CANADIAN CONFEDERATION POETRY

1855 - 1880

by

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ABSTRACT

Even a hasty perusal of Dr. W.E. Watters' Check List reveals the vast quantity of poetry published in Canada during the last half of the nineteenth century. This thesis is an attempt to explore and evaluate a cross-cut of this poetry over a period of fifteen years, 1855-1880, and to establish the qualitative values in such a quantitative output. It is axiomatic that where there is movement there is life, and it is therefore reasonable to suppose that since the Confederation era was a particularly fluid period in Canadian growth, it called for a lively response.

That there was such a response is evidenced in the various magazines and periodicals published during that time, with circulation wide enough to make it both convenient and profitable for any aspiring poets. And if there should be no especially aesthetic value to their poetry, at least they have recorded the aspirations and convictions of the average Canadian in the decade preceding and following Confederation. This aspect alone makes them worthy of consideration.
Because of the quantity of material some selectivity was necessary. It seemed advisable to discuss only such poems as had some reference to Canada. The poems are, therefore, divided into three classes. After the Introductory Chapter which is devoted chiefly to an explanation and recreation of the Canadian scene at the time of Confederation, Chapter II deals with those poems Praising Canada's Beauty; Chapter III - those Praising Country as Country; Chapter IV - those Miscellaneous-Mentioning Confederation. Chapter V is a brief evaluation only, since the poems are individually evaluated throughout.

The study, confined as it is to a period between 1855-1880, is obviously restricted, as it excludes many of the better, or better-known, poems, particularly those of Charles G.D. Roberts and Bliss Carman. Nor was it deemed advisable to include the French Canadian poems of which there is a considerable number. The poems included have been analysed, more or less, and whatever may be their merit individually, they are, en masse, a significant contribution to Canadian Literature.

Appendix I gives the musical setting for an adaptation of "My Own Canadian Home".

Appendix II records in full "Our New Dominion".
The Bibliography is chiefly a Check List, and includes a few works not recorded in Dr. W.E. Watters' Check List.
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INTRODUCTION

"Perhaps there is no branch of literature with which the Canadian mind is less acquainted than poetry; and it is not without a good deal of self-sacrifice that an author can venture to publish any work, however small." Precisely at the time that J. T. Breeze expressed these sentiments in the introduction to his A Collection of Poems published in 1865, the Reverend Edward Hartley was showing a like concern: "There is probably no country in the world where the claims of native literature are so little felt and where every effort in poetry has been met with so much coldness and indifference as in Canada."

Yet, in the face of such seeming apathy, Canadians wrote and published an astonishing amount of poetry during the last half of the nineteenth century. This is ample evidence of a cultural awakening. And there were many opportunities and means of bringing this poetry before the public. Several publications were eager for contributions: The Canadian Monthly and National Review was founded in 1872 and continued for ten years; The Nation, official organ of "Canada First", appeared from 1874 to 1876. Under the stimulus of Confederation came also the New Dominion Monthly, Montreal, 1867-1879; Stewart's Literary Quarterly, St. John, 1867-1872; the Canadian Literary Journal, Toronto, 1870-1871; continued as the Canadian Magazine, 1871-1872; the Maritime I

Edward Hartley Dewart, "Introductory Essay", Selections from Canadian Poets (Montreal, 1864), p.X.
Monthly, Halifax, 1873-1875; and the Harp, Montreal, 1874-1882, organ of the Irish Canadian.

The verses that flooded these magazines and other periodicals at the time of Confederation were an overflow of Canadian enthusiasm, and if for the most part, they were undistinguished, they were significant in that they reflected the self-conscious attitude of the poets in their desire to be Canadian as distinct from British or American. It is especially under this aspect that Canadian poetry can be studied. But it is also to be hoped that in a closer scrutiny at least some of the poems may disclose "the understanding heart." For if as Emerson says, "The poet has a new thought; ... a whole new experience to unfold ... for the experience of each age requires a new confession ..." then the abundance of poetic outburst during Canadian Confederation is understandable. Exoteric as is the poetry of this era, it would seem to lay itself open for hasty perusal and hasty condemnation. And critics have perused it and condemned it for its sentimentalism and its slavish adherence to the imagery and technique of the English Romantic poets of fifty years before, so that most of the late nineteenth century Canadian poets "are known now only to the more devoted student of Canadian letters."

It must be admitted that the poetry of this period has marked Romantic characteristics - interest in natural scenery, sentimental attitudes, subjectivism, idealism, liberalism, nationalism,

humanitarianism, interest in the past, interest in common things, revolt against oppression, picturesque language, and belief in the potential of man. Yet, if there is to be some appreciation of what the poets of Confederation were trying to express, there must also be an awareness of the contemporary tastes and norms which influenced them. Before casting them all aside as inconsequential, an honest survey should be made to determine how their poetry reflects Canadian awareness of national destiny; how it may be a "new confession" of a new age.

It may be asked, "When does a poem become a suitable object for study"? If the answer is - for delight - for satisfaction - for appreciation of sound and meaning - then only the finer poems would be worth scrutiny. But is it not legitimate to make a study of the poems of a definite era, not so much to explore their aesthetic value as to discover the source of the poetic urge. And if the poem should be so devoid of all substance as to be outside the norm of literary art, may it not still find its significance in what it reflects. If there must be an "Apologia" for the poetry of the Confederation era, Edward Hartley Dewart supplies it:

... When the poets of other countries sing of the birds and the flowers, the mountains and streams of those lands, whose history is starred with deathless names, and rich with the mellow and hazy light of romance, every reference to those immortal types of beauty or grandeur commands sympathy and admiration. But let a Canadian bard presume to think that the wild-flowers which formed the garlands of his sunny childhood, the sweet song-birds that sang him to sleep in infancy, or the magnificent lakes, forests and rivers of his native land, are as worthy of being enshrined
in lyric numbers, and capable of awaking memories of days as bright, associations as tender, and scenery as beautiful, as ever was sung by hoary harper of the olden time, and he is more likely to secure contempt than sympathy or admiration. ... There is a large class of persons who could scarcely conceive it possible that a Canadian lyric might have as deep and true feeling as those they have most admired; or that a Canadian Poet might be as highly gifted as some of the favorite names who are crowned with the wreath of unfading fame. And yet such things are not altogether inconceivable. But if a Milton or a Shakespeare was to arise among us, it is far from certain that his merit would be recognized. The mass of readers find it easier and safer to re-echo the approbation of others, - to praise those whom all praise, - than to form an intelligent and independent judgment of their own. ...

To those who are best acquainted with the poetry of Canada, the wonder is, not that so little has been achieved, but that so much poetry has been written in spite of such unpropitious circumstances. ...

But if Memory cannot draw rich materials for poetry consecrated to fame, Hope unfolds the loftier inspiration of a future bright with promise. If we cannot point to a past rich with historic names, we have the inspiring spectacle of a great country in her youthful might, girding herself for a race for an honourable place among the nations of the world. In our grand and gloomy forests - in our brilliant skies and varied seasons - in our magnificent lakes and rivers - in our hoary mountains and fruitful valleys, external Nature unveils her most majestic forms to exalt and inspire the truly poetic soul; ... 3

Here is an "awareness of national destiny", and the Reverend Dewart has answered not only the critics of his day but those later critics who decried the "romanticism" of Canadian poetry at this period. If the Old World's lakes and woods, its flowers and birds had inspired immortal poems, why not this great New World with its "grand and gloomy forests - brilliant skies - magnificent lakes and rivers - hoary mountains and fruitful valleys"? After all, these had not been written about as yet.

