative poetic literature of Canada.

James De Mille's *Behind the Veil*, published posthumously in 1892, is a kind of elegiac monody. The poet himself does not so sub-title it. He designates it simply as 'A Poem.' Whether the 'Loved One' who has been lost to the poet was a real person or an imagined companion of the spirit, it is impossible to surmise from the poem. But the poem itself is concerned with life and death and yearning for union with the Beloved in Heaven, and is thus a spiritualized elegy. Essentially, however, it is a reflective or philosophical poem. If it is reflective, it is also highly melodramatic both in substance and in form. Part of its melodramatic quality derives from its metrical structure which suggests Poe's *Raven*. It is written in stanzas of five lines in trochaic tetrameter—a form totally unsuited to its intended high spiritual dignity of theme. A taste of its quality is afforded from the following stanzas:—

Through the darkness rose a vision,
Where beneath the night I kneeled,
Dazzling bright with hues Elysian—
Congregated motes of glory on an ebon field
And a form from out that glory to my spirit stood revealed.

'Son of Light'—I murmured lowly—
'All my heart is known to thee—
All my longing and my yearning for the Loved One lost to me—
May these eyes again behold her?'—and the Shape said, 'Come and see.'

It is impossible to read one hundred and twenty-five stanzas or 625 lines like the preceding, in which the feminine endings make fixed caesural pauses that prevent enjambement and thus inhibit rhythmical variety, without the

reader's feeling himself in the realm of the musically melodramatic. So that the high seriousness of the poem suffers a loss in impressiveness because of the metre and rhythm of the poem. It is plain that De Mille was not an adroit verbal musician. The spiritual dignity and seriousness of the poem can be commended, but on the whole, it is not poetry, and is not a significant contribution to the Canadian monody.

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[1] *A Seamark* is found in the collection *Ballads and Lyrics*, by Bliss Carman (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto).

[2] *Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris* is from *Lundy's Lane and Other Poems* (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto).

CHAPTER XVI

# Novelists

THE FICTIONISTS OF THE SYSTEMATIC SCHOOL—THE HISTORICAL ROMANCERS—LIGHTHALL—SAUNDERS—PARKER—MARQUIS—MACLENNAN AND McILWRAITH—AGNES C. LAUT—WILFRED CAMPBELL—CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS. THE ROMANCERS OF ANIMAL PSYCHOLOGY—THOMPSON SETON—ROBERTS—SAUNDERS—FRASER. THE EVANGELICAL ROMANCERS—RALPH CONNOR—R. E. KNOWLES.

## *I. The Historical Romancers.*

WHEN William Kirby published, in 1877, *The Golden Dog*, he led the way in Canadian historical romance. Major John Richardson had written historical novels years before, but Richardson's material was largely first hand, from contact with a life and with a setting similar to what he described. We might argue that Kirby 'discovered' to the fictionists who were to come after him the wealth of material that lay in the unknown and almost forgotten Canadian past, for he founded his work on Canadian history and infused it with Canadian incident and color; and although Mrs. Leprohon's romances had a considerable vogue both in English and in French, the circulation of her novels was chiefly local and not anything like so widespread as that of Kirby's single masterpiece. Yet it is problematic just how much the historical or romantic fiction of the Post-Confederation period (beginning, say, in 1888) owes to Kirby and how much it owes to a stirring impulse of nationality. That impulse produced tangible evidences in our literature because of a conscious realization of national ideals and a sensing of the spirit of a courageous and romantic past in a country that, superficially viewed, had barely reached the stage of 'growing pains.'

In 1888 William Douw Lighthall published *The Young Seigneur*, a socio-political study of life and institutions in Canada, which according to the author himself; 'arose out of my ideas as a young man concerning an ideal of Canadian nationality to which I gave the color of this province (Quebec) as I knew it in the old Seigneuries.' Possibly the 'thesis' overpowered the romantic or novel elements, for this book is not regarded as equal in literary merit to its successors. *The False Chevalier* (1898) was a historical romance set partly in Canada and partly in France. It is an attempt to depict an actual romance found in a packet of documents at the house of the De Léry's at Boucherville near Montreal. It is rich in atmosphere and color both of the old land and the new

and is filled with engaging incident, but lacks somewhat in effective novel construction, and in convincing characterization. It is in *The Master of Life* (1910) that Dr. Lighthall has produced a unique and masterly piece of fiction. With Hiawatha as its hero, it is purely aboriginal in setting and color and exhibits the author's wide knowledge of Indian history and archaeology. It was the result of Dr. Lighthall's sympathies with the Iroquois Indians, derived originally from the ancient family records of the Schuylers (from whom the Lighthalls are descended). They, as leading British officers and statesmen, had much to do with keeping the Iroquois steadfast to the British Crown. Although the impetus to its writing originated in this way, *The Master of Life*, in its development is an example of rare constructive imagination and is pervaded with a richly poetic interpretation that apprehends nature as filled with spiritual presences and nature's beauty as the garment of the Great Spirit.

The year 1889 saw the publication of a work of pure romance in *My Spanish Sailor* by (Margaret) Marshall Saunders. This was a love story of the sea in which a Nova Scotian girl and a Spanish sea-captain are the leading characters. Again in *Rose à Charlitte* (1898), afterwards published as *Rose of Acadie*, Miss Saunders essays romance, colored, it is true, by a seemingly historic atmosphere, but yet rather a record than a history, for the Acadian habits and customs which one might think of as belonging to a past age were current among the people in the Bay of St. Mary settlement when visited by Miss Saunders in the summer of 1897. Here the descendants of the Acadians had lived apart from the English and preserved their language, traditions, customs, and their unique manner of life. 'The elements of strength and weakness of the people, their patient devotion, their openness, simplicity and generosity, their love of gossip and light-heartedness, with the shadows of the tragic past brooding over them, are all caught in a true perspective.' Thus it is not until the year 1896 that we come upon a truly legitimate successor to *The Golden Dog*. In that year appeared Gilbert Parker's *Seats of the Mighty*, which became one of the most popular of his novels. The story has a strong and fairly unified and coherent plot. It exhibits Parker's powers of characterization and presents to us a gallery of vividly limned historic portraits—Robert Moray, Doltaire, Gabord, De la Darant, Bigot, Vaudreuil, Montcalm, Wolfe—in the main true to type, human, and universal. There is not, however, an unerring accuracy in atmosphere and color and characterization. The writer was not sufficiently saturated with his subject and occasional touches of modernity and tinges of contemporary color subtract from the excellence of artistry.

But Parker's fiction really began with his short stories of 'Pretty Pierre' in 1890. It is related that upon coming to London from Australia he brought to Archibald Forbes, then noted as a war correspondent, a collection of stories. Forbes' comment was: 'You have the best collection of titles I ever saw.'

Parker took his manuscripts home and promptly burned them. A day or so afterwards, while passing a shop window filled with armor and other curios, he noticed the leather coat and fur cap of a trapper. He went at once to his room and began to write *The Patrol of the Cypress Hills*, the first story in the series *Pierre and His People*. These stories dealt with the life of early Western Canada and were followed from time to time by other volumes: *A Romany of the Snows*, published in England under the title, *An Adventurer of the North*, picturing French-Canadians in the woods and rural settlements; *The Lane That Had No Turning*, stories of that Quebec settlement which is the background of the novel *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*; *Cumner's Son*, sketches of life in the South Seas and in Australia; *Donovan Pasha*, tales of Egypt and the Soudan; *Northern Lights*, more modern stories of Western Canada.

Parker became a prolific writer of novels and his settings range from Canada and the South Seas to England, Egypt, and South Africa. The treatment varies from an almost immediate transcript of near present conditions as in *The Judgment House* to the re-creation of the historic past in *The Battle of the Strong*, from the delicate imaginative romance in *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*, to a pathological study in *The Right of Way*; he gives us a combination of melodrama and mysticism in *The Weavers*, the revealment of innate greatness of character in *The Translation of a Savage*, while in *You Never Know Your Luck*, he cleverly expands a tenuous short story thread to the full proportions of a novel.

Besides *The Seats of the Mighty*, the novels of Gilbert Parker that will be likely to command most attention because of intrinsic worth are: *The Right of Way*, *The Battle of the Strong*, *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*, *The Weavers*, and *The Judgment House*. *The Right of Way* is a compelling study in abnormal psychology. There may be improbabilities in the development of the story of Charley Steele, but there is a living force in his character and he stands forth as one of the realities of fiction. *The Battle of the Strong* depicts the Channel Islands in the eighteenth century, and was written in a mood of defiance. Parker was going to get away from a Canadian background. He would write no more novels of Canada. But, as Sherlock Holmes 'returned,' so Canada was too much a part of Gilbert Parker's life to remain out of his writings, and he found, himself unable to get away from it for very long. *The Battle of the Strong*, however, was based on a thorough and sympathetic study of the country and people of the Channel Islands and the characters and incidents are colored with a simple, engaging humor. *When Valmond Came to Pontiac* is a delightful excursion into romance in which the Napoleonic tradition shows its influence in a little out-of-the-way village of Quebec. It has much of the charm of Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire* and is structurally the nearest to artistic perfection of any of Parker's novels. *The Weavers* rises to a more

Imperialistic sweep, dealing as it does with internal and international politics of Egypt, while *The Judgment House*, a novel of London and South Africa, is his greatest literary conception; in it his imaginative vision has apprehended big interests, big business, big ideals, big expansion, Imperial ends, conceived and carried out by big men, struggling and striving and achieving in a big world. His more recent novels, although some of them, as *The Money Master*, show considerable skill in characterization, are largely novels of incident and of accidental circumstance and have not the broad grasp of men and events nor the innate emotional depth and power of those just outlined.

The outstanding qualities of Parker's work are:—

(1) The strong dramatic quality. It is no surprise to us to learn that he was in his college days a most enthusiastic Shakespeare student and an 'elocutionist' of some reputation. The power to portray dramatic situations is exhibited in his very earliest writings. One need but open almost any of his novels and read the first paragraph to find that one is projected into an imaginative world of action, although the story may begin with a sentence of pure narration or description.

(2) Skill in descriptive characterization. How effectively action, explanation, and description are combined to make his characters vivid, cannot be better exhibited than in the introduction of Valmond in *When Valmond Came to Pontiac*. Yet there is a tendency to cast some of his characters in moulds, so that they become types rather than individuals. 'Donovan Pasha' is but 'Pretty Pierre' amid new conditions and circumstances. 'Krool' of *The Judgment House* recalls forcibly 'Soolsby' of *The Weavers*.

(3) His versatility is apparent from the survey already made of his works. And to the list of poems, short stories, and novels, might be added his book on the Great War—*The World in the Crucible*—and his articles on agricultural questions and land settlement.

(4) His breadth of literary canvas. It may seem a simple matter to place one part of a story in England and another in Africa, or part in Canada and another part in the South Seas, but it requires a very broad grasp of material and a wide knowledge of people, and a keen sense of atmosphere to do it effectually. He has been described as the product of the British Empire, and there is little doubt that the breadth of his experience is the basis of his breadth of literary vision.

(5) A sense of the supernatural and touches of mysticism are consequent to his strong dramatic powers and show in many of his short stories, e.g. *The Tall Master* and *The Flood* in *Pierre and His People*, and in some of his novels, notably in *The Weavers*.

Summing up our impressions of Sir Gilbert Parker, we find that he has a breadth of vision not excelled or even equalled by any other Canadian writer. Comparing him with Norman Duncan, we see that Duncan is a finer workman but in a narrower range. Parker comes close to taking a place with the front rank modern British novelists and yet he does not quite do it. Why? Perhaps because of the fact that a man's excellences are very often the cause of his defects. He is nothing if not dramatic. He reaches always for the spectacular climax where nature is often satisfied to take things quietly. He has just a little too much of a tendency to play to the gallery. He verges nearer to the melodramatic than do his contemporary British novelists—in fact, he frequently falls to it. There is not enough innate value in his incidents, there is more stage play.

Yet on the whole, Parker's work is fresher. There is more of the clear air of the out-of-doors. There is not the morbidity of tone, nor the feeling of helplessness that is found in the fiction of Hardy, Meredith, Bennett, Galsworthy, Philpotts, Trevena and other leaders of the modern British novelists. We can forgive Parker many lapses because at the end—the total effect is the feeling that the good comes uppermost. Take even Pierre, half-breed gambler, a sort of half-Ishmaelite, yet with a sense of fair-play, a chivalry, a kindness that never leaves him. And so nearly all his characters and most of his books inspire us finally with divine lessons of hope and encouragement.

The historical romances of Charles G. D. Roberts—*The Forge in the Forest* (1896), *A Sister to Evangeline*, *The Prisoner of Mademoiselle*, *The Raid From Beauséjour*—while they are Canadian in setting and color, do not show the same imaginative reach and the same emotional power as the romances of Parker. The themes and settings of Roberts' romances are rather narrow. They are concerned chiefly with minor incidents of the early history of Acadia, or we might say rather with a minor treatment of these incidents, for the historical episodes about which these stories are centered were, no doubt, of themselves important enough to the early French colony. The difficulty is that, despite the skill of Roberts in depicting local color and reproducing atmosphere in exquisite smooth flowing prose, he evinces little gift of characterization and the personages of the story are more or less mechanical puppets speaking by the will and with the words of the showman.

Somewhat unique in early romantic fiction is *The Forest of Bourg Marie*, by S. Frances Harrison ('Seranus'), first published in 1898. The bygone civilization of the old seigneuries casts its glamor over a newer and more sophisticated Quebec, in its turn influenced by the hectic glitter of great cities of 'the States,' to which were attracted restless youth of French-Canada. Thus Mikel Caron, forest-ranger for the county of Yamachiche, links to the present the past grandeur of the Seigniory of Bourg Marie, while Magloire le Caron (Mr. Murray Carson in the States), villain of the piece, is the hybrid product of three civilizations. The writer's style alters itself to harmonize with the varying spirit and mood of her story—stately and poetic in its descriptions of departed greatness; nervous and gauche in the passages where the turbulent current of a fevered modernity breaks through.

In *Marguerite de Roberval* (1899), T. G. Marquis turned back to the times of Jacques Cartier and applied his constructive imagination as well as his industry in research to building a story of Old France and the New around a most romantic and dramatic love episode.

In the same year appeared *The Span o' Life* written in collaboration by William MacLennan and Jean N. MacIlwraith. Its historical basis is found in the memoirs of a Scottish Chevalier, who shared in the ill-starred rebellion of Prince Charles and afterwards became a soldier of fortune in the army of France, thus being present at the siege of Louisbourg and afterwards escaping to Quebec and joining the French forces there. The plot element of the story is somewhat weak and it is of value chiefly for its inside history of the siege conditions in the two greatest forts of New France.

So far the concern of Canadian historical fiction, as we have seen it, has been chiefly with New France and the conflicts between the French and English in North America. It remained for Agnes C. Laut to realize quite independently the amazing wealth of romantic history that lay back of the opening up and exploiting of the middle and far West of Canada. While yet a schoolgirl and knowing only the formal, conventional, and statistical outlines of Canadian history as then taught, she came accidentally upon a copy of Gunn's *History of Manitoba* and sat up all night thrilled with the story of the Selkirk settlers. Thus originated the impulse, fulfilled later (1900), in *The Lords of the North* and (1902) in *Heralds of Empire*, to reveal what she felt, to show that Canada's history was one page of glory. It had never been told in a way that the youth of the land would realize this, and she felt that, lacking this realization, we lacked a truly national spirit.

*Lords of the North* presents a vivid picture of Canada's fur trade at the most flourishing period of that industry. It follows the conflict between the rival fur companies—the North-West and the Hudson's Bay Company. Across its pages flit the voyageur, the trader, Indians, missionaries, settlers, buffalo

hunters—all the romantic figures of the Canadian West of the period of 1815 to 1821. *Heralds of Empire* will be remembered for its characterization of Pierre Radisson, the man of action—the man who dared and who did—the man with the true pioneer spirit. Miss Laut's style is forcible and direct. Her sentences are brief and crisp. The story runs on without effort. Description never wearies because it is the natural and necessary setting, painted with quick, bold vivid strokes. Of the larger matters of plot structure—the architectonics of fiction, she can hardly be said to have achieved mastery, but she writes with such energy and enthusiasm for her subject that in a measure this defect may be overlooked.

Wilfred Campbell also essayed the historical romance but with indifferent success. His *Ian of the Orcades* with its historical Scottish setting was more congenial to his genius than *A Beautiful Rebel*. It has arresting incidents, vigorously drawn characters, and considerable intensity of emotions, but it wins us rather by Campbell's power to suffuse the text with what Matthew Arnold called 'natural magic.' It is more in keeping with the 'old world imagination' of Campbell which has been defined in the study of his poetry. *A Beautiful Rebel*, a story of Canada and the United States in the war of 1812, is lacking in imaginative color, is defective in structure, and the incident is too slight for the significance of the theme. The comment of the author has a way of appearing obtrusively as a digression, or at times in the mouths of the characters. What value *A Beautiful Rebel* has as historic fiction lies chiefly in its representation of the part played in the war by American sympathizers living as Canadian settlers.

### *II. The Romancers of Animal Psychology.*

In the field of romance of wild and of domestic animal psychology, Canadian writers have shown a distinct and unique inventive genius and a corresponding artistry.

Ernest Thompson Seton attracted the attention of the world by his romances of wild life in Canada because he combined in them the skilled observation of the scientist, the vision of the artist, the insight of the psychologist, the sympathy of the humane man; and, perhaps, more than all that, the spirit of youthful wonder at, and interest in, the ways and doings of the creatures of the field and wood.

He brought to his writings of animal life a new point of view—namely, that human beings and wild animals are kin; that animals are motivated with passions and desires and, to some extent, ideas, just as human beings are. Thus he wrote with sympathy and with creative imagination and revealed the new life and being of wild animals, and he hoped to achieve the practical result of

quickening the sympathies of man toward animals and stopping the thoughtless extermination of many of our harmless wild creatures.

His books such as *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), *The Trail of The Sand-Hill Stag*, *The Biography of a Grizzly*, *Lives of the Hunted*, are studies of animal psychology and behavior. *Lives of the Hunted*, for example, contains life-histories of Krag, the mountain Ram; of Johnny Bear; of Coyotito, the Escaped Coyote. Krag's whole history from birth to death is faithfully sketched and, incidentally, much is learned about the habits of the mountain-sheep. From these life-histories we gain, not merely knowledge and information but wisdom, since animal life and human life are akin.

Some of the earlier animal stories were written in dialogue—the animals being made to talk. But, very wisely, the author soon adopted the narrative style and removed his sketches from the character of fairy stories to that of real interpretations of animal life.

In *Two Little Savages* he gives the adventures of two boys who lived in the woods as Indians and learned much about Indian life and all kinds of wood-lore. Other stories of a similar type are employed for the teaching of different phases of woodcraft. *Wood Myth and Fable* advances a step further and from incidents in animal life, and other occurrences in nature, the writer points a definite moral lesson. This escapes preachiness by the adroit epigrammatic wit of the 'moral.'

A somewhat different literary ideal inspired Charles G. D. Roberts to undertake the pure romance of animal psychology and behavior. 'It may be that this arose as a natural development from Roberts' early attempts to depict a narrative from actual occurrences and experiences in the woods. At any rate *Earth's Enigmas* (1896), followed by numerous other volumes such as *The Kindred of the Wild*, *The Watchers of the Trails*, *The Haunters of the Silences*, *Red Fox*, *The Feet of the Furtive*, *More Animal Stories* have established the place of Roberts as the supreme artist in the field of animal romance.

Roberts' treatment of animal psychology differs from that of Thompson Seton or Marshall Saunders. He makes his wild animals either wholly human or too human. They move in their world with a sort of super-animal (or super-human) knowledge, and Roberts' discloses a subconscious motivation of conduct in the wild animals that outdoes the present clay psycho-analyists in their revealments of human motivation. For this reason they appeal not to the heart but to the analytic imagination and the aesthetic sense. They awaken the interest of the intellect rather than the sympathetic emotions. They lack humor and pathos, but in imaginative sweep and artistic structure they are supreme creations. As examples of a literary prose style they stand almost alone in their particular field of fiction.

Not all Roberts' animal stories are of this 'intellectual' type. Human

interest and humor is added by showing animals in relationships, more or less accidental, to mankind, in such volumes as *The Backwoodsman*, *Hoof and Claw*.

The peculiar *forte* of Marshall Saunders is the romance of the domesticated animal or animal pet. *Beautiful Joe: The Autobiography of a Dog*, first published in 1894, is one of the literary phenomena of the world. It has been translated into fourteen or more languages and has sold over a million copies. With acute perceptive sympathy and engaging artistry, Miss Saunders has commingled strangely but veraciously the mind and life of the domestic animals. She envisages truthfully their 'near humanity' and reveals them as akin to man in feelings, passions, desires, and the motivation of conduct, but keeps them on a level below man. Her animals are not human, but they appeal more to the heart of the humanity in us than those of Roberts, Thompson Seton, or W. A. Fraser; particularly do they appeal more to the spirit and heart of youth. Her *Golden Dicky*, the story of a canary and his friends; *Bonnie Prince Fetlar*, the autobiography of a pony, and *Jimmy Goldcoast*, the story of a monkey, have all the engaging qualities of her earlier work.

W. A. Eraser, in *Mooswa and Others of the Boundaries* (1900), and in *The Outcasts* (1901) achieved a distinct success by working with much the same material as Roberts and Thompson Seton and to some extent combining the style and treatment of both. He is not so scientific as Thompson Seton; nor is he so literary or so psychoanalytic as Roberts. *The Sa'-Zada Tales* (1905) in which the animals at the zoo are represented as conversing with their keeper, Sahib Zada, and with one another, exhibit the intimate knowledge of wild animal life gained, no doubt, during the author's residence in Asiatic countries, but they are not as distinctively original in manner, nor as high in literary quality as his other animal tales. Fraser, however, has a peculiar field in which he excels—in his novel *Thoroughbreds* (1902), and in his volume of short stories *Brave Hearts* (1904), he shows a sympathetic understanding of the life of the race horse and he presents vividly and with sometimes a rollicking humor, at others a tender pathos, many incidents and expressions of the racing field. He is an apostle of clean sport and a true lover of the racing horse and his enthusiasm gives to these stories a directness and coherence not always found in some of his later stories and novels with different subjects and settings.

### *III. The Evangelical Romance.*

The pioneer writer of the 'evangelical romance' in Canada was 'Ralph Connor' (Reverend Charles W. Gordon). Back of all his books stands the missionary spirit. Indeed it was that missionary spirit which led to the finding of his literary gift. The story of that finding dates back to 1896. He had been

attending a meeting of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church at Toronto, and afterwards tried to impress upon the Rev. J. A. Macdonald, then editor of *The Westminster*, the duty of the magazine to educate the committee and the people to a greater liberality. The editor's reply was: 'Articles are no good if they have only facts and statistics and exhortations. Give me a sketch, a story, a thing of life rather than a report. . .'

The result of this advice was a series of sketches of missionary life in the foothills of the Rockies, which were featured as *Tales of the Selkirks* in *The Westminster* (1897) and appeared in book form the following year as *Black Rock*.

When the first sketches were ready it was deemed advisable to conceal the identity of the author. The editor telegraphed the query, 'What name?' The reply came, 'Sign sketch Cannor.' 'Can—Nor, that would betray the face of a mask,' says the editor. 'Perhaps the operator made a mistake. Likely it should be Connor.' And running over the alphabet of masculine names, he decided that 'Ralph' would just about fit with 'Connor.' Thus the christening of the missionary novelist.

Ralph Connor's novels fall into several groups. *Black Rock* and *The Sky Pilot* are tales of the Rocky Mountain foothills, both telling of the wild life of the West and of the work of the missionary. *The Man From Glengarry* and *Glengarry School Days* deal with the life of the author's boyhood in Eastern Ontario. *The Prospector* and *The Doctor* combine East and West, by following their leading characters through the University of Toronto and transferring them to Western Canada. *The Foreigner* has a Manitoba setting and concerns itself with the problem of the assimilation of the foreigner. *Corporal Cameron* and *The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail*, carry a young Scot to Canada and through the ranks of the Mounted Police. The Great War gave material for *The Major*; labor troubles for *To Him That Hath*; while in *The Gaspards of Pine Croft*, the author reverted to a setting not so far from that of his first novel for a story more emotional and psychological in nature than his others.

The circulation of Ralph Connor's novels has been phenomenal and has reached somewhere between two and a half and three millions, yet it cannot be said that he has established a reputation as a literary artist. His stories carry the reader because of action, incident, and tense emotional situations. They always have an underlying ethical and spiritual significance and they promulgate a belief in the presence of some redeeming virtue in every human being, so that, despite adverse critical opinion, they continue to touch the responsive chord in the heart of a common humanity.

None of his later works has quite come up to the standard of *Black Rock* or *The Sky Pilot* in consistency of characterization and in unity of total effect. Indeed *The Sky Pilot* is the most artistically finished of all his works, because

of the natural coherence of its parts in their development of the central theme. Dramatic power he has to a marked degree, so far as the presentation of individual scenes is concerned, such as the fight in the lumber camp, the horse race, the barn-raising, and many other thrilling episodes; but his grasp of dramatic values is not broad enough to escape melodrama. The constructive dramatic instinct which weaves each separate incident into a chain of cause and effect dependent upon the character and motives of the leading personages of the story is very little in evidence. Whole chapters might be lifted bodily from some of these novels without interfering with the main thread of the story.

His imagination is reproductive rather than creatively constructive. The stories of the foothills are built upon his own missionary experiences at Banff and elsewhere; the Glengarry tales deal with his schoolboy experiences and his knowledge of the rough life of the lumber woods and the drive; the stories of east and west are also drawn from his own experiences in college and in the missionary field. As a result of this his characters tend to become types and although fairly individual and distinctive they are inclined to act mechanically and to operate without sufficient inherent motivation.

The first novel of Robert E. Knowles, *St. Cuthbert's* although a romance of a Presbyterian congregation, is not strictly an 'evangelical novel.' It has more to do with showing the Presbyterian Church as an institution which dominated the life of the Presbyterian community. The doings of the Kirk session; the relations of the minister with the various elements of his flock, the pious and the profligate, are described with rare fidelity. The tender undercurrent covered by Scottish reserve; the sympathetic understanding of human nature as the greatest and most essential quality of ministry; the dry, pawky Scottish humor; the distinctive and consistent characterization—these elements make *St. Cuthbert's* a piece of genuine literature. *The Dawn at Shanty Bay* is in reality a short story. There is one underlying motive, and only one, dominating the whole—it is the fight between parental love and parental dignity. It should rank as one of the sweetest 'Christmas Carols' in English literature. His remaining novels—*The Undertow*, *The Web of Time*, *The Attic Guest*, and *The Singer of the Kootenay* are of the evangelical type and are fashioned much to the same pattern, showing inconsistencies in development and a lack of structural unity.

CHAPTER XVII

# Short Story Writers

THE SHORT STORY FICTIONISTS OF THE SYSTEMATIC SCHOOL—E. W. THOMSON—DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT—CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS—GILBERT PARKER—ERNEST THOMPSON SETON—W. A. FRASER.

THERE is, on this continent, a literary tradition that Edgar Allan Poe is the creator of the short story. The truth is that Poe applied a new method to the short narrative or prose tale in that he gave the short story a higher unity of effect towards an impressionistic climax. He did not originate or create it; he simply improved its technique. But with the school of Poe this method crystallized into a formula, and the so-called American short story became an invention rather than an imaginative creation. Thus it depends upon a cumulation of effects rising to a climactic peak of emotional intensity, or upon a plot that induces suspense by a clever interplay of incident. Its processes are for the most part mechanical. The telling or the reading of a short story of this type is far more a coldly-calculated intellectual exercise than it is an appeal to warm-hearted human emotions. With aesthetic, moral, or spiritual values it has little to do. Hence it has not that permanency that makes for true literature. Based on incident and accidental circumstance rather than character it engages the reader temporarily by its cleverness, but it does not acquaint him with living characters to whom he loves to return for an enlargement of that acquaintanceship.

The Canadian species of short story is distinguished by a high artistic unity of structure and effect and in that respect reflects the influence of Poe upon all modern short story writing, but there is this difference, that it achieves its unity of effect and its dramatic interest not by mechanically constructed climaxes but by developments arising out of the inherent traits and dispositions of the personages of the story. Its basis is the solid rock of character. The Canadian short story as a distinctive type does not present the excessively climactic plot; nevertheless, it is more truly a real story than either the plot story of the American and French writers or the fine psychological situations of successful English story writers.

As we see it, this peculiar quality of the Canadian short story is rooted in some quality of Canadian nationality. No Canadian writer can be said to have originated the method. Each appears to evolve some modification of it particularly adapted to his own field.

*Old Man Savarin and Other Tales*, by Edward William Thomson (1895) contains a number of stories of Canadian life differing widely in emotional interest. There is the near burlesque of *Old Man Savarin*, with the incident of the fist fight which lasted for four hours, although the two combatants never reached within striking distance of each other all that time; *McGrath's Bad Night* portrays a pathetic picture of a family on the verge of starvation, to which is added the greater pathos of the breakdown of a man's principles of honesty; *The Privilege of the Limits*, wherein the author captures and presents effectively the dry, pawky humor of the Scot; the sorrowful dillusionment of youthful imagination in *The Shining Cross of Rigaud*; superstitious terror overcome by plain common sense in *Red Headed Windego*.

The stories with Eastern Ontario and Quebec for their setting show a loving intimacy and understanding of the plain people—the habitant, the river driver, the lumberman, the farmer; and the author is at his best in his delineation of the Glengarry Scot or the Quebec habitant. Thomson is scarcely a stylist. There is a freedom, even looseness, in his story structure, and he employs sometimes the device of introducing a narrator for his tale. But in his stories of the Canadian type and setting his warm friendliness for his characters radiates a glow of enthusiasm that captures and holds the reader. Not all Thomson's stories, however, are of this type—in *Petherick's Peril*, there is an approach to the horror tale of Poe; and in *The Swartz Diamond* there is the trap-springing device of the surprise ending, while *Boss of the World* is an example of the 'tall story' which produces its humor by the exaggeration of its ideas—these stories we surmise to be the result of influences which surrounded E. W. Thomson in his editorial offices in a Boston magazine publishing firm.