3 Dewart, pp. XIV-XV
"Seronus", in the Preface to the *Canadian Birthday Book* throws more light on the contemporary scene:

...Nature teaches to true Poets a pure and unerring morality of her own, I have thought that - in our young and beautiful country, where we may assume a comparative immunity from low moral standards - it would be safe to allow our writers to show us the falls or the leaf, the birth of the flower and the daily marvel of the sunset, both as they bear upon human life and its experiences, and as they exist beautifully in themselves.

But Reverend Dewart knew that the establishment of a nation's literature involves more than an appreciation of its beauty:

...shallow and reprehensible is the idea, very widely entertained, that, because we can procure sufficient quantities of mental aliment from other lands, it is superfluous to make any attempt to build up a literature of our own. A national literature is an essential element in the formation of a national character. It is not merely the record of a country's mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy. It may be fairly questioned, whether the whole range of history presents the spectacle of a people firmly united politically, without the subtle but powerful cement of a patriotic literature. On the other hand, it is easy to show, that, in the older countries of the world, the names of distinguished poets, enshrined in the national heart, are the watchwords of national union, and it has become a part of the patriotism of the people to honor and love their memory.

...And what is more to be deprecated than neglect of our most meritorious authors, is the almost universal absence of interest and faith in all indigenous literary productions, and the undisturbed satisfaction with a state of things that, rightly viewed, should be regarded as a national reproach.

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4 S. Frances Harrison, *Seronus* (pseud), *Canadian Birthday Book* (Toronto, 1887), p. 4

5 E. H. Dewart, pp. IX-X
At a time when Canada was struggling desperately to attain some form of political unity it is not surprising that a patriotic theme runs through so many of the poems of this period. For the most part, they may be divided into two categories: those which laud Canada as the land of the free, the land of plenty, a land whose geographic expanse offers opportunity for all who care to avail themselves of her largesse, and those which encourage or praise Confederation as Canada's answer to an inferior colonial status or to annexation with the United States.

An understanding of the history of the time and of Canada's internal political problems is necessary for an appreciation of the many and varied poems of this period. The American Revolution started the idea of the union of British North America, and the American Civil War completed it. Most of the advocates of a united British North America were inspired by both an admiration and a fear of the United States. Since that country had broken with Britain it was growing like a young giant, striding across the country. If the lost colonies could thus become a great nation, why could not the remaining colonies unite and build another? If they did not seek strength in union, could they avoid, in the end, being drawn under the Stars and Stripes?

A survey of some of the problems facing Canadians, particularly during the years 1855 to 1880, for this is the scope of this study of Confederation Poetry, should point up the predominant motifs in the poems written or published at this time.
First, the Act of Union which in 1841 had united Upper and Lower Canada had proved unworkable. The equal representation which it gave to Canada East and Canada West alternately favored first one and then the other. By 1850 Canada West had the larger population. The cry "Rep by Pop" threatened to destroy the union, but the real trouble was the breakdown of the government under the weight of the union. Though it was clear that French Canadian Nationalism and English Canadian Nationalism were two distinct and strong to be merged in one government, yet the two areas could not part completely. There were problems or revenue, of the building of railways and canals which had to be shared conjointly.

Added to this was the expanding West beyond the Great Lakes across the Prairies to the Pacific Coast. The 1858 Gold Rush on the Fraser River in British Columbia, and the influx of American settlers to the prairie lands made it necessary for Canada to stake her claims. But this was possible only under a united Canada, and showed not only the impossibility of going back to mere division but the necessity to go on to establish a federal system. Public-minded Canadians lifted their eyes to look beyond the limits of the province. They envisioned a much greater federal union - one stretching from sea to sea.

But, potent as these factors were in promoting Confederation, it took the threat of American invasion to convince the "little British colonies" that they must seek strength in union or some day be annexed. Fear has often been a great welder of nations, and the fear created by the American Civil War, 1861 - 1865, with its subsequent
Fenian raids, was perhaps the strongest force in uniting British North America. Finally, after a series of Conferences, the Dominion of Canada was born, July 1, 1867. The ensuing years were years of expansion, in which there were the formation and annexing of new provinces, the building of the Intercolonial Railway, and the construction of a transcontinental railroad linking the Atlantic with the Pacific. There was the rise and fall of political parties, and the resignation of the Conservatives in 1873 as a result of the famous Pacific Scandal.

These were exciting times. Great political storms, beckoning horizons, pride in the new Dominion, a growing sense of independence, appreciation of new-found freedoms - all find a place in the literature of these years. This is not to say, however, that all the poetry is confined to these topics. For every patriotic poem there are many more "Temperance Odes", and for every poem exulting in the joy of expanding horizons there is another praising the peace and contentment of domesticity. But since it is Confederation Poetry that is being submitted for an appraisal, and since some selectivity is necessary in such a wide field, only those poems have been selected which pertain directly to Canada - those Celebrating Canada's Beauty; those Praising Country as Country; and those which allude to Confederation.
CHAPTER II

POEMS CELEBRATING CANADA'S BEAUTY

M. Emma Knapp voices the opinion of most of the Confederation poets who found joy and inspiration in the varied beauties of the Canadian scene when she says:

It is with no vain desire to emulate the fine talents, and rare intellectual productions of the shining stars of Genius who are reflecting a glorious halo of radiance around the earth at the present time, or presumptuously claim for myself even the most humble place amid those who command the homage of an admiring world, that I offer this little volume to the people of my native Province. . .

I would have them bear in mind, that many of the verses were ... inspired only by thoughts of home and home-associations, and an admiration for all that is romantic and lovely in the wild scenery on the shore of Chignecto. In this vast solitude, commemorated by reminiscences of the past, there is much to awaken feelings of sublimity; and with the burning eloquence of a Moore or Byron, and the wonderfully beautiful descriptive powers of a Longfellow or Bryant, I might have done a spot, so fraught with interest, full justice... 6

This is an open avowal that the interests were "romantic", and it is significant that Emma Knapp cites two British and two American poets of the romantic tradition. It would seem that though the book of her lyrics was published in 1872, many of the poems in it had been written at an earlier period, even allowing for the fact that Canadian poetry remained predominantly romantic long after the decline of romanticism in both England and America. Too many prominent poets had intervened by 1872, for Emma Knapp not to have heard of their names: the Victorians - Browning, Tennyson, the Rosettis, Matthew Arnold, and

6

M. Emma Knapp, "Introduction", Lyrics of the Past and Other Poems (Saint John, 1872).
nearer home, Walt Whitman, who as early as 1855 had startled the literary world with the publication of his *Leaves of Grass*. Longfellow and Bryant, Byron and Moore were writing at the turn of the century or during its early decades. That Emma Knapp should revert to them as the paragons of "burning eloquence" and "beautiful descriptive powers" indicate that the Canadian's idea of greatness was, generally speaking, still linked with the past and with the older lands. The only thing Canadian was the scene.

**A View of Montreal**  
**From the Tower of a French Cathedral**

The fair Canadian city,  
That rose upon my sight;  
With lofty spires and stately towers,  
I viewed with wrapt delight.

And the broad and noble river,  
Where shone the sun's bright gleam,  
Reflecting all the glorious scene, -  
With mid-day's radiant beam.

The view was beautiful and grand!  
And my mind turned to the past, -  
It seemed so strange that the city's site  
Was once a forest vast.

Temples of Learning- Art's high domes,  
Arise on every hand;  
The heart with admiration owns  
It is a favoured land.

Where religion, wisdom, science  
Must consecrate the place;  
Till of the days long past and gone,  
We scarce can find a trace.  

Knapp, pp. 141-142.
Obviously, there is nothing very distinctive about this sort of verse, although it does indicate some feel for rhyme and rhythm, with sufficient deviation from the predominantly iambic to save it from complete monotony. It is not much more, however, than an observation expressed in rhyme which could probably be better expressed in prose. There is a preponderance of the staid descriptive adjectives - "lofty", "stately", "bright", "beautiful", "glorious", "radiant", with the ever-present "fair". Indeed, "fair Canada" is repeated so often in the poems of this period that there would seem to have been a tacit understanding among the writers that it was the one fit form of address for such a land.

But, Emma Knapp has recorded a specific response, and in spite of the inferior verse, it is possible to share with her a certain sense of wonder at the sight of a Canadian city hewn from "a forest vast".

Written in much the same vein is a selection from Original Lyrics By A Canadian Rhymer:

Canada
Fair Canada, my native land,
    How my spirits thrill to think of thee;
Long may thy sons- a noble band -
    Enjoy the blessings of the free -
    For their watchword Liberty.

And long may prosperity attend
    Thy onward march sublime,
To every glorious thing a friend,
    Mayst thou lengthen out thy pime,
Engrave thy name on the golden roll of Time. 8

Again, it is "fair Canada", but praise is reserved more for her moral beauty - her gifts of freedom and of friendship. There is a depth of feeling for this land of promise which contrasts with the rather anaemic manifestations of patriotism exhibited in present-day Canada. It is, however, a matter for conjecture as to whether the Rhymer's "spirits" really "thrilled" or whether he is only carried away by "romantic" emotionalism. The "glorious", the "golden", the "noble", the "sublime" are again evident, and though there is nothing to distinguish this poem from others of its type, still it is a genuine expression of admiration for this new land.

Canada by James Joseph Gahan, is a much more lengthy poem:

Land of my love! Dear Canada my home!
Land of majestic streams, and mountains grand!
My heart turns ever to thee, on a distant strand
Land of legend! Land of heroes brave,
I hail thee, first-born, of the sons of France
May Freedom's arm be ever stretched to save,
Thee, Canada, from Slavery's dark trance!

This eulogy continues for twenty-one pages, and ends with:

O Canada! Adopted land of mine
Accept this humble tribute of my song -
May Peace, dear land, with Happiness be thine,
And countless ages all thy joys prolong. 9

8 Original Lyrics By A Canadian Rhymer (Toronto, 1856).
9 James Joseph Gahan, Canada (Quebec, 1877).
The sentiments of the two previous poems are combined in this one. There is praise for everything, visible and invisible, emphasized by frequent exclamation. Canada is synonymous with "Freedom". The concept of bigness, or challenge and adventure, is caught in the "majestic streams and mountains grand", but the diction, still romantic, inhibits the concept. Canada's uniqueness called for a whole new array of adjectives. "Majestic" and "grand" had already done their duty in the description of Old World scenes.

Maple Leaves, a collection of poems, published in 1864, abounds in this sort of encomium:

Ode to Canada

Canada faithful! Canada fair!
Canada, beautiful, blooming and rare!
Canada, happiest land of the earth!
Hail to thee, Canada! land of my birth!

Land of swift rivers, sweet-gliding along!
Land of my pride, and land of my song!
Canada prosperous! Canada true!
Canada loyal, and virtuous too!
Canada happiest land of the earth!
Hail thee, forever, sweet land of my birth!

My Own Canadian Home

Though other hearts and other hands
May love their own, and love them true;
Though other homes in other lands
Possess a charm mine never knew;
Italian skies may be more bright
Than those of other climes may be,
Yet never can another home
Be half as dear as mine to me.

Chorus:
Then give me my Canadian home
My cottage home beside the hill
Where oft in infancy I played -
I loved in youth, I love thee still -
My native home! 11

...........................

Maple Leaves

Land of the brave! Land of the Maple Leaf
Land of the loyal! Land of heroes chief!
Fair art thou Land, where mighty rivers run,
Brightest and best of all beneath the sun.
Proud is the sky and green thy daisied sod.
Though other skies boast milder skies than mine,
They cannot boast more loyal sons than thine.
What, though from every land beneath the sun?
Our cause is common, now - our country one
Though English, Scotch or Irish, Swede or Pole,
CANADIAN is the name we give the whole,
Save those - I blush to own that such there be -
Who urge thy union with thy enemy.
These I call traitors, and shall call them so,
Until a fitter name is coined below.
Then Hail! all Hail! my own Canadian home,
Fair and forever may thy beauties bloom,

11

G. W. Johnson, p. 184 (see Appendix re- version and musical setting).
Thy meadows bright, thy lakes untinged with gore,
And as thy air is free, free forevermore.  

This poem strikes a new note in patriotism. Not only is there the usual high praise for Canada's natural beauty and freedom, but also the boast of unity and loyalty coupled with open condemnation of those who would even consider union with the United States. This poem, together with another of Johnson's No Despot - No Slave, is one of the few Canadian poems which express any hostility for America:

No Despot - No Slave

Canadian hands Canadian soil shall till
Canadian hearts shall watch her welfare still;
Fair Freedom reigns, and shall forever reign
From lake to lake, from mount to mighty main.

Canadian skies are fairest, brightest, best;
Canadian hearts no traitor's blood have pressed;
Canadian eyes shall weep us when we roam
Canadian lips shall greet us: - welcome home!
And while the sun is bright, yon forests fair,
Yon meadows green, this is Canadians' prayer;
From Eire's shore to old Atlantic's waves,
Give us no despot and no weeping slaves!

Dear native land, thine air is still as free,
As summer winds that fan the summer sea.  

The allusion to "weeping slaves" and the constant repetition of

12
Johnson, p.7.

13
Johnson, pp. 178-179.
Canada's freedom is intended, no doubt, to emphasize Canada's excellence as compared with that of her southern neighbor. Yet, this sentiment is not overly popular with or evident in most of the Canadian writers. Any overt criticism was reserved chiefly for those Canadians who advocated annexation.

The Introduction to *Raise the Flag* states:

Canada has been compelled to defend her frontiers in open war in 1775 and in 1812-15, and from fillibusters in 1837 and 1838, and again in 1866 and 1870. Every generation of our people for one hundred years has seen Canadian lives given up freely in defence of her soil and institutions. Our territory has been diminished by unfair treaties; and trade regulations and restrictions, and fishery disputes have been used to retard our progress or coerce us into annexation. Yet with it all, our poems are singularly free from unfriendliness. There is no tone of aggression but a steadfast determination to trust in God and stand for the right. The only tinge of bitterness that is shown, here and there, is towards those of our own people who lack faith in our future. 14

The "slave question" was, however, of vital concern to Canadians at this time, and it is not surprising to see it mentioned in one way or another in Confederation poetry. The American Civil War, with all its attendant horror of brother fighting brother, or a country divided against itself on the question of slavery, was bound to cause some serious thinking in a younger country about to formulate its own Constitutions. The Fathers of Confederation were to profit by the mistake the United States had made in giving too much power to the

14 "Introduction", *Raise the Flag and other Patriotic Canadian Songs and Poems* (Toronto, 1891).
individual states, thus making such a war possible. Canada not only
would choose a federal union in preference to a legislative union
but also would designate the major powers to a strong central
government. During the Civil War, Canadians, for the most part, had
been sympathetic towards the North which stood for freedom, but with
the victory of the North, Canadians found their sympathy boomeranging.
A strong military force just south of the border was now seen as a
threat to Canadian freedom. The only answer to this was a unified
Canada - Confederation. All this is historical fact recorded with
prosaic terseness. But what was the emotional impact of such a
situation especially on the common man? Herein is the value of the
poetry of this period, and some debt of gratitude is due to those
who, however naively, have recorded their sentiments.