*In the Village of Viger* (1896), by Duncan Campbell Scott is a little volume of prose tales of French Canada, published in Boston by Copeland and Day. These stories affect the heart and imagination with a reality and sense of actuality as if one had dwelt in Viger and had daily come face to face with Mademoiselle Viau, the little milliner; Madame Laroque, gossip and reformer; Monsieur Cuerrier, kind-hearted postmaster; brandy-tippling Paul Arbique and his wife; Hans Blumenthal, the expatriate German watchmaker; Pierre, and the lovely but intriguing Eloise of No. 68 rue Alfred de Musset; Jean Francois, the mysterious blind peddler; Paul Farlotte who was always saving up to revisit France, and gave up the project on the day he dreamed that his mother had died—and all the rest in this gallery of lovable characters.

The reality and veracity of Dr. Scott's character delineation produces exquisite and infallible character-vignettes, or Rembrandtesque word-etchings, lovely in 'values' and in spiritual *chiaroscuro*—depths within depths of a single character as in Charles Desjardins in the tragic story of *The Desjardins*.

Yet in his handling of the tragic he awakens, not a pity that produces fear or horror or disgust, but a gentle pity that engenders sympathy. We appreciate the 'little milliner's' loyalty—begotten of pure love—to her rascal lover, a common thief. The skilful sympathetic handling of the subject gives to love a new dignity and to loyalty a new grandeur. The pathos moves to a rise and fall, but never so overwhelms the emotions as to cause tears; rather does it subdue the soul and leave in the heart of the reader a gentle welling up of sympathy, a benignant sense of fellowship with finite and erring humanity, and a tender peace. When a reader finishes one of Dr. Scott's stories of the pathetic episode—The *Little Milliner*, *The Desjardins*, *Sedan*, *Paul Farlotte*—he experiences no violent wrench of the heart-strings—sheds no tears—but is gently and sweetly touched; feels with the unfortunate and afflicted; sees the veil that obscures the hard workaday world lifted; and beholds life and the world suffused with a 'grey-eyed loveliness.' This is all superb artistry in emotional and spiritual love, by one who has had intimate glimpses into the human heart and into the stern face of sublimity in human character and in life.

So, too, his treatment of the comedy in human character and existence. Human destiny and fate are too dear and pathetic to him to allow him to engage his art in any raucous laughter. The smiles he evokes are based on sympathetic fellow-feeling, on tenderness. We are amused, yet not unsympathetic, at the rage of Madame Laroque, defeated in a long-cherished love, and hope of ultimate marriage, by the elopement of her ward, Cesarine, with the postmaster (*The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier*); the futilities of old Paul Farlotte, who would see 'la belle France' before he dies, envisage a comic character, but subdue our laughter with the pathos of frustrated desire.

These themes, we see, are chosen from character and life in a typical French-Canadian village, yet the sentiments, the ideals of human love and character and conduct, and the natural and spiritual color, are Canadian and even universal. They depend not upon mere accidents of circumstance, but upon lasting and universal human emotions and human relationships—permanent literary values. In these stories, Dr. Scott achieves structural unity and harmony of emotional tone with an entire absence of any striving for effect—with that finished art that conceals the artifice of the craftsman.

Always a careful workman rather than a prolific writer, it was not until 1923 that Duncan Campbell Scott published another volume of short stories, *The Witching of Elspie*. Some of these are French-Canadian in their setting, but those most exquisitely wrought deal with the lonely and heart-searching life of the Hudson Bay posts. Although Scott's method was fully formed in his first volume, there is here a very evident advance in artistry, a greater economy in expression, but a deeper intensity of effect. Here he shows a remarkable skill in the almost imperceptible transition from explanation or description to the

inside of the mind of the varying personages of the story and back again to description or explanation—one of the most artistic touches of the work of a finished craftsman.

Charles G. D. Roberts developed, in the story of animal psychology, a species of Canadian short story that depends not so much upon emotional and artistic effects and a unity of impressionistic tone as upon intellectual and stylistic effects and novelty of theme. Scott worked with an artistry so exquisite that his stories possess the simplicity and directness which conceal art. Roberts wrought his animal and romantic short stories with an artistry so much in the manner of the prose-poet that they reveal the stylist consciously aiming to impress the intellect with niceties of structure, and the sensibility with word-painting, always *couleur de rose*.

When Roberts is the psychologist he is also most the true structural stylist. But for an example of more impressionistic color, of sheer word-painting, of prose-poetry *couleur de rose*, the following paragraphs from *The Watchers in the Swamp* are convincing:—

> Under the first pale lilac wash of evening, just where the slow stream of the Lost-Water slipped placidly from the open meadows into the osier-and-bulrush tangles of the swamp, a hermit thrush, perched in the topmost spray of a young elm tree, was fluting out his lonely and tranquil ecstasy to the last of the sunset.
>
> • • • •
>
> It was high morning in the heart of the swamp. From a sky of purest cobalt flecked sparsely with silver-white wisps of cloud, the sun glowed down with tempered, fruitful warmth upon the tender green of the half-grown rushes and already rank water-grasses—the young leafage of the alder and willow thickets—the wide pools and narrow, linking lanes of unruffled water already mantling in spots with lily-pad and arrow-weed. A few big red-and-black butterflies wavered aimlessly above the reed-tops. Here and there, with a faint elfin clashing of transparent wings, a dragon-fly, a gleam of emerald and amethyst fire, flashed low over the water. From every thicket came a soft chatter of the nesting red-shouldered blackbirds.

These stories are lyrical poems in prose; as an impressionistic stylist in the medium of the animal short story Roberts is inimitable. We find the same mellifluous prose (as Mr. T. G. Marquis discriminatingly terms it) in his romantic short stories, *By the Marshes of Minas*, in which themes, settings, and color are authentically Canadian (Acadian).

Gilbert Parker's short stories exhibit many of the qualities of his longer fiction. They are not always as artistically constructed as those of Duncan Campbell Scott, nor are they as finely written as those of Roberts, but in the main they are based on sufficient character motivation and have a sustained dramatic power. Ernest Thompson Seton and W. A. Fraser are engaging tellers of short tales abounding in incident and humor, with a sound basis of characterization, yet of the short story writers of the Systematic School, Duncan Campbell Scott has produced the most uniformly excellent work.

CHAPTER XVIII

# William Henry Drummond

THE NEW CANADIAN GENRE OF IDYLLIC POETRY—WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND, INTERPRETER OF THE HABITANT—POET OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN CANADA.

THE Canadian *voyageur* and *habitant*, the lumberman, and peasant of French Canada are 'children of nature'—human, simple, shy, warm-hearted, honest, and manly. They were not always thus sympathetically conceived or regarded by most of their English-speaking compatriots. They, therefore, needed a sympathetic interpreter who would reveal their inward spirit and true character, mental and moral. Strangely, but according to the inscrutable methods of Providence, the man who was to be the friend and sympathetic interpreter of the French-Canadian peasant, was born in Ireland in 1854. He was William Henry Drummond.

Drummond emigrated to Canada when but a mere lad, before Old Country education and culture had any chance to mould his mind and imagination and moral attitudes. While, then, Drummond himself was an *émigré*, his verse, like that of Isabella Valancy Crawford and for the same reasons of formative influences in Canada, is Canadian. It is indeed regional, but it is also indigenous poetry—in substance, in diction, in imagery, and in craftsmanship.

William Henry Drummond, like the *dramatis personae* of his poems, the *voyageur* and *habitant*, was a 'child of nature.' No other kind of man, save this large-bodied, warm-hearted, open-minded lover of human kin and of the creatures that live in the wild, who saw and felt the common things of life, as the *habitant* saw and felt them, could have been a truthful interpreter of the *habitant*. The merely scholarly poet, the poet of a hothouse refinement, the poet who went to work at the craftsmanship of poetry as if he were carving arabesques in verse, could not have the imaginative insight into the mind and heart of the French-Canadian peasant and the sympathy with him that would make it possible for such a poet, with kindly, playful humor, to express the elemental feelings and thoughts—the real humanity—of the *habitant*.

Drummond was above all things a human poet. His sympathies were inclusive. By intuition he could feel just as the *habitant* felt about good and evil in the universe. Drummond's heart was warm and large and religious, which meant that he could call nothing that was made in the image of God common or outcast. Though he was well read in the modern poets and was a student of literature, he was not a bookish man. He distinguished between the

literature which possessed only aesthetic and artistic beauties and that which was the embodiment of the finer goods of the spirit, the inalienable satisfactions of existence. He loved only the literature that was human and beautiful—simple, pure, and true.

As, then, a ‘child of nature,’ with a large, sympathetic heart and a Keltic vision of the ‘divinity’ which is in all men and also in the wild creatures that are near to Nature, and with a gift of ready expression in rhythmical verse, Drummond was uniquely fitted to be the interpreter of his simple, kindly, reticent, but genuinely human and sincere, fellow-being, the Canadian *habitant*. Thus singularly fitted to be, as he has been called, ‘the Poet of the Habitant,’ Drummond, in his verse, actually performed a social and a literary service for his country. On the social side, to the English-speaking Canadian, who up to the last decade of the 19th century considered the *habitant* as little better than a chattel, Drummond revealed the human, lovable, and admirable virtues of the humble French-speaking compatriot, and also engendered in the English-speaking Canadian a sincere respect and affection for his French-speaking fellow countryman. On the literary side, Drummond created a gallery of *genre* pictures and spiritual portraits which constitute a unique contribution, not only to Canadian poetic Literature, but also to English Literature.

Under what inspiration or vision, hitherto not vouchsafed to any other Canadian poet, did Drummond write, and what really novel and important contributions did he make to Canadian poetry and to world literature?

He discovered and presented to the world, for the first time, the New Romance in Canada, as Kirby and Sir Gilbert Parker had discovered and presented the Old Romance. He created a new form of the Canadian Idyll. He placed on the stage of the world a group of new Characters and, through them, originated a new species or type of World Humor. Pre-eminently Drummond is the Poet and Humorist of the New Social Democracy in Canada.

Until the publication of Drummond’s first creative work, *The Habitant and Other French-Canadian Poems* (1897), the French-Canadian, in general, was appreciated only according to the types seen in the towns and cities. In particular, the French-Canadian *voyageur* and *habitant* were appreciated only as the merry hearts who had sung the old *chansons* on the rivers of Quebec Province—and, as their English-speaking compatriots fancied, in the academic and eviscerated English translations in which they heard these *chansons*. No one, up to the time of Drummond’s first volume, had revealed the mind and heart of the real, the living *habitant*, *voyageur*, lumberman, and peasant in Old Quebec. No one before Drummond had sung their heart songs in the patois that is theirs when attempting to express their thoughts and emotions to their supercilious and not too respectful English-speaking compatriots. But Drummond produced truthful, naturalistic pictures of the real, the *living*

French-Canadian *habitant*, lumberman, and peasant as they expressed their thoughts and emotions about life and their fellows.

He did not do this by a sort of reporting. He did it by letting them talk for themselves in their own patois. Thus he gave to his pictures of the French-Canadian *habitant*, lumberman, and peasant, a racy and dramatic realism which distinguishes them as 'characters' apart in Canadian, in English, and in world literature. This is the first reason why William Henry Drummond must be regarded as an absolute creator of literary species. He created a new form of romantic genre poetry, gave it reality, veracity, and ideality. This is what Louis Fréchette meant when in his Introduction to Drummond's first volume, he hailed Drummond as 'the pathfinder of a new land of song.'

In what way did Drummond give true *ideality* to the life and character which he presented also with a convincing realism and veracity? There is a species of romance which is the sheer invention of the fancy or imagination. It presents a life and character that have never existed and could not be possible anywhere on earth. That kind of romance is so 'fantastic' as to be absolutely unreal. There is another kind of romance which is based on real imagination of supposed real life and real personages. This sort of romance is typified by fairy tales, not the fairy tales of all lands, but of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. The people actually believe in the real existence of fairies, and imagine these invisible creatures in the forms of human beings. Romances about them and their doings are, therefore, not fantastic, but are based on a kind of reality. Again: there is a species of romance based upon the imagining of real personages in impossible situations and doing impossible things. It exists in Canadian Literature in those romances in which the Indian conducts himself in ways that could only be possible with men of civilized natures and civilized ideas. This kind of romance is not unreal; it is *too ideal*.

In poetically conceiving and presenting the French-Canadian *habitant*, lumberman, or peasant, Drummond might have drawn them as fantastic, or fanciful, or absolutely ideal characters. Or, he might have drawn them, as Service, for instance, has limned his characters of the trails and mining camps, with an accentuated or rude realism. Drummond employed none of these methods. He presented the French-Canadian *habitant*, lumberman, and peasant as they really *appear* on the outside, and as they ideally *are* on the inside, to the vision which sympathetically divines their feelings, emotions, aspirations, sorrows, joys, and consolations. Drummond's poetic eye perceived the ideal spirit of the French-Canadian *habitant* as it shines through the outer, rude, homely, simple, hesitant creature whom the English-speaking compatriot only too often, till Drummond's time, took to be of a lower and less spiritual order than himself. By this combined realistic and idealistic treatment of the character and life of the French-Canadian *habitant*, lumberman, and peasant,

Drummond created a new species of Canadian *genre* poetry, a new form of the Canadian Idyll.

As a creator, Drummond is entitled to another distinction. He originated a new and distinct type of Humor. There were humorists before and since Drummond. There was the prose humor of Haliburton's *Sam Slick*. There was the verse humor of Howe and of Lanigan. There was the prose humor of De Mille and of Mrs. Cotes. There have been the prose humor of Leacock and the verse humor of Service. But the only humor of all these that is likely to perdure as world literature is that of Haliburton. Drummond has created a humor which also is likely to live in permanent literature. It is distinguished from all the other humor written in Canada by the fact that it is never satiric or malicious or ungenial, or mere humor for the sake of raising a laugh or to ridicule another. It is humor with *pathos*. Just as Haliburton is unique as a satiric humorist, so Drummond is unique as a sympathetic and interpretative humorist. He is a Master of Humor and of Pathos.

His work is so well known throughout the world that it is hardly necessary to quote examples of his humor. Mere excerpts will not suffice. We may, however, recall, as outstanding examples, *The Wreck of the Julie Plante*, *How Bateese Came Home*, *The Curé of Calumette*, *Dominique*, *The Corduroy Road*, *Little Bateese*, *Johnnie Courteau*, and *When Albani Sang*.

A few words on Drummond's use of a patois or dialect and on his verse technique will be sufficient. It is by his patois that he gives not only naturalness but also veracity to the speech of his characters. His dialect is pure and clean and is felt by the reader as natural and genuine. As to technique, Drummond is a master of simple but flowing rhythm and obtains his rhymes with an ease and naturalness that disclose him as an original inventor of rhyme. He elected to be 'The Poet of the Habitant,' and as such he is unique. Yet his poetry in this form, as well as in other forms, clearly shows that if he had essayed the writing of verse on traditional themes and in a traditional manner, he could have been a poet of considerable distinction. It is best, however, to leave him with his natural distinction and glory about him—the Poet of the Habitant. As the discoverer of the New Romance in Canada, as the Creator of the New Canadian Idyll, and as the Master of a unique species of Canadian Humor and Pathos, William Henry Drummond made a signally original contribution to the quantity and quality of the creative literature of Canada.

CHAPTER XIX

# *The* Vaudeville School

THE DECADENT INTERIM IN CANADIAN LITERATURE—THE VAUDEVILLE SCHOOL OF POETS—ROBERT W. SERVICE, ROBERT J. C. STEAD, AND OTHERS.

NOT ineptly, though somewhat jocosely, we may group Canadian Poets in the Post-Confederation period, from 1887 to 1907, into three Schools, and label them with characteristic sobriquets. Already Archibald Lampman, Wilfred Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott, with Pauline Johnson and Frederick George Scott, have been called 'The Great Lakes School.' This is a dignified sobriquet, and derives its descriptive aptness from the native environment, or from the themes, of these poets, or from both. Again: Charles G. D. Roberts and Bliss Carman have been named 'The Birchbark School.' This is a jocose, playful sobriquet, and was applied to these poets because 'they use the mottled scrolls of the Red Man's papyrus to build a canoe, or as a vehicle for verse, with equal dexterity.'

By similar tokens, the throng of verse-makers whose vogue formed a decadent interim in Canadian poetry, beginning with the publication of Robert Service's *Songs of a Sourdough* (1907) and ending with the publication of his *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone* (1913), may be signalized as 'The Vaudeville School.' On account of the themes of their verse, its special and distinguishing technique, and its particular appeal to popular or vulgar taste, this sobriquet, as applied to Robert Service, Robert Stead, Paul Agar, George B. Field, Milton W. Yorke (*pseud.* Derby Bill), Robert T. Anderson, John Mortimer, James P. Haverson, Charles W. MacCrossan, Hamilton Wigle, and others, is just, apt, and veracious. It must be understood, however, to convey nothing of scorn or contempt or derision, but to be only a pedagogical formula for summarizing the qualities of the verse, the ideals, the methods, and the craftsmanship of the great majority of the poets here named 'The Vaudeville School.' They might have been dubbed 'The Sourdough School,' were it not that of them all only Service deals with those picturesque and picaresque humans known in the slang of the Canadian gold-mining camps as 'Sourdoughs,' and were it not that this name, used as sobriquet, would be derisive rather than sincerely descriptive.

As used here, the term Vaudeville harks back to its original French connotation. As applied to the verse of Service, Stead, Haverson, Field, Yorke, and the others, it means, first, entertainment which appeals to popular or vulgar

or low taste in verse. It means, secondly, arresting or violent methods in the technique of vividness. In fact, it is on the side of the technique of vividness in verse-color and verse-rhythms rather than on the side of the picturesque and often picaresque matter—characters and situations—of the verse of this School that the term Vaudeville is most apt and veracious, and that it is applied here as a descriptive epithet in the 'working' vocabulary of literary criticism.

*The sublimation of the technique of emotional vividness, to the exclusion of all regard for the intrinsic and the aesthetic beauty and moral dignity of poetry*—this is the essential formula of the verse of the Vaudeville School of Canadian poets. Their aims or motives were sincere and human. One motive was genuinely aesthetic: they wished to write verse that would escape the emotional *deadness* of the traditional themes and manner of Canadian poetry. The other motive was pragmatic: they wished to write rhythmic and rimed social documents in verse which would have such novelty of theme and such dramatic or theatrical or 'sensational' content as immediately to create a demand for the 'new poetry' and make it readily marketable. Thus should 'the art of poetry' become at once both pleasurable and profitable.

How were these ends to be achieved? 'I am one who left off singing Alleluias,' said Dante, poet of the immortal 'Vision' of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Thus Dante, desiring to get away from the conventional deadness of saying that he, as a poet, was a messenger from Heaven to reveal spiritual beauty to his fellows, makes use of one of the principles of the technique of vividness. He employs the unusual phrase, the lively, arresting phrase that would be sure to strike and vividly impress the average mind or imagination. In short, Dante invents and uses picturesque slang: for 'singing Alleluias' is slang, but how poetically suggestive it is, how vivid!

The Canadian Vaudeville verse-makers realized the poetic suggestiveness and the vividness of the picaresque speech of the Far West and the High North. They also knew how these sections of the country were rich in picturesque and picaresque characters and in the 'wild and woolly' life which produces strange and violent drama and melodrama, which is all the more appealing to the imagination of men and women because it is real and 'stranger than fiction.' It was a life full of moral (or immoral) color of speech, and action—of compelling interest. Thus ready to hand in Canada lay for immediate use the materials and the basal technical principle—the recipe—for the 'making,' not the 'creation,' of Vaudeville poetry. What was that recipe? Simply this. *Lilt in plangent anapaestic metres or rhythms the picaresque melodrama of the mining camps in the High North and the melodrama of the 'chevalerie' of the Far West.*

A single stanza from *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* by Robert Service (*Songs of a Sourdough*, 1907) affords ample proof and illustration of the

vaudeville qualities of this decadent verse:—

> And the stranger turned, and his eyes they burned in a most peculiar way;
> In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
> Then his lips went in a kind of grin, and he spoke, and his voice was calm;
> And, 'Boys,' says he, 'you don't know me, and none of you care a damn;
> But I want to state, and my words are straight, and I'll bet my poke they're true,
> That one of you is a hound of hell . . . and that one is Dan McGrew.'

That is an impressive characteristic example of the technique of vividness, by the Canadian master of them all. But let no one call it poetry. Service's astounding vogue for six years—it is now vanished—was not due to the *poetry* in his verse, but to the arresting or violent *drama* and *melodrama* in it, made more arresting or compelling by the infectious swing or lilt of the anapaestic rhythm. This rhythm is his only *forte* in verbal music, though he also employs alliteration successfully. This *forte* is seen to be a limitation and a weakness, as it also was and is in his alleged artistic foster-father, Rudyard Kipling. For as soon as Service attempts to employ another rhythm better suited to higher thought than the picaresque matter of strictly 'Sourdough' Songs, the results are disastrous. He fails to hold the attention; and, inasmuch as there are no compensating rhythmic values, all that is left is the strained and bizarre effect of cheap melodrama. A singular example of this kind of weakness and failure in Service is his *My Madonna*, in which he aims consciously and seriously to achieve a *tour de force* in religious sentiment, but falls into flat *bathos* of melodrama (*Songs of a Sourdough*).

If proof is wanted that the recipe for writing Vaudeville verse is simply to lilt in anapaestic metre and rhythm the melodrama of the Far West *chevalerie*, proof and illustration are furnished by a stanza from *Sergeant Blue* by Robert Stead (*Kitchener and Other Poems*, 1917):—

> Sergeant Blue of the Mounted Police was a so-so kind of a guy;
> He swore a bit, and he lied a bit, and he boozed a bit on the sly;
> But he held the post at Snake Creek Bend for country and home and God,
> And he cured the first and forgot the rest—which wasn't the least bit odd.

The amazing and pathetic fact about Robert Service is that he really possessed authentic poetic genius, and sometimes did write pure poetry. At his best Stead has written some satisfying *genre* poetry and story-telling ballads. But Stead could not rise beyond the homely-pathetic and the melodramatic in Western *chevalerie* into the realm of pure poetry. He kept always to the level of his lowly subject. Service, however, fell or rose to the level of his subject. In short, while most of Service's verse is popular Vaudeville, considerable of it violent melodrama, and much of it drama simply, some of his verse is genuinely poetical, charged with pure beauty and poetic significance. How nobly Service has conceived, how passionately expressed in lovely color-images and pervasive vowel and alliterative music, and how philosophically

interpreted Nature in his poem *The Mountain and the Lake*:—

> I know a mountain thrilling to the stars,
> Peerless and pure, and pinnacled with snow;
> Glimpsing the golden dawn o'er coral bars,
> Flaunting the vanished sunset's garnet glow;
> Proudly patrician, passionless, serene;
> Soaring in silvered steeps where cloud-surfs break;
> Virgin and vestal—oh, a very Queen!
> And at her feet there dreams a quiet lake. . . .

In that poem Service has given us an arresting and memorable picture of pure beauty in Nature. It is beautiful and unforgettable because it has poetic *Style*. Stead and the other members of the Vaudeville School, with the exception at times of Service when at his best, lacked genius for style in verse, without which verse, whether its subject or theme be low or high, realistic or idealistic, cannot rise to the dignity of poetry. Service, Stead, and the rest are never authentic Realists. They could not avoid the melodramatic in the matter of their verse and the plangent and vivid in its technique. Always they deliberately set out to assault the senses and the sensibilities. Kipling could be realistic and by virtue of his style rise to the dignity of poetry. But for the lack of style, the hectic realism of Service and Stead never rises above the crudely melodramatic or Vaudevillian. As picaresque realists they are, to quote Mr. E. B. Osborn, 'far behind the Australian and compare very unfavorably with the minor masters of Quebec.'

Many of the most effective pieces in Service's first volume (*Songs of a Sourdough*) were deliberate imitations of Kipling. But later he gave some promise of developing an independent manner of his own, the manner which is disclosed in *The Mountain and the Lake*, and which indubitably revealed in him innate original powers for painting the beauty and sublimity of Nature in the Arctic.

Service did not hold to his own manner; and Stead and the other Vaudevillians were innately incapable of any manner of their own. At length the vogue of the Vaudeville poets passed, having in no way affected the stream of aesthetic and artistic poetry which began with the Systematic School and which flowed on, pure and undefiled, if placid and noiseless, through the poetry of the later generation and into the Restoration Period or Second Renaissance in Canadian Literature.

Fundamental to the point of view of the criticism which follows is this proposition:—The poetry of the Vaudeville School for the most part must be regarded, not strictly as an aesthetic phenomenon, but rather as an envisagement of certain phases of the civilization of Canada in that period—that is, as a series of *social documents*. There is nothing wrong in treating contemporary phases of civilization in poetry with such vividness and veracity

that they really become social documents of the period which they envisage; but they are of no aesthetic worth if they are not consecrated to and by art. How a social document, when sublimated by fine art, can become authentic poetry may be discovered by turning to Pauline Johnson's musical and swift-moving lyric *Prairie Greyhounds*, descriptive of the transcontinental trains and their service to Canadian civilization, or to Mr. C. G. D. Roberts' noble sonnet *The Train Among the Hills*, or to his equally fine sonnet of the soil *The Sower*.

It must be realized that the sources of poetic inspiration in Canada have considerably shifted from the Atlantic, the Land of Evangeline, the Great Lakes, and the Laurentians to the Prairies, the Rockies, and the ice-clad wildernesses of the High North. Now, it was inevitable that under the inchoate and unsettled conditions of civilization in these Far West and High North sections of the Dominion, the mere inspiration to write verse should have been uppermost and that considerations of form should have appeared secondary or insignificant.

The themes treated in the Vaudeville verse were necessarily new; and when the Western or Yukon poets published their verses the newness of their themes and their naïve disregard of technical niceties were mistaken in the East for originality, vigor, freshness, and breeziness in art, and were welcomed and read by all classes of Canadians with avidity as 'real,' not 'hothouse,' poetry. There we have the explanation of the astonishing vogue of the verses of Service and Stead, and of their imitators. But their verses, far from being examples of genuine originality in invention of poetic themes and of really new art, exemplify the total absence of art; and far from being 'real' poetry, are totally devoid of the chaste speech, lovely imagery, dulcet music, and exquisite emotion which constitute true poetry.

It was a distinct moral fault on the part of Service that he should have chosen to give us in verse what he had better written in prose. The right form for social documents of picaresque communities is prose. Further: it is a law of aesthetics, a law exemplified most finely in Homer, that, whenever possible, all the elements in a work of art should each be intrinsically beautiful. Service deliberately chose themes which disregarded that law. We could forgive him for that if he had redeemed the vulgarity of the themes by beautiful craftsmanship in versification. His poetry is bad not because it is wicked or picaresque or risqué, but because it is aesthetically bad through and through.

During the Vaudeville Period Roberts, Campbell, Carman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Canon Scott, Pauline Johnson, Arthur Stringer, Albert E. S. Smythe, Ethelwyn Wetherald, Jean Blewett, Helena Coleman, Virna Sheard, the late Marjorie Pickthall, Katherine Hale, Jean Graham, Peter McArthur, Richard Scrace, Lucy M. Montgomery and a host of others published aesthetically satisfying poetry. For their spirit was of the spirit which

inaugurated the First Renaissance in Canadian poetry. But the spirit of Service and the lesser poets of the Vaudeville School was identical with that which animated the early Canadian verse-makers before the times of Breakenridge, Sangster, Mair, and John Reade. In spirit and in craftsmanship the poetry of the Vaudeville School was essentially a recrudescence of the poetry that made glad the hearts of the 'Bush' and 'Clearing' settlers of Canada in the first and second quarters of the last century.

That a New Poetry will arise in Canada and that it will originate and flourish in the Canadian Far West, is highly probable, because the prairie-lands of the West, their endless fields of grain sheening in the sun and billowing in rhythmic swaying to the winds and the mighty vastnesses of land and sky awaken moods and appreciations of Nature similar to those stirred in men by the sea. It was, in Bliss Carman's fine phrase, 'the glad indomitable sea' and the inland seas that inspired the Maritime and Lake poets who began the First Renaissance of Canadian Poetry.

But if any of the future Canadian poet, Western or Eastern, should prefer or incline to turn back to the ways of Service and Stead, let him reflect that since beauty is our clearest manifestation of the union of the real and the ideal, that is, of perfection, not to love and promote beauty in poetry is so far forth to refuse to love and promote the Godlike in the hearts of mankind, for perfection is the essence of the Godhead. To become a poet may not be a moral duty. But if one elects the office of poet, then to perfect oneself, as far as possible, in poetic artistry for the sake of beautifully or compellingly embodying in verse whatsoever is lovely in Nature or noble in ideas, is to attain to high moral dignity in one's own soul as a poet and to impress on the world the high spiritual function of poetry.

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Sources of quotations in this chapter:

Poems of Robert W. Service—*The Songs of a Sourdough* (Ryerson Press: Toronto); *The Rhymes of a Rolling Stone*, (Ryerson Press: Toronto).

Poems of Robert Stead—*Kitchener and Other Poems*—or in *The Empire Builders* (Musson Book Co.: Toronto).

CHAPTER XX

# *The* Restoration Period

THE RESTORATION OR SECOND RENAISSANCE PERIOD IN CANADIAN LITERATURE —NEW FORMS, THEMES, AND SOCIAL IDEALS—THE POETS—MARJORIE PICKTHALL—ROBERT NORWOOD—KATHERINE HALE—AND OTHERS.

WE call the period beginning with the publication of Marjorie Pickthall's first volume of verse, *Drift of Pinions* (1913), and on to the present, the Restoration or Second Renaissance Period in Canadian Literature. It is a 'restoration' period because it marks a return, after the Decadent Interim of the Vaudeville School (1907-1912), to the aesthetic and artistic ideals of the first systematic group of native-born Canadian writers. It is a 'renaissance' because the writers of the period undertook the systematic production of original authentic literature, and because they wrote under the inspiration of new themes, ideals, and forms.