In no poem of this genre are these sentiments more compactly
expressed than in The Genius of Canada. It is also one of the few
attempts to personify an abstraction.

The Genius of Canada

When the Genius of Canada came
From over the western wave,
\'Neath southern skies
She heard the cries
Of every weeping slave.

"I'll seek the northern woods", she cried
"Though bleak the skies may be,
The maple dells
Where freedom dwells
Have a special charm for me."
"For moral worth and manhood there
Have found a favoring clime.
I'll rear a race
To shed a grace
On the mighty page of time.

"And the arts shall flourish 'neath their care,
And the palm of peace shall wave
O'er a home of rest
For the oppressed,
And a refuge for the slave.

Away to the northern woods she flew,
And a lovely home she found,
Where still she dwells
'Mong quiet dells
With her giant brood around.

"And these", she says, "are the hearts we mould
In the land of lake and pine,
Where the Shamrock blows
And the English Rose
And the Scottish thistle twine." 15

This poem, published in Toronto nine years before Confederation, is evidence that Canada was capable of evoking from the very beginning, a strong allegiance and a deep devotion. Again, an appreciation for the freedom and promise of this country is emphasized by the covert reference to the plight of the slave in the United States.

With its regular rhyme scheme and its variations in line length, this poem makes rather pleasant reading. It is more restrained, and though there are the romantic characteristics of nationalism, revolt against oppression, idealism and picturesque language, there is a

different approach, and there is an absence of most of the stereotyped adjectives of address.

It is understandable how such a poem could be written at this time. The 1850's were prosperous years in Canada. The depression with its subsequent discontent and "annexation" scare, brought on by Britain's repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, had happily subsided. Canadian trade had received a new impetus with the repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849 and the 1854 Reciprocity Agreement with the United States. Canada was exhibiting a new vitality. Railroad construction was underway, business was booming, and life in a vigorous, young country promised to be exciting and rewarding. It even looked good beside its older, prosperous neighbor. Added to these attractive features was the natural beauty of the country itself, and the joy of being one of the "giant brood".

Evidently, environment does mould a people. In this "hyperborean" land there will be a people whose "hearts" have been moulded from "lake and pine". It is a "favoring clime" for rearing men of "moral worth" who will "...shed a grace/On the mighty page of time." This alignment of the natural beauty of the country with the moral beauty of its people is typical of most of the early Canadian poets, and bears out the conviction of "Serasus": ..."Nature teaches to true Poets a pure and unerring morality of her own..." Canadian, however, as all this may be, there is still the old link with the
Old World - the Shamrock, Rose and Thistle.

No such bond, however, is claimed in *Lays of Canada*, *Dominion Day Idyll*:

No broader streams than ours - no purer skies, -
No richer soil to yield the yellow grain,
No statelier trees to crown the mountain's brow, -
No richer golden robes to clothe the furrowed plain.

The snarling wolf that prowls around the door
Where squalid hunger dwells, we know not here,
Our ready fields await but willing hands,
And he that toils in spring shall reap rich autumn's cheer.

Our seas - our boundless lakes - our crystal streams,
Each yields the ransom of a mighty king;
And countless argosies bear wealth away,
The luxury of distant lands to homeward bring.

This is a land of plenty with beauty unsurpassed - "no broader streams"; "no purer skies"; "no richer soil"; "no statelier trees"; "no richer golden robes". Like *The Genius of Canada*, this poem is an attempt to write in figure. The "snarling wolf that prowls around the door/Where squalid hunger dwells" has implications of "Old World" squalor, or the hungry American slave, in contrast with this country of "ready fields" awaiting only "willing hands". And, "...he toils in spring shall reap rich autumn's cheer" is more than an exhortation to sow a few seeds in the spring and reap the fruits in the autumn.

Rather is it a call to get on the "bandwagon"- to throw in one's lot

with this new country, now in its springtime, but giving promise of a rich harvest. It is an enthusiastic response to the call of Canada's beauty and abundant resources. The metre, predominantly iambic pentameter, and the rhyme scheme abcb, place this poem in the ballad tradition. The final line of each stanza, however, has an extra foot. This longer line not only breaks the monotony of the ballad rhythm but also succeeds in sustaining the imagery of richness and abundance.

As in The Genius of Canada, a greater sincerity is apparent than in those poems which employ flamboyant forms of address. The diction may savor of romanticism, and there are Keatsian overtones in the "golden robes" and "rich autumn's cheer". Nevertheless, there is a distinctly Canadian flavour to "the Yellow grain" and "ready fields"; to "the furrowed plain" and "boundless lakes". To the question, "What is the poem about?" the answer must be that it is about Canada, not because it is systematically described, but because it induces in the imagination its sights and sounds - the result of a series of images and of a certain interplay of figure and image, if not too skilful, at least adequate to project a picture of those things which are characteristic of Canada's lush beauty.

The first stanza is concerned with emphasizing the uniqueness of Canada's claims. The repetition of "No" establishes beyond controversy the superlative quality of that country's "streams", 
"skies", "soil", "trees", and "golden-robed plain". Then, too, the imagery is somewhat augmented by the connotative power of words and phrases - the suggestion of hidden treasure or an aurelian gleam conveyed by such words as "richer", "yellow", "crown", "golden".

The second stanza emphasizes Canada's promise of fruition by comparison with less-favoured lands, through the "lupine" metaphor. The metaphor is productive of clear visual imagery. The fact that "The snarling wolf that prowls around the door,/Where squalid hunger dwells..." is not known here, indicates Canada's sufficiency. There is a return to the imagery of stanza one, whereby the aura of "rich autumn's cheer" glows brighter for having been juxtaposed with "squalid hunger".

The third stanza enlarges on the imagery of the first, presenting a picture of matured beauty and realized hopes. Canada's wealth is interchanged with that of other lands. The "countless argosies" has connotations of overflowing wealth, so that the poet sustains to the end the image of richness - of abundance.

This same brief analysis applied to an excerpt from "Seranus" Canadian Birthday Book may yield some further appreciation of these "lesser" Confederation poets:

Yet Mother England that new land is fair,
Her shores pile agate and her sands run gold
Her mountains gleam with garnet, and her capes
With amethystine pansy-purple spar;
And rosy dykes or white traverse the gray
Of that old limestone living in her cliffs.
Her rivers are the fairest in the world -  
I challenge this - the brightest in the world.  
Most sparkling blue, and altogether clear.  
Her trees drop manna and her blossoms joy  
Of her contented poor, her happy rich  

On first reading, this poem could be glossed over an inconsequential.  
But a closer scrutiny discloses much hidden artistry. Since a poet  
is ordinarily concerned with providing a particular experience and  
eliciting a particular kind of pleasurable response, it is, therefore,  
natural that he employ the devices at his disposal, and if he succeeds  
in not merely using beautiful language but in stamping that language  
with "beauty" because it arises from its eminent suitability to his  
mission, then surely his creation is worthy of consideration. An  
amalgam, then, of the elements listed - of language, figure and image,  
of tone or mood - may establish this poem, at least in part, as a  
lyric gem.  

First, the poet has abandoned the usual regular rhyme, and has  
chosen to gain the effect of the repetition device by means of  
alliteration, assonance, and consonance. The poem begins with an  
apostrophe to "Mother England" so that the subsequent eulogy is  
objectively related. A distinct tone and mood is evident, the result  

S. Frances Harrison, Canadian Birthday Book(Toronto, 1887), p. 166.
of a completely different approach to Canada's beauty. The poem furnishes excellent examples of alliteration in "gold", "gleam", and "garnet"; in "pansy-purple", and "limestone living". Assonance, another form of repetition, is quite judiciously distributed through one or several lines as illustrated in:

Her shores pile agate and her sands run gold,
Her mountains gleam with garnet and her capes
With amethystine pansy-purple spar;
And rosy dykes or white traverse the gray
Of that old limestone living in her cliffs.

The long "i" in "dykes", "white", and "limestone" provides assonance of a rather obvious sort. But the similar vowel sound of "gleam" and "amethystine" may not be so apparent. The poem also illustrates how the effect of assonance can be augmented by a repetition not only of vowel and consonant which links "garnet" and "spar" in the third and fourth lines reappears with the repetition of "sparkling" in the ninth line, And "harvests" and "are" in the eleventh line. The repetition of consonants alone - consonance - can be found in the repeated "r" sounds of "trees" and "drop" or the recurrent "n" and "nd" sound of "land", "sands" in the opening five lines of the poem, and "manna", "and" of line ten.

But repetition is only one of many ways in which a poet can use the sound of words to gain the effect he seeks. The ease or difficulty with which certain words or combinations or words are pronounced can affect the "tempo" of poetic lines in various ways. The difference
between so-called long and short vowels, between musical and clipped consonants, between frontal and "hard-palate" consonants, can be exploited to create certain general effects. For example, the line:

Most sparkling, blue, and altogether clear,

seems to take longer to speak than the next line:

Her trees drop manna and her blossoms joy

simply because the first line is more difficult to pronounce rapidly. The shorter vowels and musical consonants of the second line flow into one another and produce the effect of ease and opulence as against the cold, glitter of rivers "sparkling, blue" - certainly a most appropriate and skilful effect in a land of contrasts such as Canada.

The sound of words alone, however, does not suffice in determining the excellence of a poem. Effects are more often than not created by the meaning, connotative and denotative, which the words convey. Thus it would seem that the "beauty" and appropriateness of the language of this poem arises from its suitability to the poet's mission, the creation of a poem which reveals certain aspects of Canada's beauty, and evokes from the reading a pleasurable response.

A brief study of the word choice immediately reveals that the poet sees Canada chiefly in terms of colour, and it is indisputable that colours carry connotations and set a tone. The poem is a flash of colour - the heaped-up variegated agate; the flowing gold; the red gleam of garnet; the violet-purple spar; the rosy fissures contrasting
with the grey limestone; the blue rivers; and by implication, the
white and pink of the manna and the blossoms. It may not have been
particularly revealing to have noted that the poem opens with an
apostrophe to "Mother England", but neither is it irrelevant since it
provides a structural principle which aids in enhancing the meaning
which all these images supply. On a literal level, the poet has
merely addressed "Mother England" and revealed to her, selected
aspects of Canada's resources. On a connotative level, the poet has
seen the spectacle of a new country, resplendent in her rich beauty
and reflecting the ultimate richness of life, and has asked that this
experience be shared by others.

The wonder of the changing seasons has always been the source of
poetic inspiration. Euphemia Bellmore, in her poem, "Spring", has
c caught the surge of joy as a Canadian spring succeeds a typically
severe winter.

***
Gone are the howling winter blasts
That long have swept the landscapes o'er,
Sweet Spring, with balmy breeze invites
The opening bud and blushing flower.

Through Canada's fair and fertile plains,
Ooze gently on the murmuring rills
And basking 'neath the sunbeam's smile,
Behold the green and verdant hills.

A thousand welcomes, lovely Spring,
Smiling o'er hill and plain
In all thy budding, blushing bloom,
We hail thee to our land again. 

This could be springtime in any land except for "the howling winter blasts" which precede it. For, though other lands may have even more severe winters than Canada, they do not know the suddenness of a "sweet Spring" inviting "the opening bud and blushing flower". Again, only Canada has such contrasts. The experience is new though the diction is "old-world". There is the ever-recurring "fair", the trite "balmy breeze", "murmuring rills" and "verdant hills"; but there is, besides, an element of glad surprise, as though Spring were unexpected in such a land, and for that reason all the more welcome. And, there is no niggardliness. In accord with all the other profuse outpourings of nature's gifts, Spring bears a wealth of "budding, blushing bloom". It is a . . . "lovely Spring,/ Smiling o'er hill and plain". Not only is this the season of spring; it is also the springtime of a new land with all the promise of youth and life.

By contrast, it might be expected that winter in such a land would be depressing. On the contrary, winter comes in for more than its share of praise as the season which is particularly

"Canadian." The "Sleighing Song" which appeared in The Canadian Monthly, January, 1876, expresses sentiments typical of the general tone of merriment and exultation in the great outdoors, as part of a Canadian winter.

To the music of the trees,
    Borne along the evening breeze,
To the sleigh bell's cheery chime,
    Bringing forth its tuneful time,
Merry, merry, on we go,
    O'er the crisp and glittering snow.

No more on the briar and tree,
Bird doth warble joyously.
List! Though hushed its witching strain,
Echoes still the sweet refrain --
Earth; O earth, so glad and fair!
Sing, Oh heart! why dream of care?

Oh! diamond-dusted hills
Oh! glassy, glistening rills,
Oh! ye snowy-bowered glades,
Oh! ye laughing forest shades,
As we swiftly glide along
Break ye forth in gladsome song. 19

The rhymed couplet can be for this poem a genuine element, used with calculated effect. Together with the predominantly trochaic meter, it gives the impression of speed, and the rhythm gliding of the horse and sleigh. The diction is particularly appropriate to the overall effect of joyous abandon. There is the "music of the trees", "the sleigh-bell's cheery chime", "hushed" bird-song, and "echoes"

to delight the ear; "glittering snow", diamond-dusted hills", "glassy, glistening rills", "snowy-bowered glades" to delight the eye. Winter in Canada is presented as a joyous, fresh experience. In spite of the romantic imagery, the diction has connotations peculiarly appropriate to a Canadian winter scene. The mono-syllabic words—sleigh, bells, chime, crisp, earth, glad, fair, hills, rills, glide, song, snow—set the tone and mood of the poem. It is impossible to read it with anything but a racy pace. The alliterative "diamond-dusted", and the "gl" of glittering, glistening, glades, glide, glad, gladsome, are evocative of brightness and joy.

This same glad response to life permeates the poem "Canada" published in The Canadian Monthly and National Review, July, 1875.