By 1913 when the Canadian public had tired of the picaresque themes and the plashing anapaests of Robert Service, and the vogue of the Vaudeville School had passed, there was a demand for clean and sweet sustenance of the soul and refreshing new verbal music for the spirit. It was a demand for pure Beauty—

of fragrance made,
Woven and rhymed of light.

Marjorie Pickthall was the first to give the Canadian public sweet draughts of a new poetic wine of life. She engaged the attention of the Canadian public with the same immediacy and delight as the early lyrics of Tennyson and Swinburne captivated the English lovers of poetry. Set for the most part to a new or, so far as Canada was concerned, a strange music of trochaic, anapaestic, and syncopated metres and rhythms, rich in vowel-harmonies and the tone-color of consonance, assonance, and exquisite alliteration, her songs changed the world about her into an earthly paradise. At first Marjorie Pickthall arrested attention as a young unknown poet singing shyly from a corner in a daily newspaper or magazine, but singing with a rare beauty of imagery and of color from Nature, and with a fresh and dulcet verbal melody, heard as overtones above the more plashing, plangent rhythms of Service and his colleagues. It seemed as if Pan had come again to earth, so idyllic was the Nature-beauty and so simple and dulcet was the melody of her poetry, as in, for instance, *The Little Fauns to Proserpine*, daintily suggestive of their

shadowy figures:—

> Browner than the hazel-husk, swifter than the wind,
> Though you turn from heath and hill, we are hard behind,
> Singing, ‘Ere the sorrows rise, ere the gates unclose,
> Bind above your wistful eyes the memory of the rose.’
>
> • • • •
>
> Now the vintage feast is done, now the melons glow
> Gold along the raftered thatch beneath a thread of snow.
> Dian’s bugle bids the dawn sweep the upland clear,
> Where we snared the silken fawn, where we ran the deer.
>
> Through the dark reeds wet with rain, past the singing foam
> Went the light-foot Mysian maids, calling Hylas home.
> Syrinx felt the silver sprite fold her at her need.
> Hear, ere yet you say farewell, the wind along the reed.

There was no appeal on the part of Service and the other Vaudevillians to the spirit, to the religious imagination. It was inevitable, then, that the Canadian public—and the world—should be arrested by the spiritual beauty, tenderness, wistfulness, and the engaging music of such a poem as Marjorie Pickthall’s *Mary Shepherdess*, the following three stanzas of which illustrate how the thought is ‘woven and rhymed of light’:—

> When the heron’s in the high wood and the last long furrow’s sown,
> With the herded cloud before her and her sea-sweet raiment blown,
> Comes Mary, Mary Shepherdess, a-seeking for her own.
>
> Saint James he calls the righteous fold, Saint John he calls the kind,
> Saint Peter seeks the valiant men all to loose or bind,
> But Mary seeks the little souls that are so hard to find,
>
> All the little sighing souls born of dust’s despair,
> They who fed on bitter bread when the world was bare,
> Frighted of the glory gates and the starry stair.

One will seek far in English poetry for a picture of the human figure limned as graphically as it is in Marjorie Pickthall’s line:—

> With the herded cloud before her and her sea-sweet raiment blown;

and one will seek far in English poetry to find a line musically so in harmony with the spiritual picture of ‘all the little sighing souls’ eyeing, wistful and afraid, the wonder of the shining spectacle of Heaven, as her line:—

> Frighted of the glory gates and the starry stair.

Not once, or even for a moment, could the earthward vision of the Vaudevillian poets conceive, and much less could they write, such a poem of the pure in heart who shall see God as Marjorie Pickthall’s *The Lamp of Poor Souls*, and its subdued, sacramental music, ending thus:—

> Shine, little lamp, fed with sweet oil of prayers.

Shine, little lamp, as God's own eyes may shine,
When He treads softly down His starry stairs
And whispers, 'Thou art Mine!'

Shine, little lamp, for love hath fed thy gleam.
Sleep, little soul, by God's own hands set free.
Cling to His arms and sleep, and sleeping, dream,
And dreaming, look for me.

Francis Thompson or Alice Meynell could have written the whole poem possibly with a more immaculate artistry, but not with any finer appeal to the religious or mystical imagination, and not with a melody a whit more winning as an end in itself.

Having thus tasted the chief engagements of Marjorie Pickthall's poetry, we must in a more detailed way disclose her genius and art as they appear in her lyrical poems in *The Drift of Pinions* (1913), *The Lamp of Poor Souls* (1916), and the posthumous volume *The Wood Carver's Wife* (1922)—the last of which contains a lyric drama (the title-poem of the volume) and several lyrics. It is as an adroit and exquisite craftswoman (or 'artist'), rather than for originality of imaginative conception, that, from her first printed essays in verse to the last, Marjorie Pickthall appeals as a specially gifted poet in Canada, and must be accorded an honorable, possibly high, place in Canadian poetic literature.

Technically, her poetry is distinguished by an extraordinarily successful use of color epithets and verbal melody, especially alliteration. The defects of her poetry are not, on the whole, technical, but are defects, or rather limitations, of genius. Broadly viewed, her poetry lacks breadth of range and eloquence of style. By 'style' is not meant Matthew Arnold's conception or formula of what he called 'the grand style.' Marjorie Pickthall's verse is free, flowing, airy, graceful, tripping, musical; in a word, feminine. But by thus much does it lack originality and seriousness in the substance of its style, the qualities which give us the sense of having met with beauty which is not a mere finely distilled essence of loveliness, but which has strength, and dignity, and power over the heart and the imagination.

The key to the defects or limitations in Marjorie Pickthall's poetry was not her imagination but her 'heart.' She loved and had sympathy only or specially with all little creatures and things, with tender, frail, and helpless creatures and things; and she felt profoundly a sort of injustice in their fate, which begot in her a wistful wondering about the justice of the ways of God. She therefore inevitably impressed on her poetry her own feminine feeling for the little and helpless creatures of earth, her own sympathy with the evanescence of all the animate 'little things'—children, flowers, moths, birds, and 'the little stars of Duna'—that *for her* made existence tolerable or happy. Everywhere in her verse appears her preoccupancy with the very word or with suggestions of the

word ‘little.’ It is this ‘heart’ limitation that causes her to show what would seem at first sight to be a mannerism, namely, her predilection for certain substantives and epithets, as, for instance, ‘moth,’ ‘dove,’ ‘stars,’ ‘silver,’ ‘golden.’ It is not really a mannerism; but a necessity of her heart and mind. For the creatures and things her heart most loved, inevitably filled her consciousness and excluded other creatures and things.

But while Marjorie Pickthall, by limitation of genius, failed to attain to the sheer reaches in style and poetic substance which mark the work of Lampman, Carman, and D. C. Scott, and while she did not possess the ecstatic lilt of Carman, still she must be ranked as a supreme lyrist of the lovely, evanescent little things in the world. She must be ranked high also as a technical artist. If her poetry does not disclose her as able to achieve the finer strength and beauties of technique in poetic style, that distinguish the poetry of Lampman, Carman, and D. C. Scott, she is less often at fault technically than the older poets. Her technical artistry was not an acquired accomplishment; it was a gift of Nature. For while the older poets won their way, by hard striving, to their perfection in technique, Marjorie Pickthall, as early as her sixteenth year of age, displayed a precocious virtuosity, which was almost an instinct, in adroit and ingenious verbal coloring and melody.

In the invention of winsome and vivid color epithets and images and in her power for alliterative music in verse, Marjorie Pickthall was, perhaps, surpassed by Pauline Johnson. But Miss Pickthall was the more ingenious of the two poets. The following examples are impressive:—‘Dark with the green silence under the gold weather,’ ‘And close the cowslips’ cups of honeyed gold,’ ‘Yellow for the ripened rye, white for ladies’ wearing,’ ‘Where cling the moths that are the longings of men,’ ‘Thy lips are bright as the edge of the sword,’ ‘On the great green lawns o’ heaven,’ ‘He saw the moonlit rafters of the world,’ ‘Clear-footed from the frontiers of the world,’ ‘And hear new stars come singing from God’s hand,’ ‘To the wind that cried last night like a soul in sin.’

Nature was Marjorie Pickthall’s chief mistress. In the pictorial treatment of Nature the poet displayed special gifts. It is not true to say that she had the Greek ‘feeling’ for Nature, or that the Nature in her verse was that of the ancient Greeks. It was impossible for Marjorie Pickthall, an Anglo-Canadian, to have a Greek imagination; and they who claim that she had the ancient Greek feeling for Nature, might as rightfully claim that she had the ancient Gaelic or Keltic feeling for Nature, or the ancient Semitic feeling for the presence of God, or the medieval Breton feeling for Nature and the mystery of religious faith, which some have remarked as ‘mysticism’ in Marjorie Pickthall’s poetry.

The truth is that, first, Marjorie Pickthall had a mind and imagination

which were naturally pagan, and that, secondly, Nature was to her but the material for her fanciful and pretty treatment in verse. But to the Greeks, Nature, as perceived and embodied in their mythology and poetry, was their vision of the real face and heart of Nature. They actually *believed* in gods, goddesses, heroes, muses, naiads, mermaids, satyrs, fauns, as being Nature herself. This is what we mean by saying that the Greeks were pagans. But Marjorie Pickthall had, by native gift, only the sensibility and imagination that were naturally pagan in a love of and preference for thus *visualizing* Nature. She had saturated her mind, by reading, with the mythology of the Greeks; and her naturally pagan sensibility and imagination re-colored and re-expressed this material in a delightful pagan—not Greek—way in verse. Marjorie Pickthall had no such lively sense of the *reality* of divinity in Nature as had the Greeks. But she did have a lively pagan, if Anglo-Canadian, imagination. And so, with imaginative '*make-believe*' she peopled Nature with spirits, mermaids, pixies, fauns, elfs, playing with the Old Nurse Nature, or with themselves, and rejoicing in the sights, sounds, and the shy forest creatures, which they see and hear amongst the woodlands, streams, hills. She thus paganly *poetizes* Nature, beautifully, winningly; but it is all a *tour de force* of the senses and imagination, achieved in her 'closet,' where she was temporarily shut off from the roar and turmoil of great cities.

Had she steeped herself as thoroughly in ancient Gaelic lore, myths and legends, she would have written as engagingly of the Nature of the Kelts. In her single poetic essay in Gaelic 'feeling' for Nature—the Gael's innate love of Nature and the Homeland, his nostalgia—she failed in a double way; first, by infelicitously giving her poem a German title, *Wanderlied*, and, secondly, by a dull and commonplace imitation, if not a parody, of Ethna Carbery, Nora Hopper, Moira O'Neil, Katharine Tynan. When she was sincerely and naturally pagan, as in most of her verse, she succeeded admirably. But when she attempted to write a 'literary' poem in the pagan spirit, as in *Wanderlied*, she failed.

More of her imagery is derived from *actual Nature in Canada* than from mythological Nature in ancient Greece. The coloring from Canadian woods in Spring, Autumn, and Winter is in her verse, also visualizations of Canadian fields and flowers, and the subtle handwork of 'the Frost King,' and even Canadian domestic felicities made possible by Nature, such as the winter arabesque on the windowpanes in contrast with the inviting glow of burning logs on the hearth:—

> Here where the bee slept and the orchis lifted
> Her honeying pipes of pearl, her velvet lip,
> Only the swart leaves of the oak lie drifted
> In sombre fellowship.
> Here where the flame-weed set the lands alight,

Lies the bleak upland, webbed and crowned with white.

Build high the logs, O love, and in thine eyes
Let me believe the summer lingers late.
We shall not miss her passive pageantries,
We are not desolate,
When on the sill, across the window bars,
Kind winter flings her flowers and her stars.

And what but Canadian is this compelling line from *The Young Baptist*?—

Clear-footed from the frontiers of the world!

In short, if we were making a formula for Marjorie Pickthall's Nature poetry, we would employ this sub-title—'Lyrics in the Greek and the Canadian Modes of Pictorializing Nature.' Thus we should, by a single phrase, escape absurdly alleging that an Anglo-Canadian mind possessed Greek imagination and feeling for a mythological Nature; and thus also make clear the fact that Marjorie Pickthall, an Anglo-Canadian poet, was gifted not only with a lively pagan sense of the beauty of a vanished world, but also with a responsive sensibility to the beauty of a real and present world of Nature in Canada.

In two respects, then, Marjorie Pickthall may be regarded as having made original contributions to Canadian literature. First, she winsomely *pictorialized*, not, as with Lampman, spiritually interpreted, the face and pageantry of Nature. Secondly, she subtilized verse technique in verbal coloring and melody. She had a light and tender fancy, and, certainly for Canada, a rare artistry. She brought Titania and Ariel to earth again; and suffused existence with magical illusion, rhymed of light. The monument she herself raised to her genius and memory is not large and imposing; but it is, like her own spirit, chaste, exquisite, beautiful—and enduring.

Another significant creative poet of the Second Renaissance Period is Robert Norwood. Miss Pickthall was an objective poet. Whenever her imagination concerned itself with the spiritual realm it was to interpret only her own *private* experience, strictly from a personal point of view. Norwood is an interpreter of the Spirit to the Spirit—universalizing his imaginative experiences. He is, to be sure, a colorist and a musician in verse; but he is these secondarily in aim, whereas primarily he is the singer and interpreter of the meaning of Spiritual Love. In this field he has made a really original contribution to native Canadian poetry. In another field, however, he has made a still greater contribution to Canadian poetry.

The faculty of love, which is the deepest function of man's spiritual nature, is the imagination, the idealizing faculty. The greatest and most spiritualizing power in the world is love because its ultimate object is the heart of the universe; that is, Immortal Love, which is God, for God is Love. The greatest and most spiritualizing earthly object of love is Woman, because it is the

idealization, the love, of Woman that most inspires men to achievement in this life and to the deserving of union and companionship on earth and in the life to come. That is to say, the spiritual love of Woman is the chief inspiration of human creative ideals and activities—of material achievement, of creation in the fine arts, and of religion. Thus did Goethe apostrophize this divine function of woman:—

> Das Ewig Weibliche
> Zieht uns hinan

—the eternal woman-soul draws us forever upwards and on; and thus has Robert Norwood also declared Woman's spiritualizing function:—

> Much have I learned of woman and the part
> She plays in shaking from the laden bough
> Life's blossoms; all that has been, and is now,
> And ever shall be: Science, music and art,
> Religion, these, as from a fountain start
> The river, have been hers—man to endow.

It is Norwood's mastery of verbal color and music and his power of spiritual vision and exaltation—his interpretation and treatment of Ideal Love—that constitute his novel quality of fresh excellence in the poetry of the Second Renaissance. Certainly in his sonnet-sequence *His Lady of the Sonnets* (1915), he has enhanced the quality of Canadian poetry. Uppermost in his heart and imagination is the refining redemptive, transmuting power of Love, an absolute joy in the thought of the spiritual union and companionship of the Lover and the Beloved. To him Love is a holy ideal; and Loving is the fusion of soul and soul, of spirit and spirit, until the Lover and the Beloved become one soul, one spirit, enamored of holiness in thought, speech, and deed.

As an example of Norwood's sensuously colorful and musical envisagement of the Ideal Love we quote the following sonnet:—

> I meet you in the mystery of the night,
> A dear Dream Goddess on a crescent moon;
> An opalescent splendour like a noon
> Of lilies; and I wonder that the height
> Should darken for the depth to give me light—
> Light of your face, so lovely that I swoon
> With gazing, and then wake to find how soon
> Joy of the world fades when you fade from sight.
> Beholding you I am Endymion,
> Lost and immortal in Latmian dreams;
> With Dian bending down to look upon
> Her shepherd, whose aeonian slumber seems
> A moment, twinkling like a starry gem
> Among the jewels of her diadem.

As an example of his power for spiritualizing Love, the following sonnet from the same sequence will suffice:—

Last night I crossed the spaces to your side,
As you lay sleeping in the sacred room
Of our great moment. Like a lily's bloom,
Fragile and white were you, my spirit-bride,
For pain and loneliness with you abide,
And Death had thought to touch you with his doom,
Until Love stood angelic at the tomb,
Drew sword, smote him and Life's door opened wide.
I looked on you and breathed upon your hair—
Your hair of such soft, brown, translucent gold!
Nor did you know that I knelt down in prayer,
Clasped hands, and worshipped you for the untold
Magnificence of womanhood divine—
God's miracle of Water turned to Wine!

In his exquisitely wrought, sensuously colored, yet spiritually elevating verse surely we discover something that has never before been in Canadian poetry. It is a fresh achievement in Canadian poetry, even though it is not always impeccable in rhythm and rhyme. It is, too, authentic poetry, as if Dante or Keats or Tennyson or Swinburne had returned to earth and their genius were reincarnated, in a notable degree, in the genius of Robert Norwood.

Katherine Hale (Mrs. John Garvin) is a poet by herself. For she was a poet of considerable distinction for a decade before she published the volume which revealed her as having found her métier in creative poetry, as in her *Morning in the West* (1923). The eye and the ear are supreme in her processes of perception. Music and pictorial art were her first aesthetic loves, and had most to do with determining her attitudes and appreciations of the spiritual world. So that, at length, the inner eye and the inner ear became the faculties by which she perceived beauty in the external world as well as in the heart of mankind. All her reactions to what she saw and heard in the external world were in terms of color beauty and tonal beauty, perhaps more in terms of color than of tone. She became a musical critic of distinction, and one of our foremost 'color-writers.'

When, therefore, Katherine Hale felt the 'urge' to create poetry, her reactions to the spiritual world also were in terms of color and music. It is found that her development in poetic writing follows the same order as her development in prose writing. She began as a critic of music and reviewer of literature, but capped all her prose with a finished and arresting work in 'color-writing,' *Canadian Cities of Romance* (1922). She began her poetic creation with the musical or lyrical qualities of her verse much more accentuated than the color qualities, and her themes and forms much more earth-born and conventional than romantic and spiritualized in meaning. But always in her first three books of verse there was the feeling for pictorial or color values and for subtle emotional and spiritual nuances.

At length, as in *Morning in the West*, her latest volume, she found her true mode, and poetry became for her the beautiful sketching and etching and painting of the romance of the Canadian spirit. This poetry of the spirit she suffused with all the subtle variations of imaginative ‘color,’ half-lights, shadows, and chiaroscuro of Nature and social life in Canada from the days of the Scots factor and Western *chevalerie* to the era of the transcontinental railways.

Her first two books of verse, *Grey Knitting* (1914) and *The White Comrade* (1916), by their very titles suggest the color ‘note.’ But the gift or power of embodying spiritual beauty in lyrical music is always uppermost, as for instance in *The Ultimate Hour* or *In Noonday* containing the unforgettable alliterative and musical line:—

> With dear indefinite delight;

or in this stanza from *The Answer*:—

> Unaltered aisles that wait and wait forever,
> O woods that gleam and stir in liquid gold,
> What of your little lover who departed
> Before the year grew old?

In addition to the winsome color and musical qualities of her earlier lyrical verse, we discover a refined spiritual quality in such a sonnet as *The First Christmas*, and a noble spiritualization of romantic love in her sonnet *At Noon*, beginning:—

> Thou art my Tower in the sun at noon.

Katherine Hale’s long poem *The White Comrade* (1916) discloses notable gifts in blank verse and the power to make a dramatic picture that enthralls the mystical or religious imagination. Her rare gifts of delicate fancy, elfin enchantment from Nature and simple Orphean music, reminding us of Bliss Carman’s light lyrism, is finely exemplified in her spiritualized lyric *I Used to Wear a Gown of Green*, in which beauty and pathos are tenderly commingled:—

> I used to wear a gown of green
> And sing a song to May,
> When apple blossoms starred the stream
> And Spring came up the way.
>
> I used to run along with Love
> By lanes the world forgets,
> To find in an enchanted wood
> The first frail violets.
>
> And ever ’mid the fairy blooms
> And murmur of the stream,
> We used to hear the pipes of Pan
> Call softly through our dream.

But now, in outcry vast, that tune
  Fades like some little star
Lost in an anguished judgment day
  And scarlet flames of war.

What can it mean that Spring returns
  And purple violets bloom,
Save that some gypsy flower may stray
  Beside his nameless tomb!

To pagan Earth her gown of green,
  Her elfin song to May—
With all my soul I must go on
  Into the scarlet day.

All these—the poetry of her first three books, *Grey Knitting*, *The White Comrade*, and *The New Joan*—were but her short flights preparatory to making her eagle flight, by which she should discover the meaning of Canadian history and civilization in which is envisaged the Canadian national spirit. In *Morning in the West* Katharine Hale is no longer the individual lyrist fluting in the band of other Canadian lyrists. In that volume she sounds the diapason of Canadian nationality. She invents new forms of lyrism, and her themes are colored with new tones and lights of an impressionism which is the acme of realism and yet is finely spiritualized, as in the series of verbal color-sketches *Going North* and *A Study of Shadows*. But always we are being taken by the poet through Canada, and made to see what has been for us the most invisible, or, if visible, the most elusive of all things, namely, the forms and variation of the Canadian spirit and habitat.

The new forms of her lyrism may be exemplified in this example, *Enchantment*:—

I never see a blue jay
But I think of her;
Never hear that hoarse ‘dear—dear’
From a tree-top stir,
And the answering call
Far, far away,
And the flash of azure—
Oh, she would stay
Listening in the forest,
Loitering through the silence,
Hearing calls and singing
All the livelong day!

Her new themes and new vision and spiritual import in them—the envisagement of the qualities of the Canadian spirit—are notably presented in *Cun-ne-wa-bum*, *Buffalo Meat*, and most poignantly in *An Old Lady*, which is an incisively graphic and dramatic *picture* of the whole history of Canadian civilization from the early days of the Hudson’s Bay Company to the 20th

century social life in Ottawa in these days of automobiles and bridge parties. Yet it is no mere picture, but possesses a simple pathos, tenderness, and wistfulness which spiritualize the realism in the poem, and raise it to the plane of literature. This, then, is Katherine Hale's novel contribution to the poetic literature of Canada:—Canadian nature and civilization envisaged with a spiritual realism which has national perspective and native color and atmosphere. It is a new and distinct achievement in creative poetry in Canada.

Another significant poet of the Second Renaissance period, whose verse deserves special mention, is Lloyd Roberts. Early in 1914 he published a volume of verse entitled, *England Over Seas*. Lloyd Roberts is the son of Charles G. D. Roberts. No doubt, he inherited his poetic gifts from his father, and, no doubt, learned the principles of technical artistry from him. But, as a matter of fact, in his own published verse, Lloyd Roberts shows qualities—love of Nature and the gift of a singularly lyrical lilt—that are nearer the verse of his father's cousin, the inimitable lyrist of the seasons, the vagrom heart, and the open road, Bliss Carman.

In *England Over Seas*, the younger Roberts is an enchanting lover of Nature, a vivid colorist, and a melodious verbal musician. Nature is, in his own phrase, 'the star'—always the theme and in the foreground. Of his qualities as a nature-painter and a verbal melodist, the following is an excellent example:—

Crimson and gold in the paling sky;
  The rampikes black where they tower on high—
And we follow the trails in the early dawn
  Through the glades where the white frosts lie.

Down where the flaming maples meet;
  Where the leaves are blood before our feet
We follow the lure of the twisting paths
  While the air tastes thin and sweet.

Leggings and jackets are drenched with dew;
  The long thin barrels are cold and blue;
But the glow of the Autumn burns in our veins,
  And the eyes and hands are true.

Where the sun drifts down from overhead
  (Tangled gleams in the scarlet bed),
Rush of wings through the forest aisle—
  And the leaves are a brighter red.

Loud drum the cocks in the thickets nigh;
  Gray is the smoke where the ruffed grouse die.
There's blackened shell in the trampled fern
  When the white moon swims the sky.

The number of the poets of the Second Renaissance is legion. Amongst them are Arthur S. Bourinot, Gertrude Bartlett, Bernard F. Trotter (deceased),

Arthur L. Phelps, Lucy M. Montgomery-MacDonald, Grace Blackburn, Beatrice Redpath, Laura E. McCully, Louise Morey Bowman, Florence Randal Livesay, Norah Holland, Amy Pennington, Carroll C. Aikins, Wm. A. Creelman, Andrew D. Merkel, Alexander Louis Fraser, Peter MacLaren MacDonald, Clare Giffen, Erica Selfridge, Charles T. Bruce, Marian Osborne, H. J. Maclean. It were worth while to review in detail the work of Arthur S. Bourinot as represented in his *Laurentian Lyrics* (1915), and *Lyrics From the Hills* (1923), and Arthur L. Phelps as represented in his *Poems* (1921) and *A Bobcaygeon Chapbook* (1923). Bourinot attracted attention by his noble and moving sonnet *To The Memory of Rupert Brooke* and his tender and musical war lyric beginning:—

> They are not dead, the soldier and the sailor.

But he is also an artist in colorful lyrism of Nature in Canada, especially of the Laurentian district. Phelps is a refined, perhaps it were better to say, dainty lyrist; but he has also attempted new forms, and has been successful with realistic ‘free verse.’ The others, with a few exceptions, are systematic poets, but are not notable for spiritual vision or for originality in forms or substance.

It is, however, from the point of view of a fresh vision of earth and life and of originality in forms and substance that the work of Florence Randal Livesay, Grace Blackburn, Beatrice Redpath, Louise Morey Bowman, and Wilson MacDonald must be specially remarked. For their work displays a distinct advance in modernism over the work of Marjorie Pickthall, Robert Norwood, and Katherine Hale (earlier manner). In fact, there is in their work fresh origination in themes, structures, music, and social ideals. Florence Randal Livesay won distinction by her *Songs of Ukraina* (1916). Though formally called translations, they have such original elements of form and matter that they are no more translations in the ordinary meaning than is Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Mrs. Livesay’s work in the *Songs of Ukraina*, like that of Fitzgerald, has a turning of phrase and of imagery and a grace and music which are all her own and entitle the *Songs* to the distinction of creative verse. In 1923 she published *Shepherd’s Purse*. Here her genius flowered independently in what is essentially spiritual realism. But it is not a heavy spiritual realism. It exhibits a rare and light fancy for elusive emotional nuances; and all the poems have a piquancy, daintiness, and exquisite humanity which win one to the love of the evanescent beauty that is in all things human. The poems too have an air of the qualities which are in the *vers de société* and the ‘Blue China’ poetry of Andrew Lang and Austin Dobson. Mrs. Livesay has made a genuinely novel contribution to Canadian poetry.

Outstanding in other ways is the verse of Grace Blackburn, Beatrice Redpath, Louise Morey Bowman, and Wilson MacDonald. There is more

strength and spiritual perceptiveness in the poetry of Grace Blackburn and Beatrice Redpath than in that of Louise Morey Bowman. All show equal originality and finish in the technical treatment of their themes, but Louise Morey Bowman shows at times an airy fancy which is almost so ethereal as to be altogether abstract and unearthly. On the whole, exquisite technique is their chief distinction; they are artists.

Wilson MacDonald in his *Songs of the Prairie Land* (1918) and *The Miracle Songs of Jesus* (1921) discloses an absorption in mystical psychology and psychoanalysis which, by its daring and his method of suffusing the matter with ingenious and subtilized novelty or beauty of diction and imagery, adumbrates Goethe of the *Faust* tradition. It is at once realistic and ultra-spiritualistic. His technique is just as original and individualized as the matter of his poems. If any Canadian has the right to the distinction of possessing *sheer* creative genius, that right belongs to Wilson MacDonald as a Seer and as an Artist working in a field of spiritual vision which he has pre-empted.

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Sources of quotations in this chapter:

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Robert Norwood—*His Lady of the Sonnets* (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto).

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Lloyd Roberts—*England Overseas* (Elkin Mathews: London).

CHAPTER XXI

# Fiction Writers

THE COMMUNITY NOVEL—MONTGOMERY—KEITH—MCCLUNG—LE ROSSIGNOL. INSTITUTIONAL FICTION—PACKARD—SULLIVAN—DUNCAN—WALLACE AND OTHERS. REALISTIC ROMANCE—SERVICE—CODY—STEAD, ETC. HISTORICAL FICTION—SNIDER—ANISON NORTH—TESKEY—MCKISHNIE—COONEY. IMAGINATIVE FICTION—PICKTHALL—MACKAY. MISCELLANEOUS TYPES—MCKISHNIE—SULLIVAN—HÉMON—SIME. THE NEW REALISM—SALVERSON—DE LA ROCHE—CORNELL, ETC.

## 1. *The Community Novel.*

UNTIL the 'nineties' the production of Canadian fiction had been spasmodic and scattered, but the success of Gilbert Parker, Marshall Saunders, and other Canadian writers who gained a hearing first in lands alien to their own, and whose work came back to Canada 'with an alienated majesty,' proved that Canada was rich in literary material. The first decade of the twentieth century saw a marked increase in fiction writing in Canada. The new writers were influenced not only by the example of their compatriots but by that of the fiction writers of Great Britain and the United States. They began to realize that life around them was as interesting as Barrie's Thrums or Bret Harte's California. There was, too, a growing reading public ready to appreciate stories that presented the adventure, the humor, and the pathos of the daily life of themselves, their neighbors, or their fellow-Canadians in other parts of the country and sometimes of other racial origins.

Hence arose the Community Novel or type of story. One of the earlier examples is Adeline M. Teskey's *Where the Sugar Maple Grows* (1901). In telling of the origin of this book, Miss Teskey wrote that when reading Ian MacLaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* she said within herself, 'I know just as interesting people in Canada.' Her sketches of village characters, depicted with a homely but effective simplicity of style, showed that she was right. A delightfully humorous novel of Cranfordian flavor, *The Specimen Spinster*, by Kate Westlake Yeigh, (1906), essayed a larger canvas instead of the smaller etchings and gave an insight into the social relationships of the rural village.

The year 1908 may be said to mark the real beginning of the Second Renaissance in Canadian fiction, for in that year there were published three novels of the Community type—*Anne of Green Gables*, by L. M. Montgomery; *Duncan Polite*, by Marian Keith; *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, by Nellie L. McClung. There appeared also a charming collection of short tales,

*Little Stories of Quebec*, by James Le Rossignol. This date is still further significant as the year in which Marjorie Pickthall published her first important short story, *La Tristesse*, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, although her work differs greatly in setting and artistic method from the fiction of the Community type.