I know a land in the glowing West,
Which my youthful heart loved first and best;
A land which seemed to my raptured eyes,
As a last sweet likeness of Paradise--
Where birds and flowers were bright and gay,
And all nature joined in my happy play,
Where the blushing morn and the balmy air
Seemed ever breaking a thankful prayer;
And a spirit dwelt in the young moon's light
And guarded with beauty each summer night.
Ah, would 'neath the dear old roof I might stand,
And feast my eyes on that pleasant land,
On the meadow reach where the "scarlet cup"
Seems drinking the dazzling sunshine up.
Where Ontario's waters in calmness lie
'Neath the azure blue of the boundless sky,
And the war-birds flashed the blue-birds play,
Through the long bright hour of the summer day;
While some youth springs down from the glowing land.
And the light skiff darts from the yellow sand.
And then when the light snow falls thr' the air,
And winter sets in, oh! how bright and clear!
When the sleigh-bells ring their joyous song,
When the days are short and the nights are long,
When the dear toboggan is drawn thro' the street,
And moccasins pulled over dainty feet,
When swiftly we fly down some terrible slope,
With nothing to stop the toboggan, I hope!—
O can there on earth be more glorious fun?
Is any land better? say? under the sun. 20

The poet is reliving, with delight, earlier joys evoked by the
contrasting beauty of a Canadian summer and winter. There is evidence,
in spite of a general adherence to old forms and trite comments, of
sincere admiration for Canada, and a desire for apt expression.
There is an attempt to create specific pictures of the Canadian
seasons. In summer there is the meadow ..."where the scarlet cup/
Seems drinking the dazzling sunshine up"; the "youth" springing "down
from the glowing land", and a "light skiff" darting "from the yellow
sand". By contrast, in winter, there is the "light snow" and
"sleigh-bells", "toboggan" and "moccasins". The rhetorical question,
"Is any land better? ... under the sun." is sufficient avowal that
Canada's beauty is considered incomparable.

One of the most prolific exponents of Canadian charms was Mrs.

"Canada" by E.S.T., The Canadian Monthly and National Review,
July, 1875, pp. 18-19.
Leprohon (Miss Rosanna Mullins). Her poems appealed to the popular taste, and as long as Mr. John Lovell edited the Literary Garland, she was one of its leading contributors. Indeed, a surprising number of periodicals both in Canada and elsewhere considered her production among their most attractive features. But, in form, she is completely imitative.

"Our Canadian Woods in Early Autumn", with its internal rhyme scheme, bears a marked resemblance to Shelley's "The Cloud", without, however, its force or graphic imagery.

I have passed the day 'mid the forest gay,  
In its gorgeous autumn dyes,  
Its tints as bright and as fair to the sight  
As the hues of our sunset skies;  
And the sun's glad rays veiled by golden haze,  
Streamed down 'neath its arches grand,  
And with magic power made scene and hour  
Like a dream of Faerie Land.

The emerald sheen of the maple green  
Is turned to deep, rich red;  
And the boughs entwine with the crimson vine  
That is climbing overhead;  
While like golden sheaves, the saffron leaves  
Of the sycamore strew the ground,  
'Neath the birches old, clad in shimmering gold,  
Or the ash with red berries crowned.

-----------------------------------------------------------------
Though the bird's sweet song, that the summer long  
Hath flowed so sweet and clear  
Through the cool, dim shades of our forest glades,  
No longer charms the ear,  
A witching spell, that will please as well  
As his glad notes, may be found  
In the solemn hush, or the leaves' soft rush,  
As they quickly strew the ground.
For, though they tell of summer's farewell,
Of their own decay and doom,
Of the wild storm-cloud and the snow's cold shroud,
And the days of winter's gloom,
The heart must yield to the power they wield, -
Alike tender, soothing, gay -
The beauties that gleam and that reign supreme
In our woods, this autumn day.

There are clear overtones throughout this poem, of resignation, a quiet acceptance of life's inevitabilities. Obviously, Mrs. Leprohon has found in the autumn woods, subject matter for meditation on death: "decay and doom"; "wild storm-cloud"; "snow's cold shroud"; "winter's gloom". There is "the solemn hush" and "the leaves' soft rush" but the "heart must yield to the power they wield". This is another example of a poet finding in the Canadian scene the perfect experience for the expression of mood and conviction.

Another poem, "To Canada" which appeared in The Saturday Reader, February, 1866, combines praise of Canada's beauty with a declaration of loyalty.

Dear land of the lake and the forest,
Green Valley and pine covered hill;
The land of the broad rolling river,
And softly meandering rill!

Thou beautiful land of the maple,
Thy love is enshrined in each heart;

And tender and fond are the feelings
Thy grandeur and beauty impart.

Yes! strong are the links of affection
That bind thy brave children to thee;
And bold are the spirits and fearless,
That guard thee, fair land of the free!

O, long may thou prosper and flourish,
And bloom with the vigour of youth;
May thy shores be the bulwark of freedom—
The shrine of religion and truth.

And long may the flag of our fathers
Float proudly o'er forest and dome—
The glory, the pride and the aegis
Of every Canadian home.

And ever may peace and contentment
Within thy green borders abide;
While the streams of thy commerce expanding
Flow on in a rich golden tide.

But should the stern trumpet of battle
Awake thee to warfare again,
Then woe to the ruthless invader
That dares thy free soil to profane.

Then the flag of our fathers unfolding,
We'll meet the rash foe on the strand,
To combat and conquer like freemen,
And die for our beautiful land.

The chief value of this poem as a concensus of the time lies more in what it does not say than in what it says. It would seem reasonable to expect that the journals and newspapers of 1866 would

"To Canada" by S. M., The Saturday Reader, February 24, 1866.
be overflowing with articles and poems relevant to Confederation. Yet, on the very eve of this great event, when Canada's political leaders are preparing for the London Conference, Canadian writers are placidly preoccupied in singing the praises of Canada's beauty, with little or no thought to the political issue. It is significant that for the average Canadian of this time, patriotism is closely linked with allegiance to the "old flag". Freedom will be fought for, if necessary, but under "the flag of our fathers".
Closely linked to the poems praising Canada's beauty are those dedicated to the praise of the country as country. They are marked by a particular exuberance and a confident assurance of Canada's manifest destiny. Though there seems to be no evidence of American influence, an interesting parallel may be drawn between these first manifestations of a Canadian national pride and the braggodacious of Walt Whitman, both finding expression at the same time. Canada's "little poets" were no match for this American giant, but it may be worth noting that though Canada was a hundred years younger than her neighbor, she did not lack those patriots who were equally as confident as was Walt Whitman of America, that Canada was destined to a place in the sun. There is a constant reminder that Canada, not having known either slavery or war, is the "land of the free" with a decided advantage over the United States.

All these sentiments are embodied in a poem by Nicholas Flood Davin:

Columbia growls.
We care not, we,
We are young and strong and free
The storm-defying oak's great sap
Swells in the twig.
A breath of power stirs round us from each sea,
And, big with future greatness,
Our hearts beat high and bold,
Like glowing seas that smite the cliffs to dust.
You cannot make us blench,
The sons of freemen we, we must be free.
A nation's destiny is bright
Within our eyes,
Deep-mirrored in heroic will;
The future years like Banquo's issue pass
A crown is there,
No tinsel crown of Kings, no bauble;
A people's sovereign will.

Awake! the dawn is tripping on the hills;
The day's at hand
I see a nation young, mature, and free,
Step down the mountain side
To take her proud place in the fields of time,
And thou art she! 25

These excerpts from a longer poem are representative passages illustrating the surge of youthful independence which swept post-Confederation Canada. The usual cry of allegiance to the old world and the "Old Flag" is gone. "Columbia growls/ We care not..." strikes a new note. In place of the "tinsel crown of Kings" is a "people's sovereign will." This is implicitly the cry of republicanism. There is a new loyalty to a new country. The metaphors in which the first stanza is cast imply power, strength and life - "The storm-defying oak's great sap/ Swells in the twig"..."Our hearts beat high and bold./ Like glowing seas that smite the cliffs to dust." And, "big with future greatness" is, by

implication, an attempt at the birth symbol, a variation of the
darkness-light symbol in "the dawn is tripping on the hills."

The final stanza makes an easy transition into another of
Nicholas Flood Davin's poems, *Young Canada*. "I see a nation, young,
mature, and free,/ Step down the mountain side." is the vision of
a young giant -

A youthful giant, golden-haired
With fearless forehead, eye of blue
And large and clear its frosty depths
With fire within its dark'ning hue.

His spear which dwarfs the tallest pine,
Is bound around with yellow grain,
His shield is rich in varied scenes,
To right and left loud roars the main.

He dreameth of unborn times; "...
With manhood's thoughts his mind is braced;
He'll teach the world a lesson yet,
And with the mightiest must be placed.

The voice dies o'er the dews of morning,
Which round him glitter while shadows flee,
Bright concord beams from shore to shore,
Glad union peals from to sea to sea'. 24

Here is the same enthusiasm in verse as that expressed in the preface
of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, 1871:

Canada is no longer a child, sleeping in the arms
of nature, dependent for her very existence on the
fostering care of her illustrious mother. She has
outstripped infancy, and is in full enjoyment of a
strong and vigorous youth. . .

None of the writers, however, seem too sure whether Canada is a

Davin, 133-135.
youth or a maid. Not only Susanna Moodie mixes her metaphors but also Nicholas Flood Davin, who sees his maiden country "step down the mountain side" and exults "And thou are she." By a strange metamorphosis this same vision becomes a "youthful giant, golden-haired" with "his spear" and "his shield." Such uncertainty contrasts with the tone of confident assurance which pervades these praises of Canada. Obviously, these poems are but patriotic outbursts, though they give evidence of the author's hope, shared with a number of his compatriots, of being "the national poet" for which Canada was waiting.

Another poem of Nicholas Flood Davin, in the same collection, is *Forward*. The three stanzas given here are again illustrative of the aggressive character of post-Confederation verse:

Who sneers she's but a colony  
   No national spirit there;  
Race differences, faction's feuds  
   Her flag to tatters tear.  

Nor race, nor creed, the patriot's sword,  
   Nor faction blunts today.  
"Forward for Canada!"'s the word,  
   And, eager for the fray.  

Our purpose now fires every eye,  
   Rebellion foul to slay,  
'Forward for Canada!'s the cry,  
   And all are one today.  

Of all the aspects of the period of depression which followed Davin, 136-137.
Confederation one of the most galling was the steady flow of thousands of Canadians across the border. In many areas there was at best a restrained satisfaction with the individual benefits accruing to Confederation. Such verse as *Forward* fits into this pattern as a sort of propaganda boost. It is not so much a spontaneous expression of admiration for Canada as a battle cry in defiance of the prevalent pessimism. It is the old cry of "in unity there is strength."

William Douw Lightall, an even more prolific writer than Nicholas Flood Davin, presents the new self-confident Dominion through a dialogue of a "Young Man" and a "Seer." The prevalent uncertainty is caught in the title *The Confused Dawn*.

**Young Man**

What are the Vision and the Cry
That haunt the new Canadian soul?
Dim grandeur spreads we know not why
O'er mountain, forest, tree and knoll,
And murmurs indistinctly fly,-
Some magic moment sure is nigh
O Seer, the curtain roll.

**Seer**

The Vision, mortal, it is this -
Dead mountain, forest, knoll and tree
Awaken all, endued with bliss,
A native-land- O think! - to be -
Thy native land - and ne'er amiss,
Its smile shall like a lover's kiss
From henceforth seem to thee.
The Cry thou couldst not understand
Which runs through that new realm of light,
From Breton's to Vancouver's strand
O'er many a lovely landscape bright,
It is their waking utterance grand.
The great refrain, "A Native Land."
Thine be the ear, the sight. 26

Here, it is the thought of a "native land" which absorbs the poet.
This is the "magic moment" and the "Vision" and the "Cry". But,
to the youth, the vision is as yet a "dim grandeur" and the cry is
but indistinct murmurs. It is for the seer, the spirit of
timelessness, to "roll" back the "curtain" and present the reality.
The death and rebirth symbol is evident in "Dead mountain, forest,
knoll and tree/ Awaken all endued with bliss/..." This, then,
is to be the heritage of the young - a native land.

A distinguishing characteristic of W. D. Lighthall's verse is
the complete absence of reference to Britain. Canada stands or falls
on her own merits. One of his most effective poems is Canada Not
Last. The title is seemingly a less pretentious variant of the
"Canada First" theme prominent in the 1870's. The final stanza
presents Lighthall at his best. Much of the dream-like quality of

26 Canadian Poems and Lays: Selections of Native Verse, arr. and
Lampman's poetry or Carman's haunting melody is evident. If there is any such thing as an 'objective correlative' for Lighthall's contemplative mood, he seems to have found it in the haze-enveloped dream-world of a brilliant Canadian autumn, juxtaposed with the vision of "Rome, Florence, Venice" - redolent of "The glory that was Greece/ And the grandeur that was Rome."

...  

Rome, Florence, Venice - noble, fair, and quaint,  
They reign in robes of magic round me here;  
But fading blotted dim, a picture faint,  
With spell more silent, only pleads a tear.  
Plead not! Thou hast my heart, O picture dim!  
I see the fields, I see the autumn hand  
Of God upon the maples! Answer Him  
With weird, translucent glories, ye that stand  
Like spirits in scarlet and in amethyst!  
I see the sun break over you; the mist  
On hills that lift from iron bases grand  
Their heads superb! the dream, it is my native land.27

If 20th century critics, in their denunciation of "romanticism", have spared Archibald Lampman, surely they could accord the same "indulgence" to Lighthall. This is a fine stanza devoid of the mawkishness prevalent in so many patriotic poems. Why Lighthall should have stopped two lines short of a sonnet is open to conjecture, but the rhyme scheme of the first eight lines seems to indicate that he had contemplated a Shakespearean sonnet. Whether

that was his intent or not, he strikes a note of originality by completing the poem in rhymed couplets. Such deviation from the normal rhyme scheme abab, is accompanied by variations in stress, and the location of pauses at various points in the poem. The predominant iambic meter builds up to the emphatic spondee "Plead not", with a sudden caesura, and is again broken in the enjambent "Like spirits in scarlet. . . " The anapest slows up the pace of the line creating with the run-on line a greater feeling of freedom and wide-ranging strength appropriate to "spirits" standing "in scarlet and in amethyst."