L. M. Montgomery was born at Clifton, Prince Edward Island, and spent her childhood in Cavendish, a seashore farming settlement which figures as 'Avonlea' in her stories. That her life has been spent chiefly within the limits of the little island province and the bounds of an Ontario country parish does not narrow her outlook although she confines herself to themes bounded by rural experiences, for her forte is the portrayal of what she has seen and knows. She has imaginative and creative gifts, but she uses these in enabling us to see the beauty, the humour, and the pathos that lies about our daily paths.

*Anne of Green Gables*, her first novel, has an interesting history. Upon being asked for a short serial story for a Sunday School weekly, she cast about for a plot idea. A faded note book entry suggested: 'Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy; a girl is sent to them.' The writing of a serial was started, but time did not allow the author to complete it for the purpose intended. As she brooded over the theme it began to expand and the result was a book which may be confidently labelled a 'Canadian classic.'

In Anne we have an entirely new character in fiction, a high-spirited, sensitive girl, with a wonderfully vivid imagination; wise beyond her years, outspoken and daring: not always good but always lovable. Her longing for a real home, and an interest in her very quaintness, ends in her being established as a member of the Green Gables family. It is Anne who dominates the whole story. There are other characters, quaint too, and well-drawn, but the introduction of Anne into the community—Anne, so unconventional so imaginative, and so altogether different from the staid, prosaic, general attitude of the neighbourhood—proves to be the invasion of a peculiar ferment, and the incidents which discover the process of fermentation are most delightfully odd and mirth-provoking.

*Anne of Avonlea* follows the career of the orphan heroine and deals with two eventful years of school teaching. Miss Montgomery understands children thoroughly and makes her child characters of all types perfectly natural and lifelike. The same creative faculty which gave us in Anne an entirely new shadow-child shows itself in the portrayal of the mischievous but lovable Davy Keith, his demure twin sister Dora, the imaginative Paul Irving, and the many individualities of the pupils of Avonlea School.

Plot interest is not a strong feature of this or of any of L. M. Montgomery's novels. There are, nevertheless, several threads of action which bind together the series of incidents and secure continuity and unity. The nature descriptions reveal at once the author's intimacy with nature and her poetic attitude of

mind.

Here is a typical passage:—

> A September day on Prince Edward Island hills; a crisp wind blowing up over the sand dunes from the sea; a long, red road, winding through fields and woods, now looping itself about a corner of thick set spruce, now threading a plantation of young maples with great feathery sheets of ferns beneath them, now dipping down into a hollow where a brook flashed out of the woods and into them again, now basking in the open sunshine between ribbons of goldenrod and of myriads of crickets.

*Chronicles of Avonlea*, a volume of short stories, contains some of her most finished work, showing that perfect art that conceals all art, and abounding in a strong vein of simple humour that is found in all her work.

*The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* are written with even less attention to a central plot than the earlier 'Anne' books. They are somewhat loosely connected series of incidents in which the same characters take part. But the community type of fiction does not demand thrilling plots. Other writers can write plot stories, but most other writers do not hold before us the mirror of Canadian country life.

*Kilmeny of the Orchard* is in a sense but an expanded short story. It is a prose love idyll and does not, perhaps, bulk very large when compared with the other books. It is really one of the extended 'chronicles' of Avonlea.

The story of Anne Shirley continues through several volumes—*Anne of the Island* pictures her college days; *Anne's House of Dreams* sees her established as mistress of her own home; while *Rilla of Ingleside* carries over the history into the second generation, Rilla being the daughter of Anne. There is no new development of method or treatment in these. In *Emily of New Moon* (1923) Miss Montgomery created a new child character, with a new environment, new conditions, and a new group of minor personages, yet in effect it is of the same type and in the same literary field as her previous novels. The chief difference to be observed is that she employs a more analytic psychological method in depicting her heroine—a method that tends to produce an adult's story of youth. In a way it marks an advance in literary technique but is not as yet entirely divorced from that minute objective observation which makes equal appeal to the young in years and the young in heart.

The particular type of rural community which is the background of Marian Keith's stories may be duplicated in many parts of Canada and is quite common in older Ontario—a community originally settled by Scottish Presbyterians and afterwards leavened with just enough English and Irish to throw into relief the chief characteristics of each nationality.

One cannot escape the fact of a marked similarity to the work of J. M. Barrie in his tales of Thrums. There is, however, this difference: Barrie is more restrained in his emotions, more abbreviated and less poetic in his descriptions,

more pawky and less boisterous in his humor; in fine, Barrie is Scotch, Marian Keith is Scottish-Canadian.

As in most novels of the community type, the interest lies in incident and characterization. The noblest character of all her stories, the best drawn, is the grand old mystic Highlander, 'Duncan Polite,' the spiritual watchman of Glenoro. The incidents of this story are woven mainly around the path of the young minister, while the other Glenoro novels centre about the personages of chief interest in a rural community—*Silver Maple*, the school teacher; *Treasure Valley*, the young doctor. *The End of the Rainbow* and *The Bells of St. Stephens* are studies of town life. *Lizbeth of the Dale* and *In Orchard Glen* are character studies of a boy and a girl respectively. The same qualities prevail in all these. *Little Miss Melody* builds an engaging picture of the community of Cherry Hill around a fresh and original young girl character. The keynote of Marian Keith's stories is 'service.' Her work as a whole gives a faithful picture of the social and religious life of a certain type of rural Canadian settlement, and Canadian town.

Mrs. McClung's 'community' depicted in *Sowing Seeds in Danny* was a little western town, with certain elements of the usual population crossing its pages. The poor immigrant girl, the young English gentleman learning to farm, the doctor, the preacher, the would-be politician are faithfully portrayed. Most interesting of all is Mrs. Watson, the hard-working washerwoman and her family of nine children. The fortunes of Pearlie Watson are the theme of a sequel, *The Second Chance*, in which the setting in a rural settlement, while *The Black Creek Stopping House* is a collection of short stories. Later the career of Pearl Watson is continued in *Purple Springs*, but this novel shades into a sort of politico-propagandist treatise. Human interest and news quality with a ready-made style to correspond has caught the public interest in Mrs. McClung's work rather than any conspicuous artistry of method.

### 2. *The Institutional Novel.*

From looking at the life of fixed communities or localities, the next step is to consider them in their relation to what we might call certain 'institutions' of our national life, growth, or conditions. We saw that R. E. Knowles in *St. Cuthbert's* made the Scottish Presbyterian Church the dominating influence of that story. In this sense, the life of the railroad or construction camp is an 'institutional' rather than a local or community life. This has been excellently portrayed by Frank L. Packard in his collection of short stories, *On the Iron at Big Cloud*: Alan Sullivan's *The Passing of Oul-I-But* contains some splendid stories of this type. Here also we would place the sea stories of Norman Duncan and Frederick William Wallace.

Norman Duncan's peculiar field is the ragged coasts and savage seas of Newfoundland and the hard, cruel, tempest-battered life of the Newfoundland fisherman. When *The Way of the Sea* was published (1904), Frank T. Bullen, himself a master-maker of sea stories, wrote in a foreword: 'I am absolutely certain that with the exception of Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling no writing about the sea has ever probed so deeply and so faithfully into its mysteries as his.' Duncan's fidelity to his subject appears not only in his truthful description of the life and way of the sea, but even more in his realization and presentation of the religious side of the Newfoundland fishermen—whose stern creed was born out of a never-ceasing struggle for existence.

Norman Duncan, although he produced several novels, of which *Dr. Luke of the Labrador* is the most artistically constructed, is essentially a writer of short stories. Indeed, some of his novels were made simply by piecing together, with connecting material, stories that had first appeared in magazine form. As a short story writer he exhibits the finest and most desirable qualities—substantial character foundation, economy of language, sufficiency of emotional causation, and a breadth of human sympathy. His *Battles Royal Down North* and *Harbor Tales Down North* are two collections of a high order of excellence. His power to portray action makes his juvenile books—such as *Billy Topsail and Company*—very acceptable to the youthful mind.

Frederick William Wallace writes chiefly of Nova Scotia sailors and deep sea fishermen. He is more objective in his treatment of themes than is Duncan. While Wallace's gift may be said to lie in his skill in producing vivid visualizations of seamanship, Duncan's lies in realizing seamen. Wallace observes and describes the life of the sailor and the fisherman; Duncan realizes and interprets the soul. Consequently in *Blue Water* (1920), *The Shacklocker* (a collection of short stories), and *The Viking Blood*, have much more plot and action to them than have Norman Duncan's novels and short stories; but they are not so intimate and convincing in character analysis, neither are they so careful nor so finished in their technique—the two styles are quite in harmony with the differing methods of treatment.

Commercial life in its sociological relationships falls under our definition of an 'institutional' aspect of national life. Here must be placed Alan Sullivan's *The Inner Door* which reveals inside conditions and labor problems in connection with the operation of a large rubber factory; also his story of the somewhat spectacular development of a chain of allied industries at a strategic point for power and for raw material—told in *The Rapids*.

There are, in this period, some notable examples of Incidental Literature. Louis Hémon, a native of France, lived but a short time in Canada, yet wrote, in *Maria Chapdelaine*, (English translations by W. H. Blake and by Sir

Andrew Macphail), a chastely poetic novel of French Canadian life. Miss J. G. Sime in *Our Little Life* presents, if we view it from one angle, a meticulous study of the life of a Montreal seamstress, with her pathetically frustrate love story; but more than all that, *Our Little Life* is an observation of the life of the Canadian people by an English mind. The literary artistry of both these works is indisputable. Some criticism has been aimed at both on the score of inaccuracy of minor facts. Whether or not there are such minor inaccuracies, there still remains the grand result that the color, the atmosphere, the outward semblance, are portrayed as they have scarce ever been before; that the inmost soul of the characters is understandingly and consistently revealed.

Education in its institutional aspect appears in many novels only incidentally. As a dominant motive or a circumscribing setting its development is comparatively recent. *Miriam of Queen's*, by Lilian Vaux Mackinnon (1921), shows the molding influence of university life; *The Hickory Stick*, by Nina Moore Jamieson (1921), emphasises the place and importance of the rural school in rural life and problems; the great school novels of English literature find a modified echo in the boarding school stories of Ethel Hume Bennett and Gordon Hill Grahame—*Judy of York Hill* (1922), by the former, in which dialogue, action and atmosphere contribute effectively in conveying a picture of a girls' school; *Larry, or the Avenging Terrors* (1923), by the latter, a boys' boarding school story of lively incident.

### 3. *The Realistic Romance.*

The rapid expansion of the far West and such spectacular events as the 'Klondike rush,' gave a sort of feverish color to a life that previously had appeared one of toil, hardship, and stony endurance. Viewed imaginatively, that life now presented its hectic side, and the far West and the high North were exploited as literary fields of thrill, adventure, and excitement. Thus the second decade of this century saw the rise in Canada of the Realistic Romance. At its best this class of novel resembles the Community type but is speeded up with a more exciting and more complicated plot; at its worst it is lurid melodrama with realism interpreted as the portrayal of the sordid and seamy side of life. Very few of the realistic romances exhibit any distinction of manner and style. They are not concerned with the niceties of the art of telling a story but with the ability to keep the reader constantly keyed up to a high emotional tensity.

*The Trail of '98*, by Robert W. Service (1910), is a story of the Yukon, with the spectacular elements of gold-rush days fully emphasised. The qualities of Service's poetry are accentuated in his fiction. In the same year H. A. Cody began his career as a novelist with another Yukon tale, *The*

*Frontiersman*. It is a story of love, adventure, and missionary experience. *Rod of the Lone Patrol* followed in 1912, adding a new fictional element which has been much exploited—the doings of the North West Mounted Police. Cody produced a long series of adventure novels with a variety of settings.

Other writers of the Realistic Romance speedily developed different aspects of Western life or staged their romances in different regions of the Great West or the Far North. We have room only for brief mention of some of the best known writers in this class.

Robert Stead's novels are chiefly of the prairie farm and ranch—*The Bail Jumper* (1914), *The Homesteader*, *The Cowpuncher*, *Dennison Grant*, *Neighbors*. He is effective in reproducing the atmosphere of the prairie, the details of farm and ranch life, and characteristic bits of scenery; his stories are stronger in incident and action than they are in characterization.

Robert Watson began fairly well with *My Brave and Gallant Gentleman* (1918), a romance of England and British Columbia, that had touches of Borrow and Stevenson, but his later efforts have tended to cast themselves into more stereotyped forms. Robert A. Hood produced two adventure-romances of British Columbia, *The Chivalry of Keith Leicester* and *The Quest of Alistair*. Douglas Durkin exploited Manitoba in *The Lobstick Trail*. 'Luke Allan' (Lacey Amy) wrote several stories of cowboy life of which *Blue Pete: Half Breed* was significant because of the originality and individuality of its leading character.

John Murray Gibbon's earlier fiction—in *Drums Afar* and *Hearts and Faces*—was English in its setting and concerned with psychological problems and studies of Oxford life. In transferring to an American literary habitat, he entered the ranks of the Realistic Romancers. His novel, *The Conquering Hero*, was a lively, melodramatic story of the Rocky Mountains and British Columbia ranches; while in *Pagan Love* (1923), he combined a startling mystery with an element of satire on the modern philosophy of business success.

Theodore Goodridge Roberts, younger brother of Charles G. D. Roberts, is essentially a story teller and much of his fiction shows the influence of Weyman and the historical romanticists of the latter years of the nineteenth century. His *Brothers in Peril* (1905), *A Captain of Raleigh's* (1911), and *The Harbor Master* (1914) are stories of romantic adventure of very early days in Newfoundland, while *Jess of the River*, *Rayton* and *Forest Fugitives* have a setting in rural New Brunswick.

### 4. *Historical Fiction.*

The influences that produced the Community Novel gave to the Historical

Fiction of this period a closer up view. Instead of the far-off days of the French regime, the historical field of vision became that of but a century or so past and writers essayed to revivify the times and personages of the War of 1812 or the Rebellion of 1837. A noteworthy example is C. H. J. Snider's stories of the naval engagements on the Great Lakes, *In the Wake of the Eighteen-Twelvers*. With fine recreative imagination he enables us to live through incidents of daring, gallantry, and romance of these stirring battles. 'Anison North' in *The Forging of the Pikes* gives a realistic picture of Toronto of '37, of the battle of Montgomery's Tavern, and a pen-portrait of the rebel leader, Mackenzie. She lets us see 'both sides of the story' of the conditions that were responsible for the Rebellion.

A minor species of the Historical Novel is found in the novel of pioneer life which seeks to put into a permanent record pioneer experiences and conditions of sometimes considerably less than a century ago. Adeline M. Teskey did this for the Niagara Peninsula and the building of the first Welland Canal with *In Candlelight Days* (1914). Archie McKishnie told of the conflict of the 'bushwhacker,' who delighted in the freedom of the woods and streams, with the incoming tide of settlement in *Love of the Wild*, drawing upon the historic figure of Colonel Talbot for some of his characterization. Anison North blends a colorful picture of the enjoyment of outdoor life with a pioneer line fence feud in her *Carmichael*. In *Kinsmen* Percival J. Cooney relates a strange story of Scottish feudalism—an example of the clan system with its autocratic laird—which actually existed in Canada.

Few Canadian writers have found leisure to follow the example of Gilbert Parker in writing Historical Fiction in Old World settings, but this has quite recently been done in a highly distinctive style in novels appearing over the signature—'E. Barrington.' *The Ladies*, semi-historical stories of the eighteenth century; *The Chaste Diana*, a story of Polly Peacham of 'Beggar's Opera' fame; *The Divine Lady* (1924) tells the love-story of Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton.

### 5. *Imaginative Fiction.*

In one sense all fiction is imaginative. There is, however, a species in which pure imagination plays a much greater part than in the Community Novel, in Historical Fiction, or in the other types discussed in this chapter. Marjorie Pickthall's work is the highest example of this. She wrote, not with the reproductive imagination nor with fancy, but with the faculty defined by Matthew Arnold as imaginative reason. Into the texture of her fiction she wove poetic imagination and poetic significance derived from her clear, absolute, and sympathetic understanding of the human heart and of the hidden springs

and the meaning of existence, from her superior and inclusive sympathetic intelligence. Thus she was enabled to write stories of the most varied settings and of the most wildly differing characters with equal convincingness.

*Little Hearts* (1915), is an engaging tale of the days of 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' with its conflict chiefly between loyalty to the Crown, and fidelity to the spirit of humanity. It pictures 'little hearts,' men of small fortunes, and small (as the world sees it) ambitions, in their pathetic existence, more pathetic because of finely brave in the midst of many both petty and heroic vicissitudes of fortune, of mean victory and noble defeat. The novel preaches no didactic moral but it silently teaches Christ's philosophy of struggle and defeat—'He that loseth his life shall find it.' It impresses unforgettably how little after all are the greatest hearts, and how little we lose or gain in any defeat or triumph which is merely earthly defeat or triumph.

*The Bridge* (1922), has the same theme, with the pain and cruelty of love, of unfulfilled seeking, and the final triumph of a soul that saved itself by losing itself in inward self-knowledge and self-sacrifice. It is set against a background of the tremendous beauty of the Great Lakes, scenes of storm on land and water. Technically, it is farther from perfection than *Little Hearts*; it has less structural unity, less smoothness of style. At times the emotional situations seem overdrawn; nor are atmosphere and setting definitively localized.

The collection of short stories—*Angel's Shoes* (1922)—embodies examples of Miss Pickthall's perfect artistry as a short story writer. These stories are clear, vivid, colorful, and of almost the highest type of creative imagination. They may lack, occasionally, a warmth of humanity that is present in the work of other writers of poorer craftsmanship.

Less distinctive but belonging to the few Canadian novels of this class is *The Window Gazer*, by Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, a romance of a man who 'fell in love with his wife.' Blended with the characteristics of the novel of pure imagination there are here slight touches of the Realistic Romance and the Community Novel. A somewhat curious literary phenomena is found in *Mists of the Morning* by this same writer, which began in the style of the Imaginative Novel and ended as a Realistic Romance.

### 6. *Some Miscellaneous Types.*

To the ranks of the Animal Romancers this period has added at least one writer who approaches the subject in a new way. The attitude was apparent in the nature passages of *Gaff Linkum* (1907) and became more a quality of Archie McKishnie's work as he continued to write short stories and novels of animal life. We find it crystallized in *Openway* (1923). Roberts is the intellectual animal psychologist; Thompson Seton, the literary scientist; W. A.

Fraser, the objective story teller; but Archie McKishnie impresses us with the sense of his comradeship with the creatures of the marsh, the wood, and the stream. He is their interpreter but not as an outside observer. He lives with them, loves them, protects them. Thus when he writes animal stories he rises to his best literary style and achieves a beauty and smoothness that is not always found in his other writing.

The detective story is represented by a series of 'underground' stories by Arthur Stringer; a typical example is *The Wire Tappers*. The setting is a large American city, and rapidity of action is the desired and supplied element. More Canadian in setting and atmosphere are Victor Lauriston's *The Twenty-First Burr* and Hopkins Moorhouse's *The Gauntlet of Alceste*, both well-constructed according to the requirements of this type of fiction, concealing the mystery motive skilfully up to a surprising climactic finish.

The religions and philosophies of the Orient find a slight reflection in some Canadian poetry. In fiction, the stories and novels of L. Adams Beck—*The Ninth Vibration*, *The Key of Dreams*, *The Perfume of the Rainbow*, *The Treasure of Ho*—are chiefly Oriental in themes and settings, and mark the author as an interpreter of the mysteries of the East, with an unusual beauty and originality of style.

Arthur Stringer's trilogy of the prairie—*The Prairie Wife*, *The Prairie Mother*, *The Prairie Child*—is remarkable as a study in feminine psychology and the reactions of problems of prairie life upon a feminine mind in its domestic and personal associations. The first volume in the trilogy is the most impressive because of its spontaneity, its subtle touches of color and atmosphere. The modern double-triangle element dominates and rather detracts from the originality and individuality of the latter volumes, but the series is significant as an advance from the realistic romance toward a newer realism.

### 7. *The New Realism.*

It was but natural that a reaction should set in against the realistic romance with its insufficiency of motivation and its lack of fidelity to real life. Rather remarkably this arrives in another ten-year cycle and a group of novels published in 1923 show a marked similarity of method and treatment, with widely varied themes and settings. We distinguish this fresh and original attitude as the 'New Realism' in Canadian fiction. The strongest of these novels undoubtedly is *The Viking Heart* by Laura Goodman Salverson. It might be called the epic of the Icelander in Canada, describing as it does the arrival of a party of immigrants in 1870 and following their struggles, hardships, and gradual rise of fortunes to the present day. There is no plot but such as grows out of the record of the lives of the characters. There is no

melodrama, but there is the tense drama of the realities of life. The style is chaste, simple, but forceful. Back of it all lies a big theme—‘the price of country’—the realization of citizenship through toil, tears, blood, and sacrifice.

The other novels in this group are: *Possession*, by Mazo de la Roche, with its setting a Niagara fruit farm; *Lantern Marsh*, by Beaumont Cornell, following a farm boy through his struggles for an education; *Cattle*, by Onoto Watanna, an almost brutally realistic presentation of a man whose sole aim in life was the acquirement of cattle—as a form of wealth—whose whole outlook on life was measured in terms of cattle; *The Child’s House*, by Marjory MacMurchy, which enters into the heart and mind of a growing little girl.

The importance of this movement is that it has cast aside superficialities, that these writers have somehow been able to ‘see things as they are,’ to glimpse the realities of life from their real beginnings—four of the five novels named are actually rooted in ‘the soil’ as their setting and their underlying spiritual foundation. With this foundation of actuality and truth, the writers have gained a clearer and more finished expression. Some of these novels have melodramatic spots; some have other weaknesses, but, on the whole, the effect of this new movement has been to produce novels that have a definite structural unity, that are largely free from irrelevant and insignificant detail, that are written with an economy and aptness of language, and that have more definiteness and depth to their basic themes.

CHAPTER XXII

# The Poetic Dramatists

THE POETIC DRAMATISTS OF THE SECOND RENAISSANCE—ARTHUR STRINGER—ROBERT NORWOOD—MARJORIE PICKTHALL, AND OTHERS.

ARTHUR STRINGER, novelist and lyric poet, showed versatility and considerable power in imaginative construction when, in 1903, he published a volume of two dramatic poems or soliloquies and one poetic drama, all on classical themes in blank verse; namely, *Hephaestus*, *Persephone at Enna*, and *Sappho in Leucadia*. In these works, however, Stringer was indulging an 'avocation;' for his genius is at its best in lyrical verse and prose fiction. *Hephaestus* and *Persephone*, even though they are written in blank verse, have all the color, music, and emotion which we associate with lyrical poetry. *Sappho in Leucadia*, though dramatic in form, is undramatic in movement, and is lyrical in spirit. For at the beginning Sappho, the 'bird-throated child of Lesbos,' has resolved to destroy herself by leaping into the sea, and Phaon's only role is the attempt of a lover to dissuade her, but to no avail. The so-called 'drama' is but a series of colloquies between Sappho and Phaon. The only 'movement' is a psychological development in three stages—first, the original intention on Sappho's part to destroy herself; then the arrested intention; and, finally, the intention fulfilled, in spite of Phaon's pleading, by Sappho leaping to her death.

What Stringer has really done in *Sappho in Leucadia* is to take a Greek legend and to tell the simple episode of Sappho's death, in colorful, musical, and artistic blank verse. There is no emotional poignancy in it; nothing for the heart and the moral imagination. It is all for the aesthetic sensibility, for the lover of sensuous imagery and melody. Oddly its single lyrical interlude or 'song' is not in 'Sapphics,' but is an octave in trimeters. The sensuous beauty of color and music in this quasi-poetic drama is exemplified in the following speech by Sappho:—

> For like a god you seemed in those glad days
> Of droning wings and languorous afternoons,
> When close beside the murmuring sea we walked.
> Then did the odorous summer ocean seem
> A meadow green where foam one moment flowered
> And then was gone, and ever came again,
> A thousand bloom-burdened Springs in one!
> —How like a god you seemed to me; and I
> Was then most happy, and at little things

We lightly laughed, and oftentimes we plunged
Waist-deep and careless in the cool green waves,
As Tethys once and Oceanus played
Upon the golden ramparts of the world.
Then would we rest, and muse upon the sands, . . .
And on the dunes the thin green ripples lisped
Themselves to sleep and sails swung dreamily
Where azure islands floated on the air.
Then did your body seem a temple white. . . .
The bloom of youth was on your sunburnt cheek,
The streams of life sang thro' your violet veins,
The midnight velvet of your tangled hair
Lured, as a twilight rill . . . . . .

Stringer's *Sappho in Leucadia* is an engaging and even impressive dramatic colloquy, but it is not an authentic poetic or closet drama. It has sensuous beauty but no spiritual power. But it does increase Stringer's reputation as a verbal colorist and melodist.

In 1915 appeared an original poet of distinct spiritual power in lyrical and dramatic forms. He was Robert Norwood. His first book was a sonnet-sequence. But in 1916 he published a poetic drama, *The Witch of Endor: A Tragedy*; and in 1919, another poetic drama, *The Man of Kerioth*. In 1921 he published *Bill Boram*, which is a 'dramatic tale.'

Robert Norwood has two natural gifts. More than any other Canadian poet he has an innate genius for the philosophical or mystical interpretation of good and evil in the universe. Also, he is gifted with acute insight into the inner heart of man and woman, ancient and modern. These two gifts fit him for the office of the kind of poet who by imaginative sympathy perceives the ultimate harmony of the universe, the spiritual meaning of the tragedy and comedy of existence. As a poetic dramatist, then, Norwood is a Seer; and his voice is the voice of a Prophet. Power over the heart and imagination of the people, not Beauty and Art for art's sake, is his aim. If he is the Poet of Beauty, as he is in all his verse, lyrical and dramatic, he is more, or supremely, the Poet of Spiritual Vision and Power in his poetic dramas.

In *The Witch of Endor* Norwood returns to the Biblical theme which had engaged Heavysege—the love romance and tragedy of King Saul. The characters are never shadowy but always alive. The dramatic movement is never held up by long or digressive moralizing speeches, as in Heayysege's *Saul*, but each character makes his speeches according to the dramatic necessity, enough and no more, thus permitting at 'the psychological moment' the natural entrance of another character and his speech. The structure is logically developed to the tragic or spiritual climax. But in the development there is no uniform level of emotion, rather the emotion varies from gentle or pathetic to intense or tragic. It is indeed in its profounder imaginative vision,

its more varying and rising degrees of emotional intensity, and its more logical structural development to a climax that *The Witch of Endor* has more incisive and compelling power as poetic drama than Campbell's Arthurian drama *Mordred*. In short, *The Witch of Endor* is a beautiful and spiritual poetic drama —purging the emotions of pity and fear and transporting the spirit to the Mount of Vision where it sees intuitively how the ways of God to man are justified and how Love is greater than Faith and Hope.

In his next poetic drama *The Man of Kerioth* (that is, Judas Iscariot) Norwood made an advance in imaginative vision, construction, and power. He achieves this by reducing the magniloquence of the speeches and by modernly humanizing the characters of Judas Iscariot, Mary Magdalen, Blind Bartimaeus, Philip, and Jesus the Carpenter. He even introduces little children into the drama. The high and the vulgar and lowly, saints and sinners, the motley of society in Jerusalem, commingle intimately and humanly. There is a distinct advance in realistic truth of characterization, and the whole drama is pervaded with a winning naturalness and humanity which are not in any preceding poetic drama by a Canadian, nor even in his own succeeding ultra-realistic 'dramatic tale of the sea,' *Bill Boram*. So that in respect of creation thoroughly humanized, noble, and clearly limned character-portraiture—as, for instance, Judas Iscariot, Mary Magdalen, and Jesus—Norwood must be ranked as the supreme creator amongst Canadian poetic dramatists. This is a matter of sheer artistry. But Norwood also shows an advance in spiritual power. With profounder mystical vision and greater truth he justifies the ways of God to man, and exalts the spirit to the Temple pinnacle where we behold Immortal Love in all its sweet beauty of humanity and in all its white radiance of redeeming light. In *The Man of Kerioth* he attains his acme in spiritual beauty and power as a poetic dramatist.

So far Norwood had not created any poetic drama with a definitively Canadian theme, setting, and characters. In his *Bill Boram*, which is a 'dramatic tale' told in the third person, the characters and the action being 'reported,' Norwood made a fresh, novel, and impressive contribution to original Canadian Literature. In doing so Norwood dropped somewhat in imaginative truth and dramatic invention; but he rose to greater heights of mystical perception and spiritual power. The theme of *Bill Boram* is the redemption of the human spirit by the love of beauty in Nature. Ingenious as his conception is, Norwood committed the error of conceiving the accident of a love of flowers, that is to say, of sensuous beauty, as a possible redemptive force in human life. He would have us believe that the love of sensuous beauty can transmute itself or become transmuted into an altogether different kind of love, namely, the love of spiritual beauty and thus regenerate a coarse and brutal nature and remake it into a noble and refined spirit. Such spiritual

metabolism is impossible, and *Bill Boram* so far forth lacks imaginative truth and dramatic power.

Aside from that, *Bill Boram*, on the whole, is a novel achievement in dramatic narrative. The characters are vividly and veraciously drawn; they have realistic truth. There is also an air of romance in the whole tale, such an air of vital romance as obtains in the tales and novels of the sea by Norman Duncan and Frederick William Wallace.

Summarily; Norwood's *Bill Boram* is an amazing dramatic picture of rude characters in a setting of romance colored by a strange and startling commingling of coarse speech and brutalized deed and of beautiful diction and exquisite imagery. It is at once a *tour de force* in dramatic conception and construction and in impressionistic word-painting. Yet it is a powerful presentation of the idea of the mystical union of the human spirit with the divine through the love of pure beauty in Nature.

The Second Renaissance is noted also for the work of several other poetic dramatists. Amongst them are Dr. James B. Dollard, author of *Clontarf: An Irish National Drama*; Rev. Dean Llwyd, author of *The Vestal Virgin*; John L. Carleton, author of *The Medieval Hun; A Historical Drama*, and *The Crimson Wing*, which has the distinction of having been the winner of the first prize for original dramatic composition in the Canadian Prize Play Competition, 1918; Norah Holland, author of *When Half Gods Go and Other Poems* (1924), the title-poem of which has been repeated as a Christmas play for several successive seasons. These are all respectable poetic dramas and give distinction both to the quantity and the quality of poetic drama in the Second Renaissance.

But this work in poetic drama is, after all, not inspired impressing one as a stint in creation, and is not at all comparable to the work of Norwood in imaginative vision, artistic construction, and dramatic power. Comparable, however, with Norwood's and superior to it in spiritual poignancy is the single poetic drama left by Marjorie Pickthall. Though Norwood's poetic dramas contain lyrical interludes, and though his dramatic tale *Bill Boram* is for the most part rhymed, on the whole they are in blank verse. But Miss Pickthall's single poetic drama *The Wood Carver's Wife* is lyrical through and through, and is properly to be denoted as 'lyric drama.' In form this lyric drama stands midway between Stringer's dramatic poems and Norwood's poetic dramas. In that respect Marjorie Pickthall made a novel contribution to Canadian poetic literature.

*The Wood Carver's Wife* was first published in *The University Magazine* in 1920. It was reprinted, along with other fugitive poems, in 1922, the drama supplying the title poem of the volume. *The Wood Carver's Wife* has four characters, one of whom is Shagonas, an Indian lad who represents Nemesis. It

is set in the time of the Intendant. The theme is ‘the eternal triangle’—a girl-wife, with a husband still alive and a secret lover. The mood of the drama is the tragedy which follows the sin of disloyalty to the sacrament of marriage, even if the disloyalty is only in the heart and never openly expressed in clandestine meeting between the wife and the lover. The mood of the dramatist, however, is not one of simply illustrating the law that the ‘soul that sinneth it shall die,’ but of wistfulness about the ways of God to men and women when spiritual unmating is permitted by Heaven. The dramatist *seems* to put her own feeling about the matter into her drama. She seems to feel that if the moral law is inexorable, it ought not to be so in the case of a young girl who innocently, or without knowing her own heart and what she was doing, married a man, who, after all, did not want her as an end in herself, or her spirit for its own sake, but to have her as a model for the statue of the Blessed Virgin he was creating in wood, as a chattel in his studio. Humanly, Marjorie Pickthall felt that the girl-wife was more sinned against than sinning when she allowed herself to be conscious—merely conscious—of the lover. But Marjorie Pickthall, with loyalty to the dramatic necessities, though with a spiritual wistfulness all the while, constructed the action and movement of *The Wood Carver’s Wife* so that the tragic ending was inevitable. For the husband knows that there is a secret lover, and Shagonas knows, and at the tragic climax it is the arrow of the Indian, representing the moral law, that sends the lover to his death. The girl-wife knows what has happened, because she has heard the twang of Shagonas’ bow-string. The tragedy is complete when she receives from Shagonas, who is again Nemesis, the sword of her lover, and dies with a mad speech on her lips, while at the same time the husband, also mad, as he was from the beginning, has Shagonas pose the beautiful dead body of the girl-wife that he may put the acme touches to his statue.

How easily the dramatist might have made certain shifts which would have resulted in reconciliation and a happy ending! But with all her spiritual wistfulness, Marjorie Pickthall loyally held to the dramatic and the artistic ideals. The climax and tragic ending are tremendous and wholly spiritualizing, purging the soul with pity for humanity through the terror which the action and the denouement awake in the spirit. There is in it all a spiritual poignancy which does not obtain in Norwood’s love-tragedy of Saul in *The Witch of Endor*. It is suffused with a lovely and winning beauty of diction, imagery, and verbal music; and it contains one lyric ‘cry of a soul’ which for pathos is unsurpassed in Canadian literature, namely, the Litany of Dorette, the hapless girl-wife, to the Blessed Virgin Mother beginning,

> If you have lain in the night
> And felt the old tears run
> In their channels worn in the heart,

Pity me, Mary.

Considered critically, then, the poetic dramas of Robert Norwood and the lyric drama of Marjorie Pickthall are, from the universal point of view, authentic works of art, originally conceived and beautifully constructed, and, from the Canadian point of view, are the supreme achievements in the poetic drama of Canada.

CHAPTER XXIII

# Humorists

THE HUMORISTS OF CANADA: PRE-CONFEDERATION—HALIBURTON—HOWE— DE MILLE—DUVAR—POST-CONFEDERATION—LANIGAN—COTES—DRUMMOND—HAM: NEW SCHOOL—LEACOCK—DONOVAN—DAVIS—MACTAVISH—McARTHUR—HODGINS.

THE name and work of Thomas Chandler Haliburton as a satirist or humorist so over-shadowed the names and works of other Canadian humorists that it is a belief, both in foreign countries and in Canada itself, that the Canadian people have no genius for humor and that, outside of Haliburton's satiric writings, there is no significant Canadian humorous literature. All this is superstition and has been perpetuated in two ways. No Canadian literary historian has remarked the existence of other Canadian humorists, save Haliburton, though Mark Twain in his Library of American Humor has included the work of Haliburton, De Mille, Lanigan; and, secondly, no Canadian anthologist, save Lawrence J. Burpee, has collected in a single volume examples of the work of Canadian humorists.

Pre-Confederation Canadian humor is represented by the work of Haliburton, Howe, and De Mille. Of these the work of Haliburton is the significant humor of the period. In general it is satiric, a criticism of society, aiming to bring about certain reforms. No other Canadian humorist since Haliburton, not even Leacock, had or has any gifts in comic characterization. Howe had no satiric purpose. His humor, which was chiefly in verse, was written 'for the fun of the thing.'

A native-born Canadian man of letters who has not received his due is James De Mille, poet, novelist, short story fictionist and humorist. De Mille, at least in time, anticipated the new type of American humor which is associated with the name of Mark Twain. For some months before Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* was published (1869), De Mille's *The Dodge Club*, or *Italy in 1859* had appeared. This volume is not to be confused with De Mille's *Dodge Club Series* published in 1871, 1872, 1877 which were humorous and healthful stories for the young. If, therefore, the humor of Stephen Leacock is essentially a recrudescence of the American humor which we see in Franklin and in Mark Twain, and if Leacock read De Mille and Twain, as presumably he did, then the first of the Leacockians in Canada, to use an anachronism, was De Mille, and he is 'the father' of the later or the 20th century Canadian humorists beginning with Leacock. For the genius of that *genre* of humor, as in

De Mille and Twain, is essentially exaggerated nonsense or nonsense said with a face of seriousness. De Mille's work does not lend itself to quotation, but stylistically De Mille's humorous prose, aside from the humor itself, is distinctly engaging or readable by virtue of its simple or popular diction.

Away from the traditional humor of the American or Haliburton style, is the more delicate imaginative humor of John Hunter-Duvar and the whimsical humor of Grant Allen. Hunter-Duvar wrote considerable humor in light ephemeral form and his stories and verse are colored with many passages of *genre* humor and satire. The chief basis of his reputation as a humorist of a distinct and anomalous type is found in his extraordinarily conceived narrative poem, *The Emigration of the Fairies*. It deserves wide reading as an example of the pure humor of fancy. Grant Allen was a novelist and scientist. He published a volume of light verse, *The Lower Slopes*, in which he indulged his humorous gifts in a series of satiric and entertaining verses on scientific themes. It is all essentially the humor of persiflage.

After Haliburton the extraordinary name in Post-Confederation Canadian humor is George Thomas Lanigan. He was born in the Province of Quebec and has the distinction of having founded what is now the *Daily Star*, of Montreal. He was a brilliant journalist and possessed unusual versatility of invention and style in prose and verse. He had all the mental gifts, and some of the faults, native to the Keltic temperament. His ebullient spirits expressed themselves in restless activity and with as ready brilliancy in verse as in prose.

His prose humor, which was published serially in *The World*, New York, in the first decade after Confederation, was fresh and novel and arresting. The series was published in book form under the title *Fables Out of the World* (1878) and were to their time what the *Fables in Slang* by George Ade are to our time. So compellingly did Lanigan's *Fables* strike the imagination of Mark Twain that he republished seven of them in his Library of Humor. For the most part, Lanigan's *Fables* are satires on the half-truths which constitute popular moral maxims. They are all mere absurdities, and mere nonsense; but they contain a larger truth than the maxims they satirize. They are sure to awake a chuckle. We quote two examples:—

### THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

> A Venetian Merchant who was looking in the lap of luxury was accosted upon the Rialto by a friend who had not seen him for many months. 'How is this?' cried the latter. 'When I last saw you your gaberdine was out at elbows, and now you sail in your own gondola.' 'True,' replied the Merchant, 'but since then I have met with serious losses, and been obliged to compound with my creditors for ten cents

on the dollar.'

Moral.—Composition is the life of trade.

### THE HONEST NEWSBOY.

A Newsboy was passing along the street, when he chanced to discover a purse of greenbacks. He was at first inclined to conceal it, but repelling the unworthy suggestion, he asked a Venerable Man if it was his'n. The Venerable Man looked at it hurriedly, said it was, patted him on the head, gave him a quarter, and said he would yet be president. The Venerable Man then hastened away, but was arrested for having counterfeit bills in his possession, while the honest Newsboy played penny-ante with his humble quarter and ran it up to $2.62.

Moral.—Honesty is sometimes the best policy.

Though Lanigan's *Fables* in prose were at that time a new and brilliant type of humor, it is in his humorous ballads that he surpasses himself, and because of them he remains unique among Canadian humorists. Some of his humorous ballads have also been included in anthologies of *American* (!) humor, as, for instance, in Roscoe Johnson's volume, *Playday Poetry*. The most famous of Lanigan's humorous ballads is his egregious piece of persiflage, *The Ahkoond of Swat*. Really, however, much more humorous are Lanigan's *The Amateur Orlando* and *The Plumber's Revenge*. Their length prevents quotation here. On account of its notoriety and the absolute egregiousness of its comic irresponsibility we select for quotation Lanigan's *The Ahkoond of Swat*. To give it color and setting we note briefly the origin of the verses. According to Mr. Burpee the facts are that 'one evening, after learning the fact from the English mail just received, Lanigan announced that the Akhoond of Swat was dead and that he was writing a poem about him.' The verses appeared in the next morning paper. Following is the text of the *Ahkoond of Swat*:—

What, what, what,
What's the news from Swat?
Sad news,
Bad news,
Comes by the cable led
Through the Indian Ocean's bed,
Through the Persian Gulf, the Red
Sea and the Med—
Iterranean—he's dead;
The Akhoond is dead!
For the Akhoond I mourn,

Who wouldn't?
He strove to disregard the message stern,
But he Ahkoodn't.

Dead, dead, dead;
Sorrow Swats!
Swats wha' hae wi' Ahkoond bled,
Swats whom he had often led
Onward to a gory bed,
Or to victory,
As the case might be.
Sorrow Swats!
Tears shed,
Shed tears like water,
Your great Ahkoond is dead!
That Swat's the matter!

Mourn, city of Swat!
Your great Ahkoond is not,
But lain 'mid worms to rot:
His mortal part alone, his soul was caught
(Because he was a good Ahkoond)
Up to the bosom of Mahound.
Though earthly walls his frame surround
(For ever hallowed be the ground!)
And sceptics mock the lowly mound
And say, 'He's now of no Ahkound!'
(His soul is in the skies!)
The azure skies that bend above his loved
Metropolis of Swat
He sees with larger, other eyes,
Athwart all earthly mysteries—
He knows what's Swat.

Let Swat bury the great Ahkoond
With a noise of mourning and of lamentation!
Let Swat bury the great Ahkoond
With the noise of the mourning of the Swattish nation!
Fallen is at length
Its tower of strength,
Its sun had dimmed ere it had nooned:
Dead lies the great Ahkoond.
The great Ahkoond of Swat
Is not.

In passing we may note another Canadian humorous poem of the same type which has become famous, namely, *Hoch de Kaiser*, which was composed at a sitting by an *émigré* Canadian journalist who went sometimes by the name of Rose and sometimes by the name of Gordon.

We have elsewhere noted the fresh quality of the humor of Mrs. Everard Cotes (Sarah Jeanette Duncan) and a whole chapter has been devoted to the poetry of William Henry Drummond as the creator of a new species of Canadian humor. The great warm Irish heart of Drummond was not fitted to

create satire or mere fun. His humor is based upon a tender sentiment or what is known as ‘the homely pathetic’ and on a special sense of the humor in *genre* characters, particularly the old and the adolescent *habitant* of Quebec.

A man quite by himself as a humorist is George Henry Ham, who has not unfittingly been called ‘the laughing philosopher’ of Canada. Ham’s humor is essentially the humor of the ‘after-dinner’ or ‘the occasional’ speaker, and is for the most part anecdotal. During a long life he had acquired an inexhaustible fund of the most humorous anecdotes about Canadian characters or celebrated men. These were collected and published in his *Reminiscences of a Raconteur*.

Essentially Ham’s humor is not creative; it is the reproductive humor of the raconteur; but Ham has added to it by a color and settings of his own. It is the humor itself and not the style that counts. But while it is humor and for the most part sheer fun or entertainment, it comes from a man who has seen many vicissitudes in Canadian life and history and institutions and who, in his great age, as human life goes, invites us in his *Reminiscences of a Raconteur* to look upon life and its vicissitudes of good and ill fortune with courage, serenity, faith and hope—and not to fear death. Ham’s humor is distinguished as pleasant medicine for the soul in the hurly-burly of life and in the contemplation of having some time to depart from a world that is full of dear companions and pleasant places.

The next Canadian systematic humorist, though not Canadian-born, is Stephen Leacock. Haliburton was a creator; he really invented, his method of satiric humor, or if he did not invent the method, he at least originally created his comic characters. Leacock, who is ‘a graft on the Canadian literary tree,’ models his humor considerably after the American manner. It is satiric burlesque deliberately constructing around serious character or events extravagant nonsense which is a sort of criticism of manners and morals of society, but which tends to engage us more as burlesque than as criticism. Mr. Leacock’s first book was entitled *Literary Lapses*, published at Montreal in 1910. It was, as the author’s Preface states, for the most part a collection of sketches which had before that date appeared in print in various magazines. Two of the sketches gained the distinction of being reprinted in *Punch* and *The Lancet*, London. These were respectively Leacock’s *Boarding House Geometry* and *The New Pathology*, the latter of which had the further distinction of being reprinted in translations in various German periodicals. His *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* approaches more closely to the unity of a regular novel than any of his other books and is the highest example of his art. His style here is personal and familiar almost to undue flippancy; it is witty and sparkling even to brilliancy; it is less literary than the material of the *Mariposa Newspacket*; it is surrounded with an exuberant atmosphere of burlesque. Yet in *Sunshine Sketches* he has achieved an unmistakably true

characterization of the average ‘little town’ of Canada—its life and its people—a life which shows the universal touch that makes the whole world akin, and at the same time has those narrow, provincial idiosyncrasies that make it distinctively local and impossible of portrayal except by one who has lived it. There is here revealed much of the usually uncovered side of human nature, lit up with a glow of amusement at the foibles of our fellow-man, but tempered, more than is usual with Leacock, with a good-natured sympathy.

From 1910 onwards to 1922, when Leacock’s *My Discovery of England* was published, the humorist produced a dozen volumes of his special species of humor and attained a vogue which places him first amongst Canadian humorists of the 20th century. He works at it brilliantly, sometimes in the extreme burlesque manner of Mark Twain and sometimes in the quiet, humble and drier manner of the characteristic English humor which appears in *Punch* in its department of ‘Charivaria.’ Unlike Haliburton, Leacock rather makes the reader behold the humorist himself figuring away bravely and sometimes futilely, to divert and amuse or entertain. That is to say, unlike Haliburton’s humor, which had an easy method of attack and drew attention to itself, Leacock’s humor gives the reader an impression of its being *strained*, an effort on the humorist’s part deliberately to make people smile or laugh, whether they will or not. It is ‘smart,’ as the word is used in Yankee slang, rather than human and profound. It ‘tickles’ the fancy and sensibility rather than illuminates the imagination and informs the moral reason. It is clever; but like all things that are merely clever it is ephemerally engaging or pleasing, and it is all a case of the half being greater than the whole. In short, Leacock’s humor is for a day, whereas Haliburton’s humor is for all time.

Peter Donovan is a promising later humorist. His first book was *Imperfectly Proper*. After a short residence in England since the war, he published *Over ‘Ere and Back Home* (1922). Mr. Donovan is a critic of society. He is not, however, a critic of constructive social thought but of conventional thinking and conventional manners. The arrows of his humor, which are neither sharp-pointed nor poisonous, are directed against what Matthew Arnold used to call ‘Philistines’—the ‘nice’ people who outwardly conform to all the conventionalities of the law of the land and of the church but who inwardly—when no one is looking—break these laws. Donovan directs his humor against shams in society—not the great shams but those shams which have become acquired habits, or against all that is the ‘fashion’ or the ‘rage’ of the year or day. What he really achieves, from the point of view of vision, is to make us see ourselves as others see us, and to cause us to ‘chuckle’ over his polite—for he is never rude or coarse—revealments. Norris Hodgins works much within the same range as Donovan—*Why Don’t You Get Married?* (1923)—and is not often quite so hilariously funny, but he comes

closer to the daily experiences of every man and every woman, and there is just a bit more solidity to his underlying structure of everyday philosophy.

In another vein is the humor of Peter McArthur, who has been sometimes called ‘The Sage of Ekfrid.’ McArthur writes as one who, living a pastoral and serious life, actually looks around upon his neighbors in other spheres of life and on their striving after wealth and material goods, and who freshly reflects the thought, as old as the ancient hills, that a serious and contented mind, satisfied with the gifts of nature and of God, with pure friendships and sufficient sustenance for body, possesses the only permanent satisfactions of life. He presents this view, not with any originality in thought, but with a manner or style that is pleasant reading and causes us to fall in love with life and laughter and simple joys and to look with charity upon our fellows, and to promote peace.

A new type of Canadian humor, with a new quality of style, is the humor of Newton MacTavish, Editor of *The Canadian Magazine*, in which periodical Mr. MacTavish first gave to the public his fresh and piquant humor, under the title *Thrown In*. The sketches were collected in a volume and published with the same title in 1923. The aim of MacTavish’s humor is definitively social—to disclose the hidden humanity of commonplace souls and their essential unity with their more magnificent fellows. When his humor is amusing or entertaining, it achieves this quality not so much by depicting grotesque or ludicrous situations as by revealing the natural attitudes of pioneer people towards the common things of life, and the elementally human idiosyncrasies of the so-called common people. When it is wit rather than mere humor, MacTavish turns the light of truth upon human psychology and character, by way of situation and character-drawing, in terms of commonplace humanity expressed and colored by homely speech and anecdote. So that the effect of his humor is two-fold. For while the reader is being entertained his mind is also receiving new insight into our common heritage, our genuine humanity, whatever be our culture or social status. In short, MacTavish’s humor is philosophical.

In Roy Davis’ long satiric poem, *Flying Rumors*, published in booklet form at Boston, 1922, we discover a recrudescence of the satiric spirit of Haliburton. Davis was born in Nova Scotia, and was educated at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, and Harvard University. He is Professor of English in the School of Business Administration, Boston University, of which he is also Assistant Dean.

With the same intent as Haliburton, namely, to correct certain centrifugal tendencies in society, Davis employs satire, not, as did Haliburton, in prose, but in verse, which was the traditional medium of the satire of Haliburton’s and Davis’ Loyalist ancestors in Pre-Revolutionary days in the Old Colonies.

The form of Davis' 'essay on man and society' in verse adds, on the side of novelty, a fresh contribution to the satiric literature of Canada. The poet has avoided going back to the traditional rhymed couplet of the Loyalist satirists in Nova Scotia, but has used an octavo stanzaic form in which the first six lines are rhymed alternately, and the last two are rhymed as a couplet. This effects a pleasant sense of finality and rest. Besides, Davis has invented a considerable number of lines which are musical, and arresting or startling in novelty of imagery, as, for instance, this ingenious and daring couplet:—

> A goose-step strutting Kaiser, kissing Mars,
> Has missed the humor of the midnight stars!

When, therefore, we survey the history of Canadian humor from Haliburton to Leacock, and from Leacock to MacTavish and Davis, the humorists who have remained salient and popular, and whose work seems to have the inherent qualities which make for permanent appeal, are Haliburton and Lanigan. And when we survey and note the variety and distinction of Canadian humor—that it is, in many ways, a humor quite by itself, and that it is of considerable quantity—we may reply to certain literary historians and critics that Canadians are not, as they are superstitiously believed to be, a humorless people and quite without a literature of humor. For Canada has produced several notable humorists, an admirable literature of humor; and the work of one of Canada's humorists, Haliburton, has long possessed international renown—a place in permanent world literature.

CHAPTER XXIV

# National Stage Drama

THE RISE OF NATIVE AND NATIONAL REALISTIC STAGE DRAMA IN CANADA: THE LITTLE THEATRE AND THE WORK OF CARROLL AIKINS AND MERRILL DENISON.

ALTHOUGH Canada is relatively rich in Poetic Drama, there is no evidence of a developed Stage Drama. Part of the literary future of the country lies in the development of native and national stage drama. A significant beginning in native production of the acted drama was inaugurated by Mr. Carroll Aikins who established in the Okanagan Valley, at a centre named Naramata, a 'Little Theatre,' which he named The Home Theatre. It was formally opened in November 1920 by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Meighen, then Prime Minister. Mr. Aikins' aims were to produce a national drama, staged according to artistic conceptions of simplicity and beauty, and to teach the people to appreciate good plays produced with simple and beautiful properties, stage sets, and lighting.

In order to realize these ideals it was necessary to choose good plays that had already been standardized and to train his actors directly in the Home Theatre. Mr. Aikins' belief was that by developing in the people a love of good plays produced in a Canadian theatre under Canadian direction, the people sooner or later would demand the production of Canadian plays and that this demand would lead to the creation of plays on Canadian subjects by Canadian playwrights. That is to say, Mr. Aikins believed that the movement he started in the Home Theatre would at length result in the creating of Canadian Native and National Stage Drama.

In 1921 Mr. Aikins produced on the stage of the Home Theatre an acted version of *The Trojan Women* by the ancient Greek dramatist Euripides. In 1922 he produced his own Passion Play, *Victory in Defeat*, a beautifully staged pantomime of moving pictures against a sky of changing light, interpreted with the aid of a reader and expressive music—the first experiment of its kind attempted in Canada.

The 'Little Theatre' movement has also achieved something for the appreciation of good Canadian plays in the cities of Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. At Hart House in Toronto, there has been considerable activity concerned with the production of Canadian plays. In April, 1921, Merrill Denison's *Brothers in Arms* was produced at that theatre; and in April 1922 another of his plays, *From Their Own Place*, was produced.

These, with two others, were published in book form in 1923 under the title *The Unheroic North*.

Denison's plays are Canadian by virtue of the author's parentage and family traditions (his mother being the late Flora McD. Denison), and by the plays themselves being on Canadian themes, with Canadian characters moving in Canadian surroundings. They are realistic satiric dramas of life and thought in Canadian 'backwoods' and rural settlements. The dramatist presents the life and speech and conduct of these characters with such broad realism that the plays themselves are a mordant satire on existence and society in isolated Canadian communities. But Denison's plays are also a satire *within* a satire. It is not life in certain Canadian communities that he is really satirizing, but an attitude of the Canadian people themselves.

The people of Canada dearly love 'high' romance and spurious sentimentality. They find this spurious sentimentality in some Canadian fiction, and the romance in the poetic dramas of Mair, Mrs. Curzon, Wilfred Campbell, Dr. Dollard, Robert Norwood, and others. Boldly, therefore, and with evident sincerity, Merrill Denison conceived the idea of satirizing the lovers of spurious sentimentality by presenting them with plays which would be the antithesis of 'high' romance and affected sentimentality—with life so broadly or coarsely realistic that the people of Canada would *not* like the life or the plays.

Two of the plays—*Brothers in Arms* and the *Weather Breeder*—portray life in the Canadian backwoods districts as Mr. Denison has observed that life. Two of the plays—*From Their Own Place* and *Marsh Hay*—portray, according to Mr. Denison, life in the poorer or more sordid farming districts of Canada. The dramatist has explained his motive and aim. He says: 'These plays have their origin in the needs of a theatre—not *the* theatre. *Brothers in Arms* was written because a Canadian comedy was needed to fill a bill and none could be found. In writing it as an innovation, I wrote of a part of Canada I knew, and introduced as characters actual Canadians. The result was new, but, as might have been expected, Canadian. It must be remembered that these plays were written for a Canadian theatre, not Broadway, and that any literature of the theatre in Canada must follow the same course—be written for Canadian production.'

It may be regretted that Denison went to sordid and vulgar society in Canada for his dramatic subjects or material. But he had just cause to satire Canadian life by means of realistic Canadian plays. For the intellectual dishonesty, and the 'immoral moral psychology,' which creates the spurious or hectic sentimentality in certain Canadian fiction would compel a sane-minded man to show the other side of the picture, and to show it with pervasive and vivid realism. Denison perceived and felt the profound untruth or falsity of

certain forms of 20th century Canadian fiction. In his view, it was all too ‘nice’ and saccharine as art; it had neither truth nor strength. Denison felt that no such men and women as appear in many of the novels of the Realistic Romances exist in Canada. In his opinion, the substance of these novels is puerile and vain invention. He, therefore, decided to present to the Canadian public real men and women as they really live, move and have their being in Canada—even if they are, as indeed they are, sordid and vulgarized men and women. Denison’s plays, then, are a Protest; they are also a Satire. What the dramatist is protesting against is not the life that he presents in his plays. What he is satirizing is not Canadian life as such. He is protesting against intellectual dishonesty and spurious sentimentality in Canadian fiction. He is satirizing the life and characters which these Canadian fictionists have presented in their romances.

Denison presents his material in three one-act plays with four to six characters, and in one four-act play with fourteen characters. It is the business of the dramatic critic to estimate Denison’s success in dramaturgy, to determine whether they are well-constructed and actable plays. On the strictly literary side, his plays in *The Unheroic North*, despite their sordid or vulgarized characters, and despite the sections of society and life presented in them, intrigue the attention and make interesting and diverting reading. As satires on the methods and ideals of certain Canadian romantic fictionists, on the social life at least of certain Canadian communities Denison’s realistic dramas are a significant beginning of creative Stage Drama in Canada.

# Part III.

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# Special and Miscellaneous Literature (1760-1924)

CHAPTER XXV

# *The* War Poetry *of* Canada

MRS. MOODIE—ANNIE ROTHWELL CHRISTIE—ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD—JOHN MCCRAE—CANADIAN POEMS OF THE GREAT WAR.

## I. THE POETRY OF THE CIVIL REBELLION AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

IT is a literary phenomenon by itself that the best or most popular of the inspirational and the commemorative war verse by permanently resident *émigrés* or native-born Canadians was the work of the country's women poets. No samples of martial verse inspired by the War of 1812-14 seem to be extant. The records of martial verse produced in Canada begin with the Civil War of 1837-38 and the inspirational war lyrics of Mrs. Susanna Moodie.

Fifteen years after the war opened, Mrs. Moodie's martial lyrics were published in her *Roughing It In The Bush* (1852, two vols.). In 'The Advertisement' (which is a sort of publisher's Preface) to this work, the publisher recounts the origin and effect of Mrs. Moodie's inspirational war verse. 'During the rebellion,' he says, 'her loyal lyrics, prompted by strong affection for her native country [England], were circulated and sung throughout the colony [Ontario], and produced a great effect in rousing an enthusiastic feeling in favor of public order.' But Mrs. Moodie herself modestly remarks (*op. cit. sup.*, Vol. 2):—

> I must own that my British spirit was fairly aroused, and as I could not aid in subduing the enemies of my beloved country with my arm, I did what little I could to serve the good cause with my pen. It may probably amuse my readers, to give them a few specimens of these loyal staves, which were widely circulated through the colony at the time.

It will suffice to quote the first and last stanzas of her *Address to the Freemen of Canada* (*op. cit. sup.*, p. 191) in order to show that Mrs. Moodie wrote no mediocre martial verse of the inspirational type:—

Canadians, will you see the flag
  Beneath whose folds your fathers bled,
Supplanted by the vilest rag
  That ever host to rapine led?
Thou emblem of a tyrant's sway,
  Thy triple hues are dyed in gore;
Like his, thy power has passed away,
  Like his, thy short-lived triumph's o'er.

In a footnote Mrs. Moodie explains that ‘the vilest rag’ is the tri-colored flag assumed by the rebels. The use of the phrase has, of course, both psychological and aesthetic warrant. The thought of the tri-colored flag, of its earlier bloody history in the French Revolution, revolted her sense of nobility and righteousness, and, like Homer’s, her diction and imagery sank in correspondence with the fall in the spiritual dignity of her subject. Aesthetically viewed, she was quite justified in sinking and rising with the emotional dignity of her subject. She sinks in the third stanza, but rises magniloquently in the fifth (final) stanza. Thus:—

By all the blood for Britain shed
  On many a glorious battlefield,
To the free winds her standard spread,
  Nor to these base insurgents yield.
With loyal bosoms beating high,
  In your good cause securely trust;
‘God and Victoria’ be your cry,
  And crush the traitors to the dust.

Compared with standard martial songs, such as Burns’ *Scots Wha’ Hae wi’ Wallace Bled*, or *The March of the Men of Harlech*, the first three lines of the foregoing stanza are really excellent. The vocables are mouth filling, the rhythm moves rapidly and carries one with it, and though the third line might be improved by the use of the word ‘fling’ for the word ‘spread’ in the text, still ‘To the free winds her standard spread’ increases respiration, and stimulates ideated sensations of free movement and expanding personality. Altogether, it is a vigorous—a ‘breezy’ line. No Canadian need feel ashamed of it. And what magnificent energy is in the last two lines of the stanza! The reader no sooner reaches ‘God and Victoria’ than he shifts back the accent to the word ‘God,’ emphasizes it with a full burst of breath and with a change in pitch, and then impulsively spurts out the utterance of the remaining syllables in the same changed pitch until he attacks the word ‘cry,’ which is both oxytoned and emphasized. Thus the line becomes a veritable battle-shout and inspiriting slogan. After this ringing, rousing, energizing oxytone line comes the barytone cadence, ‘And crush the traitors to the dust.’ The reader braces himself for action—takes in a full breath, fronts his eyes, sets his jaws, and all his muscles, and lunges forward to the fray. Both are brave lines; both are energizing, impelling; and the whole stanza is a magnificent sample of inspiriting martial verse. No Canadian need feel ashamed to recite it before the admirers of Robert Burns or William Duthie.

Mrs. Moodie’s modest estimate of her martial lyrics is not just to the poet. They are better than mere ‘loyal staves,’ fitted solely to ‘amuse’ casual readers. That they were widely circulated and sung throughout Canada at the time when they were needed, is proof that they possessed lyrical eloquence and the

inspirational power to stir the heart and impel the will to honorable action. They are good singing verse, but they are not genuine poetry. All that is required in an inspirational war lyric is that it come warm from the heart and hand; that it be human, manly, direct in thought; that it be ringing in lilt and swinging in rhythm; and that it be respectable technically as verse. To write martial verse that fulfils all these requirements and to write it immediately on demand is no easy task. Judged by these standards Mrs. Moodie excelled in inspirational war lyricism. It is true that Harriet A. Wilkins, Mrs. Curzon, Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie, Valancy Crawford, and Agnes Machar surpassed her in poetic war lyricism. But this was due to the fact that their best martial verse was commemorative, and was written *after* the deeds or events celebrated by them, and at a time when they could compose in peace and at leisure.

Of these later Canadian women poets of martial verse the supreme artist was Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie. The verse of the others, even Isabella Valancy Crawford's novel *The Rose of a Nation's Thanks*, and Agnes Maule Machar's swinging *Our Lads to the Front*, though choicer in diction and imagery than Mrs. Moodie's, hardly rise above the quality of good verse. Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie's commemorative martial verse on the other hand, attains to the dignity and beauty of pure poetry. We do not need the statement of the English poet Sir Edwin Arnold, that 'the best war songs of the Half-breed Rebellion were written by Annie Rothwell-Christie.' Dignity, beauty, melody and compelling pathos are in every line she wrote. These qualities can be observed in the lines we quote from her *After the Battle* and *Welcome Home*, selecting, first, two stanzas from *After the Battle*:—

> Ay, lay them to rest on the prairie, on the spot where for honor they fell,
> The shout of the savage their requiem, the hiss of the rifle their knell.
>
> • • • •
>
> As the blood of the martyr enfruitens his creed, so the hero sows peace
> And the reaping of war's deadly harvest is the earnest his havoc shall cease.

The extraordinary imagery of the last line of the first stanza (couplet)—'the shout of the savage their requiem, the hiss of the rifle their knell' and the novel beauty of the similitude in the first line of the second stanza are enough to raise these verses to the dignity of pure poetry. Besides, there is a spiritual militancy in the rhythm that soothes or solaces, while its cadences solemnize the soul, begetting resignation to the Will of the Universe. Or listen to the triumphant, sonorous verbal music of these lines from *Welcome Home*:—

> War-worn, sun-scorched, strained with the dust of toil,
> And battle-scarred they come—victorious.
> Exultantly we greet them—cleave the sky
> With cheers, and fling our banners to the winds;
> We raise triumphant songs, and strew their path
> To do them homage—bid them 'Welcome Home!'

We hear drum beats, bugle calls, and the tramp of armed men on the march in those first two spondaic phrases—‘war-worn, sun-scorched.’ A new emotional experience comes to us with the quicker moving syllables in the next two lines; the rhythm is fitted to exultation. Also we are treated to a new but brilliant alliterative metaphor—‘cleave the sky with cheers.’ We are in the realm of poetry. But fine as are the preceding examples of Mrs. Annie Rothwell-Christie’s commemorative martial verse, the pathos of the following, from *The Woman’s Part*, is overwhelmingly human and moving and ennobling. The inspiration is derived from reflecting whether to those who, fired by love of adventure or country, have gone to war, and fallen, the mothers, sisters, and sweethearts shall give regrets, prayers, or tears. The poet disparages all these, and turns to solace the mother or wife, whose son or husband had died on the battlefield:—

> O, woman-heart be strong,
> Too full for words—too humble for a prayer—
> Too faithful to be fearful—offer here
> Your sacrifice of patience. Not for long
> The darkness. When the dawn of peace breaks bright,
> Blessed she who welcomes whom her God shall save,
> But honored in her God’s and country’s sight
> She who lifts empty arms to cry, ‘*I Gave*!’

After reading that noble poem of love and pathos, and being moved to emotion too deep for tears, one knows that all distinctions for sex are man-made and ephemeral and abortive—that only ‘soul,’ whatever be its form of earthly tenement, is real. For Annie Rothwell-Christie who wrote that poem was altogether soul—superman, superwoman—gifted with the speech of angels. Her martial verse is absolutely unique, and a distinct contribution to perduring war poetry.

## II. THE POETRY OF THE WORLD WAR

The Canadian Poetry of the World War is, as was previous martial verse by Canadian poets, both inspirational and commemorative. What is significant for literary history, is, first, that there is a distinct advance in the excellence both of the ideas and of the artistic form of the Canadian poetry of the world war; and, secondly, that both the activity in poetic composition occasioned by the late war and the quality of the poetry became an inspiration to other poets whose genius was dormant and unawakened, and caused a genuine Renascence of the Poetic Spirit and of Poetry in Canada.

In what respect may the Canadian Poetry of the world war be said to be excellent, or even unexcelled by the martial poetry of the United States, if excelled by that of England and France? It is relatively great in noble ideas. In it we see clearly and vividly what Canadian men and women, at home and in

the field of war, really thought and felt about war and death, love and home and country, self-sacrifice, and the good green earth, and peace.

*Truth, beauty and splendor of ideas*—these are the three supreme excellences of the Canadian poetry written by the soldier-poets in active service on the fighting field, and by the professional or amateur non-combatant poets at home, during the war.

As to the artistic form of this poetry, considering all the conditions of distraction and perturbance under which it was written, the wonder is that it has any formal finish at all. As a matter of fact, however, the Canadian poetry inspired by the world war cannot be depreciated as 'twinkling trivialities' either in substance or in form. All the best of it is good poetry—originally conceived, winningly suffused with beauty of sentiment, rich in noble ideas and spiritual imagery, engaging in verbal music, and technically well-wrought. If the formal finish of Canadian Poetry of the world war is not always quite the equal of the British and American poetry similarly occasioned, still the altogether most famous and most popular poem of the war and most likely to perdure in the popular memory, is neither the sonnet of the English soldier-poet, Rupert Brooke, *The Soldier*, nor the poem of the American soldier-poet, Alan Seeger, *I Have a Rendezvous with Death*, but the lyric of the Canadian soldier-poet, John McCrae, *In Flanders Fields*. Further, special circumstances, special sentiments, and special color and form went to making the poem by McCrae the supreme lyric of the world war, and the popularity of *In Flanders Fields* affected the appreciation of other Canadian poetry of the late war to such a degree as to cause the popular imagination, as well as the critical sense of the cultured, to estimate all other Canadian poetry of the world war as so far below McCrae's exquisite lyric as to be second-rate in substance and form. This is not so. Save that they do not embody a special form and are not as musically insinuating as McCrae's, the best of other Canadian poems of the world war are as nobly conceived, as spiritually subduing or exalting, and as technically finished as *In Flanders Fields*.

During the world war, as in previous wars, the women poets of Canada were to the fore in writing inspirational and commemorative martial verse. In Garvin's *Canadian Poems of the Great War* about one third (26) of the total number (73) of poets represented are women, and their war verse, especially the verse of Katherine Hale (whose poetry has been already dealt with), Helena Coleman, Frances Harrison, Isabel Graham, Agnes Maule Machar, Gertrude Bartlett, Grace Blackburn, Jean Blewett, Minnie Hallowell Bowen, Louise Morey Bowman, Isabelle Ecclestone Mackay, Lilian Leveridge, Lucy Montgomery, Beatrice Redpath, Sheila Rand, Florence Randal Livesay, Richard Scrace (Mrs. J. B. Williamson), Virna Sheard, Eloise Street, Ruth Strong, is not a whit below the level of the war verse by Canadian men and in

some instances surpasses the latter's.

Dr. O'Hagan's *Songs of Heroic Days* (1916) is a popular volume, in which, for the most part, the poet recrudesces, in good newspaper verse, the traditional war spirit of bloodshed, retaliation and revenge. The poems, however, are made engaging by a ready humor and an Irish *jeu d'esprit* in the thought of 'squaring things' with an enemy guilty of 'dhirty thricks' in war. Several other volumes of war verse appeared during and shortly after the close of the war —*The Fighting Men of Canada* by Douglas Durkin; *Over the Hills of Home and Other Poems* by Lilian Leveridge; *Sea Dogs and Men at Arms* by Jesse Edgar Middleton; *A Canadian Twilight and Other Poems* (posthumous) by Lieutenant Bernard Freeman Trotter; *Laurentian Lyrics and Other Poems* (1915) by Lieutenant Arthur S. Bourinot; *Insulters of Death* and *The New Apocalyse* by Sergeant J. D. Logan, and several other volumes by returned men. The only comprehensive anthology of verse of the Great War, written by Canadians, is J. W. Garvin's *Canadian Poems of the Great War* (1918). This volume furnishes adequate proof that, as foreign critics have said, 'the war poetry written by Canadian civilians and Canadian poets on active service is as excellent as that written by the poets of the older Allied Nations.'

For the purpose of just appreciation we remark the fine, spirited, and imaginatively impressive qualities, as well as the artistic finish, of selected Canadian war poems that are really worthy to stand beside the best verse of English and American poets who were inspired by the late war. Aside from McCrae's *In Flanders Fields* the most celebrated commemorative war poem by a Canadian is Dr. J. B. Dollard's sonnet to the memory of Rupert Brooke—a sonnet in which, as English and American critics observed, Dr. Dollard made beautiful use of the supposed cause of Brooke's death (sunstroke, 'arrows of Apollo') and the place of burial in the Aegean. Brooke's grave is on the island of Scyros, not Lemnos. But the error in fact only enhances the beauty of the poem:—

Slain by the arrows of Apollo, lo!
The well-belovèd of the Muses lies
On Lemnos' Isle 'neath blue and classic skies,
And hears th' Aegean waters ebb and flow!
How strange his beauteous soul should choose to go
Out from his body in this hallowed place,
Where Poetry and Art's undying grace
Still breathe, and Pipes of Pan melodious blow!
Here shall he rest untroubled, knowing well
That faithful hearts shall hold his memory dear,
Moved to affection weak words cannot tell
By his short, splendid life that knew no fear;
Beloved of the gods, the gods have ta'en
Their Ganymede, by bright Apollo slain!

Almost as celebrated as Dr. Dollard's sonnet to Brooke is Lieutenant Arthur Bourinot's sonnet to the dead poet-soldier. For the sake of variety in forms we quote *Immortality*—a most winsome, tender lyric; simple, sincere, and convincing—from Lieutenant Bourinot's *Laurentian Lyrics* (1915):—

They are not dead, the soldier and the sailor,
  Fallen for Freedom's sake;
They merely sleep with faces that are paler
  Until they wake.

They will not weep, the mothers, in the years
  The future will decree;
For they have died that the battles and the tears
  Should cease to be.

They will not die, the victorious and the slain,
  Sleeping in foreign soil,
They gave their lives, but to the world is the gain
  Of their sad toil.

They are not dead, the soldier and the sailor,
  Fallen for Freedom's sake;
They merely sleep with faces that are paler
  Until they wake.

The most lilting example of Canadian inspirational war verse is Douglas Durkin's *The Fighting Men of Canada*. It is spirited and inspiriting. The colloquial diction of the refrains charges it with veracity, vividness, and with 'the punch' which the London critic, Mr. E. B. Osborn, desiderates in the content of what are, in his view, the only 'true war poems,' namely, 'song-pictures of the campaigns and of soldiers' life':—

Call it lust, or call it honor. Call it glory in a name!
  We're a handful, more or less, of what we were,
But we praise the grim Almighty that we stuck and played the game,
  Till we chased them at the double to their lair.
    For the word came, 'Up and over!'
      And our answer was a yell
    As we scrambled out of cover—
      And we dealt the dastards hell!

Mr. Durkin's ballad is a human, veracious war-poem in the traditional spirit of Campbell's *Battle of the Baltic*, Tennyson's *Ballad of the Revenge*, Newbolt's *Drake's Drum*. It is designedly inspirational after the manner, and with the substance, of the old heroic 'fighting spirit.' It is, therefore, a recrudescence of a war spirit and an ideal of poetic inspiration, aim, and content which were not the real and authentic spirit, motive, and ideal of the best Canadian, British, French, or American poetry of the world war. In short, Mr. Durkin's poem, *The Fighting Men of Canada*, lilting, spirited, and inspiriting as it is, must critically be estimated as an obsolete form of 'recruiting' ballad rather than as a true inspirational poem conceived and

written according to the characteristic genius of the poetry of the world war. As a reversion to the old type of martial poem, it deserves mention. Possibly it may be instanced as the nearest approach to a Canadian war-song, though the extraordinary fact is that not a single war-song, of the popular or of the marching species, was written by a Canadian civilian or soldier-poet.

In the war verse of another poet we find the kind of poetry that fired the imagination and moved the will of the men of Canada who went to the world war. To Lloyd Roberts, son of Charles G. D. Roberts, the war poetry of the British Empire, as well as Canada, is indebted for two of the most striking and impressive short poems in the new spirit of inspirational verse inspired by the world war. His *Come Quietly, England*, simple and direct in thought, free in form, colloquial in diction, but positive, candid, sincere, is one of the most arresting and convincing poems that have for a theme 'the call to arms'—not for King, or Country, nor for fear or anything else undivine:—

> But for the sake of simple goodness
> And His laws,
> We shall sacrifice our all
> For The Cause!

*The Literary Digest* remarked Lloyd Roberts' *Come Quietly, England* as 'one of the most striking statements of what may be called the philosophy of the war from the English [British] point of view because it puts so candidly into words the thoughts that are in the minds of the author's fellow-countrymen.' The other poem by Roberts, also in his new simple, colloquial, direct style, is entitled *If I Must*. It is the most remarkably original 'anti-pacifist' poem written by an English-speaking poet. It takes the form of a quasi-dramatic monologue, and concludes with a stanza which has, in journalistic slang, 'punch' in it. We quote the whole poem:—

> God knows there's plenty of earth for all of us;
> Then why must we sweat for it, deny for it,
> Pray for it, cry for it,
> Kill, maim and lie for it,
> Struggle and suffer and die for it—
> We who are gentle and sane?
>
> Let us respect one another, wherever we are,
> Fly your flag, O my brother;
> I like its bright color, whether red, green, or yellow;
> Your language is queer, but I'll learn it in time;
> And you're a dear fellow,
> If your laws are not quite so clean as our own;
> But then ours need pruning, and thistles have grown.
>
> So I won't spill your blood, for that's not the way
> To assist in law-making, whatever some say,
> I'll try by example to lead you aright
> Out of the shadows and into the light—

If you'll do as much for me.

What! You don't understand?
You refuse my right hand?
You say might is right,
And to live we must fight?
Are we still in such plight?
Poor, blind, stupid fool, so deep in the dust—
Well, hand me the gun—
If I must—if I must!

It is, perhaps, in the best Canadian commemorative, elegiac, or reflective poems of the Great War that the three supreme excellences, Truth, Beauty, and Splendor of Ideas, in the war poetry of Canada are most conspicuously present. The distinctive presence of these qualities not only marks a clear advance beyond the older Canadian martial verse but also establishes a high place for Canadian commemorative, elegiac and reflective war verse in the body of war poetry written by poets of the Allied Nations. Truth, Beauty, or Splendor of Ideas are in Gertrude Bartlett's *The Blessed Dead*, Grace Blackburn's *Christ in Flanders*, Lillie Brooks' *Bereaved*, Helena Coleman's *Oh, Not When April Wakes the Daffodils*, Jean Blewett's *The Lover Lads of Devon*, Lilian Leveridge's *Over the Hills of Home*, Florence Randal Livesay's *A Daffodil from Vimy Ridge*, Agnes Maule Machar's *De Profundis*, Louise Morey Bowman's *The White Garden*, Virna Sheard's *The Young Knight*, Frederick George Scott's *The Silent Toast*, Arthur Stringer's *Christmas Bells in War Time*, Archibald Sullivan's *The Plaint of the Children*, Beatrice Redpath's *The Men of Canada*, Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's *The Mother Gives*, John Stuart Thomson's *His Darkest Hour*, A. E. S. Smythe's noble sonnet *The Champions*, S. Morgan-Powell's magniloquent *Kitchener's Work*, and W. D. Lighthall's magnificent and exalting poem *The Galahads*.

One of the finest commemorative poems of the world war written by a Canadian is Duncan Campbell Scott's sonnet *To a Canadian Lad Killed in the War*. It is fine in conception, novel in terminal endings and elevating in emotional appeal. But fine as it is, it pales in aesthetic and artistic dignity with the only Canadian war poem that has achieved sublimity—the same poet's unforgettably noble elegiacs *To a Canadian Aviator (Who Died for His Country in France)*:—

Tossed like a falcon from the hunter's wrist
A sweeping plunge, a sudden shattering noise,
And thou hast dared, with a long spiral twist,
The elastic stairway to the rising sun.
Peril below thee and above, peril
Within thy car; but peril cannot daunt
Thy peerless heart; gathering wing and poise,
Thy plane transfigured, and thy motor-chant
Subdued to a whisper—then a silence,—

And thou art but a disembodied venture
In the void.

But Death, who has learned to fly,
Still matchless when his work is to be done,
Met thee between the armies and the sun;
Thy speck of shadow faltered in the sky;
Then thy dead engine and thy broken wings
Drooped through the arc and passed in fire,
A wreath of smoke—a breathless exhalation.
But ere that came, a vision sealed thine eyes,
Lulling thy senses with oblivion;
And from its sliding station in the skies
Thy dauntless soul upward in circles soared
To the sublime and purest radiance whence it sprang.

In all their eyries eagles shall mourn thy fate,
And leaving on the lonely crags and scaurs
Their unprotected young, shall congregate
High in the tenuous heaven and anger the sun
With screams, and with a wild audacity
Dare all the battle danger of thy flight;
Till weary with combat one shall desert the light,
Fall like a bolt of thunder and check his fall
On the high ledge, smoky with mist and cloud,
Where his neglected eaglets shriek aloud,
And drawing the film across his sovereign sight
Shall dream of thy swift soul immortal
Mounting in circles, faithful beyond death.

In that poem we perceive, unmistakably, how even war verse may rise to the spiritual dignity of absolute poetry, and by its ideal substance and spiritual grandeur achieve the highest moral and religious function—the function, namely, of dignifying or glorifying the human spirit with Christlikeness in self-slaying love for the perfection and happiness of humanity. Only a too fastidious and perverted criticism will deny to the best of the Canadian poetry of the World War a distinction in truth, beauty, and splendor of ideas and in technical artistry that gives it the right to an equal place beside the significant war verse of the British and United States poets. Certainly in technique it is quite as finished as the American war poetry, and in ideas of ‘uncompelled and undiluted chivalry,’ it is as noble and eloquent as the war poetry of the British singers.

CHAPTER XXVI

# Hymn Writers

THE HYMN WRITERS OF CANADA—ALLINE—CLEVELAND—SCRIVEN— MURRAY —SCOTT—RAND—DEWART—WALKER—AND OTHERS.

A HYMN is a form of sacred lyrical literature. It must be popular literature, but not necessarily pure poetry or permanent literature. A hymn is properly defined not by what it *is* in literary qualities but by what it *does* for the human spirit—for the heart and the religious imagination. It aims lyrically to express dependence on divine providence, to praise the divine perfections, to give thanks for divine mercies and benefits, and to supplicate divine aid in doubt and weakness and divine consolation in tribulation and defeat. A hymn, in short, is the spontaneous lyrical expression of a paternal and filial relationship between Man and God.

The structural qualities which constitute a true hymn are few and readily understood. Since a hymn must above all things be potent over the hearts and imagination of *all* the people, its diction must be vernacular—simple words of one and two syllables. Since a hymn must be singable by *all* the people in concert, its metrical flow must be short and rhythmical. In aesthetic qualities a hymn should be simple but beautiful in thought, sentiment and imagery. In moral qualities a hymn should be suggestive of human but holy relations between Man and Divine Providence. These are the prime qualities that constitute the popularity of a hymn and give it a place either in permanent poetry or in permanent hymnody.

Several Canadians, *émigrés* or native-born, have written hymns which have a rightful and permanent place in church hymnody. The history of Canadian hymnography dates back to the year 1786. In that year Henry Alline, leader of the ‘New Lights’ schism in Nova Scotia, published his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. He was as prolific a hymn writer as Charles Wesley, having five books of hymns to his credit. His diction is not always true to the demands of a hymn; sometimes it is stilted and too literary. But his imagery is simple and the movement of his thought is direct. The chief merit of his hymns is their genuine lyrical quality; they have rhythmical flow. One or two of them have held a permanent place in church hymnody, as, for instance, the hymn beginning with this homely image expressed in vernacular English:—

> Amazing sight! the Saviour stands
> And knocks at every door—

Of the Cleveland family in the Old Colonies two members emigrated to Nova Scotia—Aaron Cleveland, who became minister of Mather's (now St. Matthew's) church, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Benjamin Cleveland who joined in with the 'New Lights,' and emulated Alline as a hymn writer. One of his hymns still finds a place in church hymnody in Canada, the familiar hymn beginning

> Oh, could I find from day to day
> A nearness to my God.

None of the hymns of Alline or Cleveland, however, attained a world-wide popularity. The first Canadian to write a hymn that has become not only world-famous but also has been translated into several 'heathen tongues' as well as civilized languages was Joseph Scriven, author of the simple spiritual song, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. The man and the hymn have a remarkable history, which is recounted by Rev. James Clelland in his biographical sketch in a tiny thirty-page booklet entitled: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus, and Other Hymns by Joseph Scriven*. It was published at Port Hope, Ontario, in 1895.

For many years the hymn had been attributed, without authentication, to Dr. Horatius Bonar. But in 1893 a letter appeared in the *New York Observer*, in which it was stated that the hymn had been found amongst some papers belonging to Joseph Scriven, who had ended his life by suicide. Scriven was a local preacher but he was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and was, therefore, a man of respectable culture. Like Cowper, Scriven suffered from melancholia; and it is natural to suppose that he had written the hymn after recovery from one of his fits of melancholia. He was a shy man, and after writing the hymn gave a copy of it to his mother, from whom he extracted a promise that she would not reveal its existence or show it to anyone else. But whether the mother's pride in her son's accomplishment overcame her, or whether due to some sort of accident, the hymn reached a certain Mr. Converse, a musician, and he at once set it to music of the more popular kind. Soon the hymn attained a popular vogue in the United States and from there gained equally popular vogue in Canada. Some are inclined to believe that it was not the hymn itself but the musical setting that created its popularity. No doubt the musical setting to Lyte's *Abide With Me*, or to Newman's *Lead Kindly Light*, has considerable to do with the appeal of those hymns. Newman expressly attributes the popularity of his hymn to the musical setting and not to the spiritual beauty of the text. But the musical setting to Scriven's *What a Friend We Have In Jesus* is so poor in melodic invention and so lacking in cantante quality and rhythmic flow that as a tune or melody it is not singable or infectious and could not be a compelling 'sacred folksong.' We must, therefore, charge its popularity to the appeal of the text of the hymn to some

elemental want or need of humble human hearts.

But whatever the cause of the popularity of this hymn, whether the words or the musical setting or both, the fact remains that it is the most widely known hymn in Christian hymnology. It has been translated into many of the civilized and the barbaric languages of the world, and more than a hundred million impressions of the hymn have been printed. Searching for a psychological explanation of its appeal to the universal human heart, we know that as a matter of fact it has solaced, as one writer puts it, ‘millions and millions of souls, from the criminal on his way to the scaffold to the ocean traveller in his last moment aboard a sinking ship; from the negro in his wretched plantation cabin to the highest dignitary of the evangelical churches; from the unclad heathen denizen of the cannibalistic South Sea Islands or in wildest Africa to the most learned savant of the most civilized land.’ The obvious explanation of its appeal is that Scriven’s hymn expresses, both for the humble and for the highest, the elemental and inevitable sense of *dependence* for life and happiness on some spiritual power that is mighty to comfort, solace, sustain, and save. When that sense of dependence comes over any human being, and when such a human being feels that there is an ever-ready invisible hand to sustain or succor, in that moment the sense of dependence and of ever-ready aid, and of joy or comfort or hope thus awakened, are expressed in emotionalized rhythm, which is religious song.

Scriven lacked lyrical or rhythmical sensibility, and his famous hymn possesses no aesthetic or artistic appeal. But in times of need, aesthetics are the poorest support and solace. In spite, then, of the lyrical and aesthetic defects of Scriven’s simple hymn, it has remained, by virtue of its elemental appeal to people of all estates and by its solacing and sustaining power, one of the world’s perduring sacred songs.

From a strictly Canadian point of view and with reference to aesthetic qualities which give a hymn a dignity of poetry, the most notable and significant hymn composed by a native-born Canadian is Robert Murray’s *From Ocean Unto Ocean*. The author was born and educated in Nova Scotia. From early childhood he disclosed a Keltic gift of imagination and fondness for expressing his emotions in verse. Dr. Murray was a religious journalist, and, as editor of *The Presbyterian Witness*, did much to raise ordinary journalism to the dignity of literature.

It was his custom to write hymns and to publish them anonymously in the religious press. Those who had an eye for the revision of church hymnals were struck by the aesthetic beauty and dignity as well as religious fervor of Dr. Murray’s hymns. They are indeed extraordinary, and the substance of them is so universalized that they fit the hymnals or Books of Praise of any Christian communion, Protestant or Catholic. His hymns are included in the *Book of*

*Praise* of the Presbyterian Church of Canada; in the *Book of Common Praise* of the Church of England in Canada; and in *The Hymnary* of the Scottish Churches. Rev. A. W. Mahon observes in his readable brochure, *Canadian Hymns and Hymn Writers* (1908): 'Thirteen Canadians contribute to the New Church of England Book of Common Praise, including Canon Welsh of Toronto and the late Dean Partridge of Fredericton, but Dr. Murray's contributions exceed all other in number and in intrinsic merit.'

To appreciate Murray's *From Ocean Unto Ocean*—its intrinsic merits, as well as its special qualities and fervor which embody and express the Canadian national spirit—the whole poem must be read and felt both as a hymn for devotional and for national occasions. Following is the full text of Dr. Murray's hymn:—

From ocean unto ocean
  Our land shall own Thee Lord,
And, filled with true devotion
  Obey Thy sovereign word.
Our prairies and our mountains,
  Forest and fertile field,
Our rivers, lakes, and fountains,
  To Thee shall tribute yield.

O Christ, for Thine own glory,
  And for our country's weal,
We humbly plead before Thee,
  Thyself in us reveal;
And may we know, Lord Jesus,
  The touch of Thy dear hand;
And, healed of our diseases,
  The tempter's power withstand.

Where error smites with blindness,
  Enslaves and leads astray,
Do Thou in lovingkindness
  Proclaim Thy gospel day;
Till all the tribes and races
  That dwell in this fair land,
Adorned with Christian graces,
  Within Thy courts shall stand.

Our Saviour King, defend us,
  And guide where we should go;
Forth with Thy message send us;
  Thy love and light to show;
Till, fired with true devotion
  Enkindled by Thy word,
From ocean unto ocean
  Our land shall own Thee Lord.

The diction of this hymn is simple, vernacular; of 160 words in the text only ten are of Latin origin, and even these are as short and familiar as our

Anglo-Saxon diction. The rhythmic flow is thoroughly lyrical. But though simple in diction and lyrical structure, there is a universality of reach or sweep in its imagery that, at least relatively to most other hymns, raises Murray's hymn to the dignity of poetry. There is no provincialism in it. There is no denominationalism in it. There is no narrow or bigoted ethics in it. It is thoroughly human and humane. It possesses universality and spiritual dignity. It is all that a true hymn should be.

Murray's hymn, moreover, in humanity and spiritual dignity, contrasts winningly with the original form of the British, which is also the Canadian, National Anthem. This so-called anthem has been revised so as to remove from it certain inane thoughts and sentiments and imagery that were not consistent with Christian charity and the ideal of human brotherhood. Canada has, too, its own indigenous National Song or Hymn which is the text to a sonorous organ-toned musical setting by Calixa Lavallée. The original text of the Canadian National Hymn is by Routhier. It is patriotic in the old exclusive sense, containing that kind of patriotism which is solicitous about the mere material success and aggrandizement of Canada. But Murray's *From Ocean Unto Ocean* is so human and so humane, so unracial, so unprovincial, so unsectarian, and by its imagery so informed with the free and all-embracing spirit of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, bounding the vast Canadian prairies and mountains and forests, that its spiritual sweep takes in the whole of Canada without respect to race or region or religion, or high degree or low degree of person, and is fitted to be, if not the National Anthem, at any rate the National Hymn, of Canada. It is at once both Christian and Universal—a distinctive and authentic hymn, and an original contribution to permanent Canadian hymnody.

Murray was not a creative poet in the sense of being a systematic poet. But Canon Frederick George Scott, who is a member of the Systematic School of Canadian poets, has written hymns. They are strictly evangelical, rather than universal in thought and scope, and are in the traditional hymn form. They have a sweet simplicity and a spiritual dignity but, beyond their lyrical or rhythmic expressiveness, have no especial aesthetic and artistic qualities that call for particular critical consideration. The same appreciation suits a critical estimate of the hymns by Silas T. Rand, Edward Hartley Dewart, Charles Innis Cameron, Louisa Walker and other accepted Hymn Writers of Canada.

Rand's Latin Hymns are interesting as translations and are literary phenomena by themselves. Cameron was a poet and his hymns have an excellence of structure, imagery, and color that give them quite the quality of poetry, though again, it must be observed, they are evangelical, rather than universal, in scope and sweep. Anna Louisa Walker is famous as the author of the hymn *Work, For The Night Is Coming*. This is really a 'sacred folk-song.'

It has indeed a wide popularity, but by no means as wide as Scriven's world-famous hymn. Albert Durrant Watson and Alexander Louis Fraser are hymn writers of distinction. Summarily: Canadian Hymn Writers have contributed substantially to the hymnody of the Evangelical Church in Canada, and, at least in two instances, to permanent hymnody. But no Canadian hymn has the structural beauty and spiritual sublimation which belong to such hymns as Newman's *Lead, Kindly Light*, or Baring-Gould's *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, or Lyte's *Abide With Me*, and which lift these hymns into the realm of authentic poetry.

CHAPTER XXVII

# Literary Criticism

LITERARY CRITICISM IN CANADA—SCHOOLS, AIMS, METHODS, AND DEFECTS—NEW SYNOPTIC METHOD APPLIED TO POETRY OF OVERSEAS DOMINIONS.

## *I. Schools of Literary Criticism.*

IN an old country, like England, which long has had established standards of taste and refined artistry, literary criticism is a fine art. The essays in criticism by Coleridge, Hazlitt, Arnold, Pater, Arthur Symons, Gilbert Chesterton, Mackail, Ker, and others are polite, disinterested, humane, and delightful in themselves. They have an intrinsic charm of thought and style. They are literature. In a young country, like Canada, when, in pioneer days, the people were necessarily preoccupied wholly with practical living and material civilization, and few were cultured and none had leisure for cultivating taste, literary criticism, if it existed, was exotic and traditional. Later, when the people are still primarily occupied with material civilization but decent culture is distributed and there is leisure for cultivating taste, literary criticism becomes imitative but academic, and, sometimes, is in the manner of the dilettante. Finally, when the people of a young country become conscious that they have a native literature and indigenous standards of taste but are in doubt about the status of their literature and the aesthetic dignity of their literary taste, literary criticism becomes pragmatic or pedagogical or philosophical.

In its first stage literary criticism in a young country attempts to *appraise*, by exotic, traditional standards, foreign literature. Such criticism has no communal value. It is not disinterested but personal. It only exhibits, as it was intended to do, the fine taste and style of the critics. In its pragmatic stage literary criticism in a young country attempts to *praise* native literature, so as to win for this literature the appreciation of the people in the land in which it was produced and, secondarily, the decent regard of foreign men of letters. The matter of such pragmatic criticism always counts most, or for more than the manner or style. It aims to be constructive. But because it is self-conscious, self-reliant, and ardent, its praise tends to be too high and its condemnation too severe. In the final stage literary criticism becomes less self-conscious, less ardent, and more detached and philosophical towards native literature. It takes a synoptic view of the whole civilization and culture which the native literature of a young country embodies and interprets. It looks first to this literature as an

entity by itself and next regards it from the point of view of absolute or long established standards. It judges the native poetry and prose of a young country by their relative importance to the people of that country itself, and by its dignity as a contribution to world-literature.

These are the stages in evolution of Literary Criticism in Canada. Progressively there arose four Schools of Criticism—the Traditional, the Academic or Dilettante, the Pragmatic or Pedagogical, and the Synoptic or Philosophical. But the fourth is not so much a new School as it is the Pragmatic School with a broader and more philosophical application of its aims and methods. All these distinctions, however, are themselves pedagogical. The members of the various Schools commingle aesthetic, academic, and pragmatic methods in the same essay, for the reason that in Canada criticism has been compelled, as it still is compelled, to be primarily a cultural agency, and could never aim to be literature, wholly delectable in itself.

The Traditional School has passed but it was represented by such deceased critics as George Stewart, John Reade, George Murray, and Martin Griffin. The Academic or Dilettante School is represented by Professors James Cappon, W. J. Alexander, Pelham Edgar, and Archibald MacMechan, and by Sir Andrew Macphail, and Arnold Haultain; and the Pragmatic School, by T. G. Marquis, Miss Jean Graham, Miss Marjory MacMurchy, Katherine Hale (Mrs. John Garvin), Donald G. French, Melvin O. Hammond, R. H. Hathaway, J. D. Logan, and Bernard Muddiman. The Synoptic School, which, too, is pragmatic but also philosophical, is represented by Ray Palmer Baker, author of *A History of English-Canadian Literature to Confederation* and by the author of the present work.

As to the aims and methods of the members of the Traditional and the Academic Schools:—In general, Reade and Griffin wrote critically, to illuminate universal literature (poetry, fiction, drama, social life, and history). The members of the Academic or Dilettante School have, on the whole, the same aim, but sometimes they write critical essays as a fine art in the department of *belles-lettres*. Reade and Griffin wrote on literature and life in brief but scholarly journalistic essays. Professors Cappon, Alexander, Edgar, and MacMechan wrote or write monographs (as, for instance, Cappon's fine study of the poetry of C. G. D. Roberts) or critical introductions and prefatory essays to selected English men of letters (as, for instance, Alexander's admirable *Introduction to Browning* or MacMechan's scholarly Introductions to his *Selections from Tennyson* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*). Dr. Macphail and Mr. Haultain delight in the critical essay for its own sake, and are more solicitous about beauty or dignity of style than about substance or thought. Their essays belong to the department of *belles-lettres*—not always and not

essentially, but in tendency, form, and aesthetic dignity or style.

In particular, whenever the members of the first two schools have written about any phase of the literary history and the literature of Canada, or about any author who has figured notably in that history and literature, they have been rigorously aesthetic and critical. But the writers of the Traditional School differ from those of the Academic or Dilettante School in critical attitude to Canadian literature and literary history. Reade and Griffin wrote sympathetically, and with sincere admiration, about phases of Canadian Literature; but they showed little or no understanding of the historic process in the evolution of Canadian culture, of the continuity of Canadian literary history. How, then, could they have been more than merely aesthetic—how could they have been genuinely critical—if they had not the philosophic eye, did not look before and after, and thus did not treat the phases of Canadian Literature from the point of view of its implied relations to the whole of Canadian life and of English literature, of which Canadian verse and prose form a part? Sympathetically, politely, and charmingly as Reade wrote about the phases of Canadian Literature, his criticism, to employ a phrase of M. Jules Lemaitre, was ‘not criticism, but entertaining conversation.’ Virtually it denied that Canada possessed a literature, a body of poetry and prose which should be regarded as a real integer, having unity of inspiration and a continuous growth from crude thought and form to respectable aesthetic and artistic dignity. It implied only that in the literature of Canada there are no ‘highways,’ but only pleasant ‘by-ways’ which invite the essayist to write of them with aesthetic appreciation. This is not philosophical, not genuine, criticism; it is polite, entertaining conversation. For the problem of Canadian literary criticism is not the question whether Canada has produced, intermittently and here and there, some original authors who have composed poetry and prose as aesthetically winning and as artistically beautiful or dignified as that of British and American writers, but whether the Dominion has produced a continuous body of poetry and prose, which, at its best, may justly be considered genuine literature, worthy to be regarded, as American literature is regarded, as a living branch of English Literature.

While the members of the Academic School take the strictly aesthetic attitude to Canadian Literature, and show little or no appreciation of the historic process in the evolution of Canadian culture, they differ even in aesthetic attitude from their predecessors. They are rather dogmatic and patronizing towards Canadian prose and poetry.

As to the aims and methods of the Pragmatic School:—The members of this school have for their central principle or chief article of faith the proposition that Canada has a worthy body of authentic literature, which is being perennially enhanced in quantity and in quality. For their second

principle they hold to the proposition that Canadian literary critics must more or less intimately know the history—the social and spiritual origins, ideals, and evolution—of Canadian Literature. For their third principle they have the proposition that the independent, sincere, honest, and really serviceable literary critic to-day must be constructive and pedagogic in method. They do not write literary criticism which is meant to be literature itself, intrinsically aesthetic, or pleasantly engaging reading on its own account. They call their essays, whether a journalistic review or editorial, or a magazine article, constructive criticism. Their critical writings are, in the Greek sense, pragmatic. For the chief aims of the Canadian constructive critics are these two: first, to make plain and indubitable to their compatriots and the world that Canada has a really respectable body of literature; secondly, to appraise new works of verse and prose by Canadians and to determine the status of their worth in the permanent literature of Canada. Canadian constructive critics have also a third aim. It is pedagogical: to teach the people a decent knowledge of the literary history of Canada and an aesthetic appreciation of Canadian poetry and prose. The members of the Pragmatic School all write with knowledge of their subject, with literary dignity, thoughtfully, and, on the whole, convincingly and effectively. Their systematic and ardent championing of the cause of Canadian Literature has had a three-fold result. It has led to establishment of regular courses in the study of Canadian Literature in the universities and colleges of the Dominion and in some universities of the United States, to a wider study and appreciation of Canadian Literature on the part of the people, and to finer critical and creative writing by Canadian men and women of letters.

### *II. The Synoptic Method.*

Literary criticism in Canada has had two faults. It was *vicarious*—an echo of foreign criticism which was patronizing and insincere, and, therefore, untrue and harmful. It was too *inclusive* in conspectus and standards, for Canadian poetry and prose were critically compared with classical English Literature. This was to write criticism without perspective and without respect to a hierarchy of values. It was supererogatory and therefore futile. Even the Pragmatic School of Canadian literary critics did not wholly escape this second fault. It will result better for the advancement of Canadian Criticism if the literatures of the British Overseas Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, South Africa—are compared amongst themselves; and if thus the status of each relatively in the literature of the Empire is critically determined.

By this method of comparing child with child, and not the child with the

parent, the literary historian shows how worthily Canadian poetry and prose compare with other Overseas poetry and prose, and what right Canadian and other Overseas literature have to be considered respectable branches of the literature of the Empire. A comparative appreciation of the Poetry of Canada and the other Overseas Dominions will suffice.

If Canadians have not written ‘great’ poetry, they have written poetry in which, as Mr. E. B. Osborn, of the London *Morning Post*, says, ‘the most exacting critic can find something to admire.’ The problem of literary criticism in Canada to-day is not whether Canada has produced or is producing ‘great poetry,’ but whether it has produced or is producing good poetry, consistently with its grade of culture, civilization and national inspirations and aspirations—poetry that can genuinely be admired and that deserves to be preserved. To observe that Canada has produced good poetry, near-great poetry, is not, as many Canadians seem to feel it is, to damn it with faint praise, but sensibly to evaluate it. Those native critics who ignore Canadian poetry because, as they think, it is not ‘great’ poetry and is, therefore, not ‘real’ poetry or not poetry worthy of the name of literature, are maladroit logicians. Those other native critics who discover Coleridge reincarnated in Bliss Carman, Tennyson in Roberts, Keats in Lampman, Matthew Arnold in Duncan Campbell Scott, Kipling in Service are damning Canadian poetry with superobese praise. The truth is that Canada has produced systematic poets who have written much poetry that is good, some that is super-excellent, and some rare examples that are near the perfection which entitles them, in their kind, to be ranked as really great.

Canadian poetry, in variety of theme or species, and in technical finish, naturally might be presumed to be superior to that of Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa. In a literary way, Canada is not much, if at all, older than Australia. Both countries depend on England for their literary standards and poetic forms. But in changes of seasons and their effects on the beauty and call of objective Nature, Canada has greater variety, and Nature makes a deeper impress on the soul, than is possible by climatic changes and Nature’s varying face and garb in Australia. Moreover, Canada has a unique background of romantic history which affords Canadian poets special opportunities to incorporate romantic and heroic material in their poetry, or to suffuse it with the glamor of romance. Australia has not this romantic history, and Australian poets, therefore, have less opportunity to make their descriptive and narrative poetry interesting or entrancing by way of romantic glamor. Again: Canada has had several internal or national crises which have had a distinct effect on the conscience of the Canadian people—creating in them a sense of solidarity, evoking a national consciousness, and filling them with national aspirations and an intense desire to work out their own destiny. Australia has not had any

such internal crises; and, it is, therefore, not to be expected that Australian poetry will be noted for peculiar, intense, or profound expressions of the sense of nationality and of destiny.

But while in Canada the literature most in popular demand is imaginative prose, and while the majority of readers are virtually perusers of prose fiction, in Australia the readers and writers of poetry are legion or, as one critic has put it, 'poetry out there is a national habit.' Mr. Arthur Adams, an Australian editor, has stated that while he was always certain of getting good verse from contributors, he was never certain of getting a good story. It has been quite the other way in Canada—an editor is practically certain of getting a good piece of prose or a good story, and never sure of getting a technically worthy poem, or even verse which might by courtesy be called poetry. In Canada, with the exception of the enormous sales of Service's volumes and W. H. Drummond's *habitant* verse, Canadian poets have had to be content with very small editions, and even some of these had many left-over copies, absolutely unsaleable. In Australia the sale of poetry—of large successive editions of the poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Lawson, Will H. Ogilvie, A. B. Patterson, C. J. Dennis, the latter's running beyond 100,000 copies in 1917—is a literary phenomenon by itself; and goes to prove that in Australia the reading and the writing of poetry are virtually national habits.

On the sides, then, of romantic historical backgrounds, practical or social crises, and variety, beauty, and sublimity of Nature, Canada was naturally fitted to produce a larger and more impressive body of poetry than was Australia. But as a matter of fact, in at least two respects, Australian poetry rather surpasses Canadian. Canadian poets never had a waiting and avid body of readers. Australian poets had precisely such a *clientèle*. This means that in Canada poetry would not be written with the consciousness of a critical public in mind—a public that would as readily reject or condemn poetry which was not satisfactory as it would accept and praise poetry which satisfied, whereas in Australia poetry would be written consciously aiming at pleasing and satisfying a critical public of readers. In other words, while Canadian poets had only foreign or English standards, and practically no domestic standards or *clientèle*, Australian poets had both foreign and domestic standards and a very large and responsive domestic public of readers.

The result was that while in Canada the general run of poetry was technically indifferent, at least until the rise of the Systematic School, in Australia the run of poetry, irrespective of the themes, was technically better finished than the Canadian. The Canadians did not seem to write with a consciousness of English standards and criticism. Their poetry was only for home consumption—and the substance counted more than the form or style. The Australians, as poets, on the whole were more cultured than the Canadians

and wrote their verse as if distinctly conscious that it would be seen and read in England, and judged according to rigorous English standards, because regarded as written by *absentee* Englishmen. Australian verse was written more for English readers than for home readers. But the home readers also read with English standards in view—even though the themes were Australian, horse-racing and other picaresque life or the more dignified themes of Nature's loveliness, Nature's immensities, or tragic death in the wilderness. Hence, on the whole, Australian poetry actually shows a better *technical* finish than does Canadian poetry.

Canadian and Australian poets naturally produced verse which is marked by fervid nature-painting and by realistic pictures of pioneer and wild romantic social life. But in fine nature-painting the Canadians surpass the Australians. Both in color from Nature (Canadian poets have the larger, more varied palette) and in technical artistry Australia has not produced a poet of the quality of Lampman, Wilfred Campbell, or Duncan Campbell Scott. Nor when it comes to envisaging the *moods* of Nature and the open-road, has Australia produced a poet of the lyrical quality of Bliss Carman. Canada's Nature-painters are superb *artists*.

But the Australian poets have their *forte*. In realistic pictures of rough or pioneer social life, they surpass the Canadian poets. The Canadian poet Drummond, of course, stands in a class by himself, inasmuch as his poetry of the *habitant* and *voyageur* was a field pre-empted by him and inasmuch as his poetry in this field is devoted to picturesque revealment of the *humanity*—the pathos and humor—of the thought, speech and simple life—of a peculiar but morally worthy people. There is nothing melodramatic in Drummond's poetry. It is genuinely humanized verse about a genuinely human people. Service's Western and Northern Canadian verse, on the contrary, is the poetry of picaresque melodrama. The best ballads of the Australian poets of rough or pioneer life, A. L. Gordon, A. B. Patterson, Henry Lawson, C. J. Dennis, are authentic poetry. In remarking the distinction between the Australian and the Canadian poets of rude or picaresque life, Mr. E. B. Osborn truthfully says: 'Some of the poems in his [Service's] last volume are a *near approach* to the Australian realism, which avoids the melodramatic and the splashing of anapests as far as possible and makes use of the quiet-curtain. So far the manly adventurous poets of Canada [Service, Stead, McInnes, Fraser, *et al.*] have not progressed far beyond the Adam Lindsay Gordon convention. As yet none of the Western Canadian poets see that *style* is the only antiseptic and, as artists, they are far behind the Australians and compare unfavorably with the minor masters of Quebec.'

What has been said regarding the technical finish of Australian verse applies also to the verse of New Zealand and of South Africa, and to the latter

with even more truth. For all the South African poets happened to be men and women of culture. Thomas Pringle was a man of rare and refined culture. So are Arthur Cripps, R. C. Russell, John Runcie, Mrs. Beatrice Bromley, W. C. Scully, and a score of others.

What, then, is the status of Canadian poetry in the poetry of the Empire? Canadian nature-poetry, in variety of theme, substance, color, imagery and artistry, at its best, surpasses that of the other Dominions. Much of Overseas poetry is concerned with social life. In the past Canadians displayed an insistent sense of a call to work out their own destiny, and a profound pride in the resources and institutions of their country. In the verse of Canadian poets the 'note' in this regard is somewhat too insistent, almost strident. But the stridency of the national 'note' is nothing compared with another defect. The moral earnestness of Canadian poets is so obtrusive that it either causes a neglect of form in order to get the important thing said, or it effervesces in insincere and melodramatic utterances. Australian, New Zealand, and South African poets do not exhibit the same intense consciousness nationality and destiny. They still hold to the idea of the Motherland, still feel their connection with the Old Country. For this reason they write of social life in their respective countries with more objectivity than do the Canadians, revealing the joys and humor and pathos of life with a realism that is veracious and sincere.

So far no Overseas poetry, Canadian or other, has contributed anything novel or original to the forms and aesthetic values of English poetry. In this respect no Overseas poetry is 'great' poetry, although much of it is genuinely 'real' and excellent poetry. But in aesthetic content, as in its Nature-painting or Nature-psychology, and in moral substance, all Overseas poetry—all the best of it—is admirable. Canadian poetry, however, ranks highest, particularly in self-reliance, in faith in the land and the people, in serenity and a profound trust in the providential government of nations that love righteousness and pursue it.

Summarily: Canadian poetry, excepting the realism of Service, is the sincerest poetry written in the Overseas Dominions of the British Empire. It is not always the most joyous, the most winning, the most moving, or the most transporting. But it is the most sincere and serene, and, therefore, the most satisfying, verse in the poetry of the British Overseas Dominions.

CHAPTER XXVIII

# Essayists *and* Color Writers

THE ESSAYISTS AND COLOR WRITERS OF CANADA—CARMAN—MACMECHAN—BLAKE—KATHERINE HALE—KING—DEACON—LEACOCK.

CANADIAN essays, familiar studies of life and manners, or essays in *belles lettres*, are too meagre in quantity and too ephemeral or slight in aesthetic substance as yet to be significant. Pure criticism of fine arts, including literature, is also slight in quantity and insignificant in form and substance. Both literary criticism and essays in *belles-lettres* are possible only under certain social and mental conditions. There must be a considerable degree of economic independence and leisure so as to permit writers to view Nature and existence with detachment. The writers themselves must be specially gifted with a light literary touch, a delicate sensibility to impressions from Nature and character, and a refined sense of the relative values of good and evil, tragedy and comedy, in the world, a whimsical or gracious humor and a faculty for gentle revery. In short, detachment, an eye for beauty in Nature and the human spirit and a genuine humor are necessary in writers who would achieve distinction in the field of the Familiar Essay and in Belletristic Literature. In Canada, however, where life is strenuous and where men and women must take pragmatic or moralistic attitudes to existence, detachment, humor, and a light touch are rarely possible. The result is that the belletristic literature of Canada is slight and as yet insignificant.

The most notable work of the kind appears to be the essays of Bliss Carman. He has published four volumes, considerable in quantity, on the philosophy of Nature and the Spirit, distinguished by a clear, well-knit, and readable prose style, and rich in poetic suggestiveness and spiritual power. These volumes are *The Kinship of Nature*, *The Friendship of Art*, *The Poetry of Life*, and *The Making of Personality*. Plato, the Greek Gnostics and Mystics, and the Transcendentalism of Emerson informed Carman's heart and sublimated his imagination pantheistically and mystically. Carman applied his poetic imagination to a special philosophical interpretation and appreciation of Man's kinship with Nature, and of the metaphysical meaning of the human personality or spirit in its relation to Nature and the universe. In truth, Carman's prose and poetry are related as the converse and obverse sides of his inner being. Indeed the secret of the inner springs of his lyricism is to be discovered beautifully, lyrically, expressed in his prose essays.

But Carman's essays are not prose poetry. He did not attempt, as Roberts attempted in his prose, to write impressionistic prose. Carman does not aim at mere color-writing for its own sake. What he attempts and achieves is a subtle analysis of the history of the spirit in its relations to man and to God and the whole universe. Because this was his aim, Carman was solicitous about his style—especially about clarity of diction and pure beauty of imagery, and about the simplicity and readableness of the structure of his sentences. In short, Carman's prose style has the same simplicity and directness and chaste beauty of imagery and spiritual exaltation which we find in his lyrics. For this reason we may signalize Carman's prose as 'lyrical' prose. But we are by no means to allow this epithet to connote anything like sensuous impressionism or vague imagination. It is all solid, if sublimated, thought about profound matters, addressed to the imaginative reason or the religious imagination, and addressed in a style so clear and direct and so emotionally pure that it affects the heart and the imagination lyrically.

An essayist in another style is Archibald MacMechan. Dr. MacMechan has published two volumes, *The Porter of Bagdad* (1901) and *The Life of a Little College* (1914); and he has published several booklets of essays in a series of 'chap books.' Dr. MacMechan is unsurpassed in Canada as a writer of the Light Essay. He differs of course from Carman in bent of genius as an essayist. Carman employs the religious or metaphysical imagination and appeals to our sensibilities. Dr. MacMechan employs the fancy. His essays are essentially, as he indicates in the title of *The Porter of Bagdad*, 'fantasies' or reveries. His style has a lightness of touch which is inviting and ingratiating, and he has a delicate and pleasant gift of humor. He is hardly Addisonian, but the substance of his essays, their diction, and the movement of his sentences engage the attention and delight the sense of form with the readiness and pleasant intrigue of the essays of Addison.

Not in so light a style and not with such playful fancy as Dr. MacMechan's are the essays of W. H. Blake, widely known as the translator of Louis Hémon's romantic idyll of French Canada, *Maria Chapdelaine*. Mr. Blake's *Brown Waters and Other Sketches*, *In a Fishing Country*, and *A Fisherman's Luck* indicate the scope and method of his essays. They are 'sketches' of objective experiences. They are not fantasies or reveries. The intellect, rather than the fancy, is the creative faculty most employed in them. Mr. Blake's essays, therefore, have not the lightness and the limpidity of MacMechan's but they contain happy revealments of Nature in Canada and of the human spirit against a background of Nature. At times, they contain patches of engaging 'color-writing.'

In the field of systematic 'color-writing' Katherine Hale is an artist by herself. In aesthetic criticism Katherine Hale's *forte* had always been a gift of

causing the imagination and sensibilities to appreciate one art, say, music, in terms of another art, say, painting. Her musical criticism is not musical, but *literary impressionism*. Its effect all depends upon suggestion, particularly suggestion of color. When, therefore, Katherine Hale turned to employ her pictorial imagination in a field where the sense of color in Nature and of the 'color of life' would be absolutely free and directly at home, she produced work which is unique in its kind, as in her *Canadian Cities of Romance* (1922). The romance in this case is not the romance of sentiment and of wonder and of curiosity. It is the romance that exists for the eyes which perceive beauty in ancient by-ways, strange and eerie places, and in the dress, manners and habits of peculiar peoples in towns and cities which still retain a residue of an old and lost civilization and culture. Her *Canadian Cities of Romance* is a book by which to transport the pictorial imagination and to win the imaginative eye with aesthetic delights of 'color' in character, incident, and the dramatic movement of life. Her literary style is piquant, swift-moving, realistically faithful and yet suffused with tints from Nature's palette and with imaginative light. Its analogue is found in the travel essays of E. V. Lucas.

In another form of the Essay, namely, the Practical, Reflective Essay, very little has been achieved, because rarely attempted, in Canada. Canadians do not seem to have the same desire as their cousins in the United States for homilies or practical preachments on the secret of 'getting along' in the world. An excellent, if singular, example of the Practical, Reflective Essay is *The Secret of Heroism* by the Rt. Hon. MacKenzie King, Premier of Canada. *The Secret of Heroism* is a biography of a human spirit, which, having served nobly on earth, passed, and in passing left the effluence of his life, which is still potent, to win men to the love of 'otherworldliness.' Aside from the matter, it is notable as an example of what is rare in Canadian prose, namely, 'infused' style, which requires that the matter and the form, the thought and the expression, be indivisible.

A pragmatic people, as are the Canadians, have little or no taste for the Whimsical Essay. The matter of the whimsical essay counts for nothing. Its appeal is altogether by way of piquancy in what is said. Piquancy—not mordancy! For mordancy would only make what is said satiric, and cause pain. The whimsical essay must cause mere smiles and chuckles. It must be *clever*—and nothing more. Canadians are beginning to turn more and more to this form of Essay. Its character and manner are well exemplified in William A. Deacon's *Pens and Pirates* (1923). The essays in this volume have novelty of theme, over which plays precisely the light of a 'whimsical' fancy and humor. They are informed, however, with the strictly literary color of allusion and quotation from the poets and prosemen of all ages to the present, but in such an incidental and light way that there is no show of pedantry. The allusion and

quotation are natural to Mr. Deacon's professional office as a reviewer of contemporary literature. His style is journalistic in the French sense—'style *coupe'*—as regards sentence length. But he adds a piquancy to it which makes it somewhat 'winged' and which thus pleasantly engages the sensibility.

No Canadian as yet has appeared as a systematic writer of the Critical Essay. Such essays of this genre as were published have been 'fugitive,' and their aim and method have been pragmatic and pedagogical rather than literary. There is, however, much room and great need in Canada for systematic Essays in Criticism which shall have dignity of thought, imaginative light, and grace or power of style, and which in themselves shall be literature. Thomas O'Hagan's Essays in *Canadian Literature* are too fragmentary and didactic to be literature, though they are literary. L. J. Burpee's *A Little Book of Canadian Essays* contains brief but illuminating critical studies of seven Canadian writers. Stephen Leacock's *Essays and Literary Studies* are too heterogeneous in theme and too variable (perhaps variegated) in style to be credited with the dignity of systematic Essays in Criticism. They are interesting but not weighty literary 'Studies.' The master critic has yet to appear in Canada.

CHAPTER XXIX

# Anthologies

CANADIAN BIRTHDAY BOOK (SERANUS)—DEWART's SELECTIONS FROM CANADIAN POETS—LIGHTHALL'S 'SONGS OF THE GREAT DOMINION'—OXFORD BOOK OF CANADIAN VERSE—GARVIN'S CANADIAN POETS, ETC.

EVERY anthology of national literature must be critically appreciated from the point of view of the aim of the author. Properly, according to the roots of the word anthology, care, and even fastidiousness, are implied on the part of the compiler. The world-famous collection of Greek verse known as *The Greek Anthology* is properly, that is both etymologically and aesthetically, an 'anthology.' For the poems in it were most carefully chosen before being collected together; and they were selected strictly according to ideals of beauty in thought and expression. So that the term anthology hardly if ever applies strictly to the so called anthologies of Canadian verse. As a matter of fact such collections of Canadian verse as have been compiled, actually do not bear the title anthology; they bear some such title as 'A Treasury,' or 'A Wreath,' or 'Flowers,' of Canadian Verse. Sometimes the collections have the plainest of practical titles, such as *Canadian Poets* or *Canadian Singers and Their Songs*, or *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*.

It is quite irrelevant and an elaboration of the obvious to dispraise, as some Canadian critics have done, the contents of certain anthologies of Canadian poetry, as of 'unequal merit.' They might as well say that the culture and the cultural institutions of Canada are of 'unequal merit.' Relatively to the poetry of old civilizations the poetry of Canada is poor or mediocre or indifferent or fine in aesthetic substance and artistic structure and form according to the culture and genius of the country's poets. Secondly, all Canadian anthologies, whether the aim was to select the very best of the very best poetry or to select representative poems from each period or all periods, contain poetry which is not all on the same level of excellence.

The first anthology to engage public attention and to win critical appreciation was a book which now belongs to the *rarissimae* of collectors of 'Canadiana,' namely, *The Canadian Birthday Book*, by 'Seranus' (pseudonym of Mrs. S. Frances Harrison), published at Toronto in 1887. It was compiled, with exquisite taste, in both English and French; and it is notable for the fact that its selections date as far back as the year 1732, with a poem by Jean Taché who, as the compiler has said in her notes, is 'probably the first French-

Canadian poet to publish.' It is notable also for the fact that it contains some verses by the Indian Chief Tecumseh, and is, likewise, one of the earliest volumes to contain the work of such poets as Bliss Carman, Wilfred Campbell, Pauline Johnson, and Archibald Lampman. In a real sense, that is, in the Greek sense of the term, the *Canadian Birthday Book* is the first Canadian anthology. The poems in it, are dainty in themselves and the artistry of the poems also is dainty—'little flowers' of pretty or beautiful Canadian verse, pioneer, *émigré*, nativistic, and native and national.

Twenty years before the appearance of Seranus' miniature anthology Rev. Edward Hartley Dewart published, under the plain title of *Selections From Canadian Poetry*, what may be called the first treasury of Canadian verse (1864). Dewart's *Selections* was simply a 'collection' of poems for 'good reading,' or for pedagogical purposes in the Provinces of Canada. It was not intended to be received as literary anthology, but only as a volume of representative poems from the earlier periods of Canadian history up to the year of publication. Its audience was limited to Canada and it had only local or provincial appreciation.

The next anthology was W. D. Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889). It was informed with the Canadian outlook on life and national achievement within the twenty years after the formation of the Confederacy, and with the Canadian prevision of a national destiny which seemed implied in the genius of the Canadian people for autonomous government, in the vast resources of the Dominion, and in the relations which would inevitably develop between Canada and the United States and the other nations of the world. The aim of Dr. Lighthall was both literary and pragmatic. He desired to present to the English-speaking world the ideals and genius of Canada as these ideals and genius were embodied and expressed in the best poetry by *émigré* and by native-born Canadian poets.

Dr. Lighthall's inclusive and pragmatic aim determines both the scope and the method of his aptly named *Songs of the Great Dominion*. In his Introduction he carefully explains the scope and method of his anthology. The order of this collection is in sections, treating of the Imperial Spirit, the New Nationality, the Indian, the *Voyageur* and *Habitant*, Settlement Life, Sports and Free Life, Historical Incidents, Places and Seasons. He says: They give merely, it should be understood, a sketch of the range of the subjects. Canadian history, for example, as any one acquainted with Parkman will know, perfectly teems with noble deeds and great events, of which only a small share have been sung, whereof there is only space here for a much smaller share. The Northwest and British Columbia, that Pacific clime of charm—the gold-diggings Province, land of salmon rivers, and of the Douglas firs which hide daylight at noonday—have been scarcely sung at all, owing to their newness.

The poetry of the Winter Carnival, splendid scenic spectacle of gay Northern arts and delights, is only rudimentary also. Those who have been present at the thrilling spectacle of the nocturnal storming of the Ice Palace in Montreal, when the whole city, dressing itself in the picturesque snow-shoe costume and arraying its streets in lights and colors, rises as one man in a tumultuous enthusiasm, must feel that something of a future lies before the poetry of these strange and wonderful elements.'

What Lighthall in his *Songs of the Great Dominion* attempts to do is not to present us with a mere quantity of Canadian poetry which we may receive with delight or reject, but to invite us to the home of the Canadian National Spirit and to show us what the Canadian spirit, as it is envisaged and expressed in the poetry of the Dominion since Confederation, has achieved and means to achieve. One who reads Lighthall's anthology cannot escape catching in it glimpses of the essential Canadian spirit. In the poems in Lighthall's volume the Canadian spirit sings clearly its full gamut. We hear the 'notes' always of courage; of self-reliance; of hope; of exultation; and of good cheer and serenity; and these notes of courage and faith and exultation and indomitable will and heroism and good cheer and peace in the heart of man in Canada *are but the antiphons to the voices of the land and the sea and the forest, the great waters and the sky and the maples, and elms in their strength and also in their gentler and peaceful humors*.

The Canadian spirit, as evisaged and expressed in the *Songs of the Great Dominion*, is manly; and the supreme quality of the poetry in Lighthall's anthology is the quality of *manliness*. But this is a moral quality. What of the aesthetic quality of the *Songs of the Great Dominion*? Agreeing that poets should rise and drop with their subjects, we note a high level of excellence in thought and in craftsmanship in the poems in Lighthall's volume. Considering its scope and the variety of the subjects and styles of form in the volume, and considering also its expression of the full gamut of the notes of the Canadian spirit, Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion* not only implies a kind of creative vision and imagination on the part of the compiler, but distinctly and unmistakably appeals to the same faculties in the reader. In other words, Lighthall's volume delights the heart and the imagination by way of the intrinsic beauty and the moral substance of the poetry in it; but it delights more the constructive imagination of the reader by way of the illumination it sheds on the essential nature, will, and ideals of the Canadian spirit, of the Canadian people. It differs in this constructive way from all anthologies of Canadian verse that have preceded it and all that have followed it. In short, Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion*, on the side of embodying and expressing spiritual essences, is unique amongst Canadian anthologies of native and national poetry.

*Later Canadian Poems* (1893), edited by J. E. Wetherell, is a much slighter volume than Lighthall's but is significant as an expression of the new spirit in Canadian Literature, containing, as it does, the first publication of some of the work of Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Pauline Johnson.

It might have been expected that *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1913), inasmuch as it was seemingly compiled by Wilfred Campbell, one of the more important poets of Canada, would be on the level of the ideal required by the Oxford Press and superior to other anthologies of Canadian verse. As a matter of fact *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, as originally compiled by Wilfred Campbell, was not according to the standard of the Oxford Press. The necessary re-compilation was made by two hands, Mr. S. B. Gundy, Canadian Representative of the Oxford Press at Toronto, and J. D. Logan who selected and added fifty poems (Nos. 211 to the end, inclusive) from the work of the younger Canadian poets. Campbell's Oxford Press anthology has been frequently appreciated as the best of the treasuries of Canadian poetry. But how a volume of such fortuitous origin and construction can be the best of the Canadian anthologies, passes understanding. As an anthology *The Oxford Book* is more than any of the other anthologies of Canadian verse a volume of poetry 'of unequal merit.' But the defect most conspicuous in the book is psychological rather than artistic, spiritual rather than aesthetic. It contains 251 poems by 100 poets. It is the slightest of the three great anthologies, and the most classical. Its contents have dignity, taste, correctness.

Of the other two chief anthologies—Theodore Harding Rand's *A Treasury of Canadian Verse* (1900) and John W. Garvin's *Canadian Poets* (1916)—the Rand anthology was compiled from the point of view of the history, rather than the aesthetics, of Canadian poetry, whereas the Garvin anthology was compiled from the point of view of modernity in the aesthetic substance and artistic construction of Canadian poetry. Garvin's volume contains the work of only fifty-two poets, whereas Rand's and Lighthall's contain the work of more than twice that number of poets. Garvin's volume is better suited to its century than is any of the others. It is not only a repository of modern Canadian poetry but also a critical *vade mecum* to 20th Century Canadian poetry. For in addition to the poems in the volume, each poet's work is prefaced by a biographical sketch and by critical appreciation or comment by others than the compiler. The latter fact relieves the critical apparatus itself of the charge of personal bias on the part of the compiler. The Garvin anthology, again, is distinguished by a peculiarity of singular spiritual import. It contains nothing that is not *typical* of the Canadian national spirit and Canadian civilization and culture. Lighthall's volume, despite its good sense and genuinely aesthetic

quality, had such variety and diversity of ‘notes’ of the spirit in it that it is hard to distinguish which is the essential note, the typical voice, and which the ‘overtones’ of the Canadian spirit. *The Oxford Book*, again, is untypical of the Canadian spirit by way of too many poems that are ‘poet’s poems’—too much of art for art’s sake. But Garvin’s *Canadian Poets* contains the work of such poets, both of the older and the younger generation, as expresses the typical work of each of the singers and the typical spirit of the Canadian people. It is a companionable volume; and it has the distinct advantage of biographical and critical comment, which fit it, according to its scope, for private reading and enjoyment and for critical study of the history of Canadian poetry. In those regards Garvin’s *Canadian Poets* is an anthology which is at once aesthetically satisfying and pragmatically the most serviceable in the field that it covers. Mr. Garvin is also the compiler of the only anthology of the Canadian poetry of the Great War.

Several other anthologies of Canadian poetry require no more notice here than to mention their names and scope. L. J. Burpee’s *Flowers From a Canadian Garden* is a genuine anthology in the Greek meaning of the term. It is a bijou anthology containing seventy-five fastidiously selected short lyrics, lovely ‘little flowers’ of Canadian poetry. The selections in Mr. Burpee’s *A Century of Canadian Sonnets* are also most carefully chosen. E. S. Caswell’s *Canadian Singers and Their Songs* is a unique volume of selected poems in fac-similes of the authors’ holograph manuscripts; and is illustrated with portraits of the authors of the poems. It is essentially a literary curiosity, and meets the express design of the compiler, namely, to produce a book of ‘personalia’ which would be appreciated as a gift book. Mrs. C. M. Whyte Edgar’s *A Wreath of Canadian Song* (1910) is too fragmentary in the poetry which chiefly forms its substance to be considered a genuine anthology. Moreover, it is limited to the verse of Canadian poets who have died. Aesthetically viewed it is a work of no significance; but it contains historical and bibliographical data that is curious and useful for critical purposes. *Our Canadian Literature* (1923) is a collection of Canadian poetry and prose by Dr. Lorne Pierce and Dr. A. D. Watson. It is much more valuable as a reading course or class room textbook than as a treasury of aesthetic poetry and prose. *A Book of Canadian Verse and Prose* (1923) is the compilation of Professor E. K. Broadus and Mrs. Broadus. It is a collection of Canadian poetry and prose in English and French.

A number of compilations of Canadian poetry and prose have been made from time to time for school use. Among these are *Patriotic Recitations and Arbor Day Exercises*, by G. W. Ross; *Selections from Canadian Poets* and *Selections from Canadian Prose*, both by E. A. Hardy; *The Standard Canadian Reciter*, by Donald G. French; *The Canadian Poetry Book*, by D. J. Dickie.

CHAPTER XXX

# Canadian Journalism

CANADIAN JOURNALISM IN RELATION TO PERMANENT CANADIAN LITERATURE; A SUMMARY CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE CHIEF CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES.

THE question: Are Newspapers and Magazines literature? has various answers, negative and affirmative. There cannot be any doubt that Newspapers and Magazines can be literature, because they have been literature; or that Newspapers and Magazines promote literature, because they have done this. The fact is that the first journalism in English was at the very outset literature. *The Tatter* and *The Spectator* were founded in the years 1709 and 1711, respectively. *The Rambler* was founded later. These periodicals, whose pages were the popular reading of the times, and whose pages were made 'living epistles' by the pens of Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson, and Oliver Goldsmith—four of the greatest prose writers of the 18th century—were the predecessors of the modern Newspaper. Their pages, especially those of *The Spectator*, combined the functions of a newspaper, a literary miscellany and a review of society, life, and world happenings. In particular, Joseph Addison was 'the father' of the modern newspaper 'leader' and 'editorial' and of the special article in theatrical and art criticism. Samuel Johnson was the inventor of the modern 'society page' and 'woman's page' as we know them in our day. In short, Steele, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Defoe and others of considerable literary reputation in the 18th century were the creators of England's first 'people's literature'—a journalistic literature.

Journalism and Magazine writing in Canada began with the same ideals of scope and literary dignity as obtained in the days of Addison and Johnson in England. The first newspaper to be established in any of the Provinces which later became confederated in the Canadian Union was *The Halifax Gazette* which was established at Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1752; that is, 43 years after the founding of *The Tatler*. The first magazine to be established in Canada was published at Halifax in 1789 and was named *The Nova Scotia Magazine*. As a newspaper, however, *The Halifax Gazette* was devoted chiefly to the publication of military and governmental intelligence. It was not till Joseph Howe purchased *The Novascotian*, at Halifax, in 1828, that journalism in Canada harked back to the ideals of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Joseph Howe must be regarded as the first and foremost literary, as well as practical,

journalist in the history of Canada.

It is sufficient here to remark Howe's strict literary ideals, even as a journalist, and to observe not only that in his own journalistic writing he strove after literary form and color, but also that in the writings of his contributors he saw to it that there was a very considerable literary flavor. His ideals were emulated by other Canadian journalists, as for instance Etienne Parent, in Quebec, and George Brown of the Toronto *Globe* and Charles Lindsey, in Ontario, and by later journalists in Canada. Yet we must here emphasize, for our own times, the inclusiveness of the ideals which inspired Howe and which resulted in his producing newspapers whose influence abides to this day.

By some sort of intuition, Howe knew, as Addison and Steele before him knew, that the secrets of successful journalism are two: *Variety* of interests in reading matter, and *Readableness* or the power to hold the attention by the manner or style of what is written. Howe also had aesthetic and moral ideals. He aimed to produce journalism that would entertain and at the same time improve literary taste and educate the sensibilities and moral imagination. Howe saw that the unpardonable sins of all newspapers are the lack of humanized matter, and dullness in style; and that, therefore, no matter how high and worthy the moral aims of journalism may be, unless a newspaper possesses variety and readableness, it is doomed to fail both as a newspaper that otherwise might have endured and as a newspaper that might have been perennially the voice and the educator of the spirit. In other words, Joseph Howe saw that the supreme virtues of first rate journalism, the virtues which raise journalism to the dignity of literature, are two: *Humanity* and *Urbanity*.

Five years after the fall of Quebec, that is, in 1764, when Quebec city had acquired a considerable English-speaking population, the second of the pioneer Canadian newspapers was established. This was the *Quebec Gazette*. For seventy-eight years this newspaper was printed in two languages—English and French. From 1848 till 1880 it was printed wholly in English. With the coming of the Loyalists, while New Brunswick was still part of Nova Scotia, there appeared at St. John, in 1783, the *Royal St. John Gazette and Nova Scotia Intelligencer*. In the following year, when New Brunswick had become a separate Province, this newspaper changed its name to the *Royal Gazette & New Brunswick Advertiser*. In 1785 the *Gazette* was established at Montreal. In 1791 and in 1793 newspapers were established at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and Niagara, Ontario. In 1806 and in 1810 newspapers were established at Fredericton, N.B. and Kingston, Ont. Up to 1810 the newspapers of Canada, with the notable exception of the *Quebec Gazette*, were not at all in the spirit of constructive journalism, but with the founding of *The Herald* at Montreal in 1811, *The Acadian Recorder* at Halifax in 1813, the *Colonial Advocate* at Queenston in 1824, and *The Novascotian* at Halifax in 1824

(purchased by Joseph Howe in 1828), journalism in Canada took on the scope and complexion of literary and constructive journalism.

The Pioneer Newspapers, as contrasted with the Pioneer and later Canadian Magazines, served very considerably as 'the people's' reading and as the popular educator. They were instrumental in creating a desire for intelligence about Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The demand was chiefly for commercial and social, and political news. And so with the desire for news came into existence an ardent desire for an education in the so-called 'three R's.' As to the style of the reading matter in the Pioneer Newspapers, it conformed, with notable exceptions, to the conditions, social and political, of the times. As a matter of fact, politics were paramount in pioneer days and up to the triumph of Responsible Government, or to the middle of the 19th Century. Naturally, therefore, the newspapers contained considerable satiric writing and letters on practical matters, including reforms in Government. Accordingly the general style of the newspapers was straightforward, often overpointed in vigorous vernacular, with no care for purity of diction and coherency of sentential structure. The thing to be said, the matter, must be said at all hazards—plainly, bluntly, vigorously, and unmistakably. In all these regards, which were not according to the English style of journalism under Addison and Steele, the better newspapers, such as *The Montreal Gazette*, and *The Novascotian*, were notable exceptions to the general run of the Pioneer Newspapers. Howe, for example, did see to it, with considerable solicitude, that his newspapers, especially *The Novascotian*, should contain genuine literary matter and that the style of the general reading matter which appeared in his newspapers should be in decent readable English.

On the whole, therefore, the Pioneer Newspapers of Canada and those which appeared up to Responsible Government and Confederation, and later, conformed to the two ideals of purveyors of intelligence and disseminators of popular culture. Except in rare instances, however, they did not foster the creative literary spirit. That function was left to the Canadian Magazines.

As, in the case of daily journalism, Nova Scotia had priority in establishing newspapers, so, in the case of Canadian magazines, Nova Scotia also was first in enterprise. The first magazine to be published in any of the Provinces of Canada was the *Nova Scotia Magazine*, which appeared at Halifax in 1789, and ceased publication in 1792. The second Canadian magazine to be published was the *Quebec Magazine*, which appeared at Quebec in 1791 (2). It also went out of existence in two or three years. The difficulty then was the same as in the present day. The Canadian editor and publisher of native magazines could not compete with the British and the United States magazines, because the foreign periodicals were more readable and cheaper. The matter, however, of the earlier Canadian magazines was, for the most part,

genuinely literary and fostered culture.

The first magazine in Canada to spread culture and at the same time to foster amongst native-born or resident *émigré* writers the creative literary spirit, and to publish contributions in the form of essays, Nature sketches, and poems by native-born and permanently resident writers, was the *Literary Garland*. It flourished from 1838 to 1851, and numbered amongst its contributors such men and women of parts as William Dunlop, who may be regarded as the first *émigré* Canadian humorist in distinction from Haliburton, the first native-born humorist, Charles Sangster, who was the first native-born Canadian poet of significant power in original creation, Susanna Moodie who was a versatile writer of colorful prose, and the first singer of Canadian Martial Verse, and her sister Catharine Parr Traill, whose Nature studies and sketches are still eminently worth reading.

In the year which saw the consummation of the Confederacy George Stewart, a man of fine critical taste, established *Stewart's Quarterly* at St. John, N.B. His ideal was that of the English Quarterlies; and the articles which appeared in his magazine were notably solid in substance and distinguished in literary style. *Stewart's Quarterly* did much to promote culture and to encourage creative writing on the part of native-born Canadian writers. Several other magazines which conformed more to the matter and style of the *Literary Garland* were established in the first 25 years following Confederation. They all eventually went out of existence. The first magazine to endure as a cultural agency and genuine fosterer of the literary spirit was the *Canadian Magazine*, founded in 1893 by J. Gordon Mowat. Under his editorship it grew and further progressed under the editorship of John A. Cooper. In 1907 the *Canadian Magazine* came under the editorship of Mr. Newton MacTavish.

From 1907, when Mr. MacTavish became editor, there was a distinct and continually progressive change in the editorial policy of the *Canadian Magazine*. Patriotically he set out to foster the appreciation and production of fine arts and literature by native-born Canadians. To do this he reproduced in the magazine paintings and drawings by Canadian artists, along with special articles, critically appraising Canadian artists and their art. He also published essays, criticism, fiction, and poetry, by native-born Canadian writers. In fact, it was considerably due to the sympathetic and respectful encouragement which Mr. MacTavish gave to native-writers, that Canadian poets and prose writers achieved as splendidly as they have done in the first quarter of the 20th century, and that constructive literary criticism and literary history significantly developed in Canada.

With the *Canadian Magazine* should be mentioned two others, the *Queen's Quarterly* and the *University Magazine*. The latter was edited by Sir Andrew Macphail, and did much to foster letters and criticism in Canada. Amongst

other distinctions, the *University Magazine* published not only the best verse but also the first book of poems by Marjorie Pickthall, *Drift of Pinions* (1913). It ceased publication in 1921. The *Queen's Quarterly*, always well edited, is still potent in fostering letters and criticism in Canada. *The Dalhousie Review*, founded in 1921, essayed some of the ideals of the *University Magazine*. But it is given too much to critical writing by foreign *literati* to be potent in fostering letters and criticism in Canada.

CHAPTER XXXI

# Narrative Literature

NARRATIVE LITERATURE—HISTORY—BIOGRAPHY—EXPLORATION—TRAVELS—SPORT OR OPEN-AIR LIFE.

## *I. History.*

TWO general conditions have made the writing of 'true history' in Canada an impossibility. On the personal side, there were the lack of adequate culture, of a sense of the historic process and of history as the narrative of spiritual development, and of any genius, save curiosity, on the part of those who essayed the writing of history. Men with the historic imagination did not exist in Canada, and only 'minor' historians were active, up to the beginning of the 20th century. On the material or instrumental side, there were the heterogeneity of Canadian civilization, the want of political unity, the lack of access to documents and of facilities for historical research, and other untoward circumstances. Unimaginative minds and the heterogeneity of life and thought in Canada, before and after Confederation, limited history for the most part to annals, chronicles, period and sectional narratives.

The number of these uninspired, unimaginative 'minor' Canadian historians is legion. The more important were George Heriot, William Smith, Robert Christie, Alexander Begg, Beamish Murdock, Duncan Campbell, William Kingsford, James Hannay, and Egerton Ryerson. Oddly, the two first native-born historians to write with a show of imagination and a sense of true history were Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the humorist, and Major John Richardson, the romancer.

Haliburton's *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* was published by Joseph Howe in 1829. Though the two volumes are, in a degree, a compendium of facts, Haliburton was not interested in the facts so much as in the romantic or dramatic story of civilization and life in Nova Scotia. The way Haliburton imaginatively handled his material, the way he romantically told the story and made the whole a colorful and generally absorbing narrative, constitutes his work as 'true history.' It is Haliburton's conception of history and his method of writing it that make him important—though he was not potent—in this department of Canadian Literature. His work is an outstanding native example of the romantic method of writing history as literature; and Haliburton himself appears as the first Canadian Historian to write history as if

he were writing imaginative literature. But if he was not potent in his own country, that is, in British North America, he had, there is good ground to believe, considerable influence on Francis Parkman. For Parkman read Haliburton's *Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, and not only had his imagination fired by such a romantic story as Haliburton tells of the Expulsion of the Acadians, but also adopted the romantic method of Haliburton in writing his own historical works.

The best account of the War of 1812 came from the pen of Major John Richardson, who had served in the conflict. It is the account of an eye-witness. It was written hurriedly for publication serially in his newspaper the *New Era*, and was reprinted in book form in 1842. As might be expected, Richardson presents vividly the drama or dramatic movement of his story, and makes it a colorful, gripping narrative. But though, like Haliburton, Richardson wrote graphically, romantically, he is superior to Haliburton in an important respect. The Nova Scotia historian and humorist did not have any gift for sharp character-drawing; his characters, like Dickens' or Twain's, stand out and hold us by what they say. But Richardson's characters in his account of the War of 1812, especially Brock and Tecumseh, are vividly drawn by their *action*, and stand out sharply individualized. In Haliburton's *Historical Account of Nova Scotia* we get only colorful romance. In Richardson's *War of 1812* we get colorful romance, dramatic movement, and memorable character portraiture. It, too, is 'true history,' and his work, like Haliburton's, is an outstanding native example of the romantic method of writing history as literature.

After Haliburton and Richardson, all history of Canada, or the Provinces, by native-born or *émigré* writers was fragmentary in conception and dry-as-dust in matter and method. They all show inquisitiveness, diligence, though not careful research, and no imagination, and certainly no sense of history as the outward expression and movement of a people's social and spiritual evolution. Yet the work of one man must be specially remarked. He was Alpheus Todd, who, in the department of Constitutional History, wrote a work which was long regarded as the greatest study of the English constitution written by any British subject. This really 'monumental' historical work was entitled *Parliamentary Government in England; its Origin, Development, and Practical Operation*. The first volume was published in 1867, the year of Canadian Confederation. But while Todd's work is a 'monument' to his scholarship and industry, and while it has historic perspective, it is, like the work of preceding historians, without imagination and was written by one who had no conception of constitutional history as the expression of the social conscience gradually realizing, under changing conditions, the ideal of the rights of the spirit.

From the beginning of the 20th century, Canadian historians based their

work on documentary research and wrote history with a lively sense of imaginative or romantic values which corresponded to the method and manner of Haliburton and Richardson. This change in the method of writing 'true history' is notably exemplified in *Quebec Under Two Flags* and in *The Cradle of New France* by A. G. Doughty; in *The Fight for Canada*, by William Wood; and, later, in *The Conquest of the Great North-West*, *Pathfinders of the West*, and *Vikings of the Pacific*, by Agnes Laut. Doughty was a poet before he became an historian, and in writing history let his imagination play over the facts, thus transmuting the documentary material into literature. William Wood also applied the romanticist's imagination to the facts, and, besides, wrote history with a fine feeling for style and characterization somewhat in the manner of Parkman. Miss Laut, basing her matter on thorough research, humanized it with a sympathetic appreciation of the struggles of the pioneers of the Canadian West and with a picturesque literary style.

Sectional and local histories of Canada abound. There are also race histories and several so-called School Histories. But these are all of popular quality and have no distinction in literary style, although the narratives of W. J. Rattray, George Stewart, H. Scadding, J. Ross Robertson, John Murray Gibbon, Sir John Bourinot and Charles G. D. Roberts show a considerable solicitude for style and actually achieve good literary style.

### *II. Biography.*

As with general history, so with personal or spiritual history. Biographical writing in Canada is sparse in quantity and, on the whole, insignificant in literary quality. Often the subject of a biographical narrative was great enough to compel imaginative and artistic creation on the part of the writer. Seldom, however, does any biographer of a Canadian man of distinction rise to his subject either in conception or in style. But of those who did rise to their subject, one was Charles Lindsey, who wrote *The Life and Times of William Lyon MacKenzie*. Lindsey handled his material so as to present the proper values in the political and social problems in the time of the famous leader of the Rebellion of 1837. Another of those who rose to his subject and who wrote with a sense of the really significant events in the life of his subject, presenting the salients with decent respect for truth, with adequate detail, and yet with readable style, was Sir Joseph Pope, who gave the literary world a compelling and vigorously moving biographical volume, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald*. It is a vigorous narrative, but rather inflexible in style. Sir John Stephen Willison's *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and The Liberal Party* is an outstanding biography. Like Lindsey, Sir John Willison was a thoroughly trained journalist before he attempted biographical

writing. Along with the journalist's vigor and vivacity of style, Sir John Willison wrote with feeling for dignified and elegant diction. His *Wilfrid Laurier* is notable chiefly for its refinement in prose style.

George Monro Grant's *Joseph Howe* is a *tour de force* in brilliant word painting and hero worship. It misses the significance of Howe as an original and constructive mind. Longley's *Joseph Howe* is a popular narrative, careless of logic and literary style.

Several other individual biographies of Canadians by Canadians have been published. The best of them are Duncan Campbell Scott's *John Graves Simcoe*, Adam Shortt's *Lord Sydenham*, George M. Wrong's *Life of Lord Elgin*, Arnold Haultain's *Goldwin Smith: His Life and Opinions*, Grant and Hamilton's *George Monro Grant*, and Edith J. Archibald's *Life and Letters of Sir Edward Mortimer Archibald*. But a genuinely great biography of a great man remains to be written in Canada.

Deserving of mention are three short popular biographies—Owen McGillicuddy's sketch of the life and achievements of Rt. Hon. MacKenzie King, Premier of Canada, which appears under the title *The Making of a Premier* (1922); John W. Dafoe's *Laurier* (1922) and Peter McArthur's *Laurier* (1922). These biographies are by practical journalists, and are journalistic in style. Dafoe's Laurier is the most acute and weighty.

A genuine literary achievement in biographical writing is M. O. Hammond's *Confederation and Its Leaders* (1917). It is based on thorough research, and, as a series of intimate political biographies in the form of narrative sketches, is packed with human interest, and is marked by a straightforward, commonsense style. It has a high seriousness, and in this respect contrasts with the lighter, more piquant but less persuasive style of Augustus Bridle's *Sons of Canada*—a work which is essentially a series of familiar portraits, done as *jeux d'esprit*.

### *III. Travels, Exploration, Sport.*

Canada has a considerable quantity of the literature of travels, explorations and sport but the literary interest of the most of it is far from obvious. A really remarkable book in this genre is the elder Alexander Henry's *Travels and Adventures in Canada and The Indian Territories*, published in New York in 1809. Henry was a man of acute observation, and also possessed a graphic pen for character limning. His *Travels and Adventures* engages both the intellect and the imagination, the scientist and the literary artist. For it contains the most interesting observations on the flora and fauna of the countries he visited, and really graphic and colorful pictures of the peoples and the characters he met and observed. Henry had also a gift like that of Thucydides—the gift and skill

of dramatically reporting a speech as, for instance, the speech of the Ojibwa Chief Minavavana. The book really forms an entrancing and instructive volume of Travel and Adventure.

The same may be said of Sir Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages From Montreal Through the Continent of North America, 1789-1793*. This work was published at London in 1801. Mackenzie came from a people—the Gaels of the Island of Lewis—who have a racial gift of colorful imagination and of felicity of language in nature description. Mackenzie, moreover, was, like Henry, a keen observer. His *Voyages*, therefore, as might be expected, are marked by colorful style and the imaginative presentation of the scenes he visited and of the inspiring or sublime phenomena he observed. John Howison's *Sketches of Upper Canada* conforms only to the ideal of fact. It is, as the title suggests, merely a series of 'sketches,' written in a vigorous style with only a touch here and there of finer literary style.

With the work of Anna Brownell Jameson we meet with the first 'color-writing' in and about Canada. Her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, published in London in 1838, has not yet been excelled by a native Canadian 'color writer.' At the time, Canada was a wilderness for the most part, with a few settlements, but Mrs. Jameson, with the eye of an artist, saw everywhere in Nature in Canada and in Canadian life and character much to delight the eye and the sensibilities and much to satisfy the pictorial and dramatic imagination. Her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*, in three volumes, are a library of winsome Nature sketches and critical appreciations of human personality—a work of art, and a permanent contribution to the Incidental Pioneer Literature of Canada.

The aesthetic sense and the artistic conscience were uppermost in Paul Kane's *Wanderings of An Artist Among The Indian Tribes of North America*. Kane was a celebrated Canadian painter; and, having the gift of style, he wrote, with the eye of the pictorial artist, about his 'wanderings' among the western tribes. It is an informing volume and makes genuinely interesting and satisfying reading.

George M. Grant was a man of splendid force of character and strength of will tempered with a singular gift of humor and pathos. He travelled across Canada in the last five years of the first decade following Confederation, he met all peoples, dwelt in camps, visited trading posts, and stopped at the hotels of the larger centres. On his journey he was impressed by the *life*, *energy*, and the *striving* of the Canadian people for a self-reliant and worthy history and destiny. And so Grant's volume of travel, *Ocean to Ocean*, is noted for its acute observation, for its colorful and vitalizing descriptions of Nature in Canada, and for its seriousness, at all times relieved by an unusual quality of humor and of pathos. In 'color-writing' too, the volume is, at times,

incomparable.

J. W. Tyrrell's *Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada* and his *The St. Lawrence Basin and Its Border-Lands*, Lawrence J. Burpee's *The Search for The Western Sea*, Vilhjalmur Stefannson's *The Friendly Arctic* and his *Hunters of the Great North*, Arthur Heming's *Drama of the Forests*, are all noted for their literary style and for the dramatic pictures they make of Nature scenes and of human characters.

Two really notable books under the head of Sport, as a form of travel and adventure, are Arthur Silver's *Farm, Cottage, Camp and Canoe In Maritime Canada* (1884) and Phil. H. Moore's *With Gun and Rod in Canada* (1922). Silver's volume makes pleasant reading, but the style is much more pedestrian than Moore's work, which is heightened and colored by picturesque diction and images and by considerable characteristic humor. Midway between the greater books of Travel and Adventure and these books of Sport come Wilfred Grenfell's volumes descriptive of Labrador and the late C. Gordon Hewitt's *Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada*. The latter, though scientific in aim and method, is full of aesthetic and literary charm and is written in an interesting literary style.

# Index

This index covers the names of Canadian writers, Canadian books, journals, individual poems, or stories referred to in the text. Names of authors are in roman type; all titles of books, journals, poems, stories, etc., are in *italic*.

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[The end of *Highways of Canadian Literature* by John Daniel Logan and Donald G. French]