Besides such prosodic achievements the poet has combined substance and language in a way calculated to evoke a mood at once dream-like and alert. The tone is quiet, sustained by the long vowels o's, a's, e's, and the musical consonants, m's, l's, particularly in the first five lines in which the picture created is "dim." The robes are of "magic. . . /fading blotted dim. . . "; the picture is "faint" and the "spell more silent." Then, suddenly, the vision clears, and the physical details - the "fields", the "autumn hand/ Of God upon the maples" become more vivid. Fields and maples are concrete images - reality breaking through the "mist", though the maples and the fields "Answer Him/ With weird, translucent glories. . . " "Weird" and "translucent" carry connotations more
trance-like than dream-like, but suddenly, there comes the "sun". This is reality. The "mist" is lifting from the hills. The dream is realized - "it is my native land."

The Reverend Edward Dewart in *Songs of Life*, a collection of his poems, emphasizes Canada's expanse, and like so many of his contemporaries, stresses the liberty enjoyed with this "free Dominion." Two stanzas of his *Ode to Canada* are indicative of the sentiment of the whole poem.

God bless our noble Canada!  
Our broad and free Dominion!  
Where law and liberty have sway -  
Not one of all her sons today  
Is tyrant's serf or pinion.  

Fling out our banners to the breeze,  
And proudly greet the world  
With words of amity and peace;  
For never on more halcyon seas  
Was Freedom's flag unfurled. 28

The same note of confidence rings through:

**The Canadian Farmer's Song**

Let the cities broad long and loud  
Of their palaces fair and grand;  
In the country wide, spread on every side,  
Are the works of our Father's hand.  
Though our fate may seem, to some idler's dream,  
A toilsome and weary lot.  
Yet peace and health are the priceless wealth  
That are found in the settler's cot;  
We are freemen - not labor's slave ever stood

On our loved Canadian soil -
No tyrant's power can withhold for an hour
The fruits of our honest toil.  

These poems, as those of Nicholas Flood Davin's, indicate that desire for a united and strong nation, part of the high excitement which permeated Canada during the first years of Confederation. There was a recognized need for solidarity of purpose and a distinctive national spirit. Speaking of this period in Canadian history, Desmond Pacey says in his *Creative Writing in Canada*: "There was, then, recognition of the fact that a nation does not achieve greatness by a merely material expansion. Never before had Canadians been as ready as in these first three decades after Confederation to welcome a native literary movement, and this public responsiveness undoubtedly had something to do with the marked increase in the quantity and quality of literature during the period. ... As the West was settled and new provinces added to the Dominion, as the railway pushed gradually across the continent, periodicals and books came from the presses testifying to the new spirit abroad in the land."  

Dewart's poems  

Dewart, pp. 201-202.  

are part of "this public responsiveness" and though his poetry lacks distinction, still it bears witness to the spirit of the times.

One of the longest poems embodying all the sentiments of post-Confederation writing was published in pamphlet form ten years before Confederation. It is anonymous and is entitled "0 Country/ Happy New Year" The Carrier's Poem, "Dedicated to/The Patrons of/ The Ottawa Citizen"

Our Native Land! with heart and hand,
We strike a chord for thee,
Whose every note shall wildly float,
And tell that we are free.

We'll sound it wide o'er land and tide,
From Freedom's broad domain
To Europe's thrones where crumpled bones
Speak of the tyrant's reign;

From the trackless bourne of that distant world,
Where the sun's bright rays recline
To where morning light by the waves is curled,
And St. Lawrence onward is swiftly whirled
To the ocean's rolling brine, -

Is the Land we love, -'tis the land of Peace!
Tho! never at duty's call
Did her heart's allegiance to honor cease
Or her rights to a foeman e'r release
Or yield to a stranger's thrall.

Then follows a list of Canada's excellences, and what the verse lacks in poetic art is compensated for by emphasis:

'Tis a Land of Bibles! ...
'Tis a Land of Laws! ...
"Tis a Land of Science!...
"Tis a Land of Arts!...
"Tis a Land of Schools!

So much for the past and the present:

Thus of the past. Turn now with me,
And in the future let us see
What yet remains: no paltry line
Our rightful limits can define,
Think not, Canadians! think no more
As you have always thought before,
Those narrow bounds, from Georgian Bay
To where St. Lawrence rolls away,
Your lines are set. No, no, - that space
Contains within its small embrace,
Including lakes and streams and isles,
About three hundred thousand miles
In square content; but those are not
Our boundaries alone; not e'en a jot
Of such as fill our rightful claim,
And which should bear our nation's name:

This panegyric reaches the climax of narcissism in:

Gaze for a moment on that plan
Which Heaven propitious made for man,
To elevate from Nature's birth
Our Land, to be the first on Earth. 31

 Probably the most naive of all the poems of this genre is

Margaret Gil Currie's The Wonder of C------

It is a shame, I've often thought -
A dreadful pity, still I say -

31 The Carrier's Poem, Dedicated to the Patrons of the Ottawa,
Pamphlet(January, 1857).
That C----- is not known abroad
As London of America.

Or, better still, 't might be compared
With Athens, Nineveh or Rome;
For such illustrious geniuses
Hail glorious C----- as their home.

But as you stand with breath suppressed,
With gaping mouth and lifted hand,
Let sober thought at once suggest
He came from C-----'s wondrous land.

One of the better known and more widely accepted poets of this era is Mrs. Leprohon (Miss R. E. Mullins). The Introduction to her The Poetical Works of Mrs. Leprohon is a declaration of the sincere hope that she and her contemporaries are helping to lay the foundation of a recognized Canadian literature.

When in after ages, the literature of Canada comes to be written, it is to be hoped that among the mighty sons and daughters of genius now unknown, or as yet unborn, some room will be kept for the brave and loving pioneers who gave the people of their best, and sang the songs of duty and patriotism and hope, ere life in our young land had ceased to be a struggle. ... But if those who come after, thus favored by circumstances, surpass their predecessors in literary skill or power, not less deserving are the latter who, with little prospect of reward, bore the burden and the heat of the day. This early stage in a nation's literature had, indeed, an interest and a value of its own, which only meet with due appreciation from a judicious and grateful posterity. If it has not the rich, warm splendor of

32 Margaret Gill Currie, Gabriel West and Other Poems (Frederickton, 1866), pp. 124-125.
the later morning, it has the welcome promise of the dawn, and a tender beauty of its own.

Though the selections of Mrs. Leprohon's poems given here could come under the classification of those celebrating Canada's beauty, still they carry connotations beyond the praise of that beauty evident to the senses. This external beauty speaks to her of an inner beauty which evokes loyalty and admiration, and leads to praise of Canada as a country. Thus does the poet see Canada as symbolized by The Maple Tree.

Well have Canadians chosen thee
As the emblem of their land,
Thou noble, spreading maple tree
Lord of the forest grand;
Through all the changes time has made,
Thy woods so deep and hoar
Have given their homesteads pleasant shade
And beauty to their shore.

In Autumn's hours of cheerless gloom,
How glowing is the dye
Of the crimson robe thou dost assume,
Though it only be to die;
Like the red men who long years ago,
Reposed beneath the shade,
And wore a smiling lip and brow
On the pyre their foes had made.

Warmly we pray no deed of harm
May fright thy peaceful shade,
May'st thou ne'er see in war's alarm
Contending foes arrayed,
But, smiling down on peasants brave,
On honest tranquil toil
Thy branches ever brightly wave,
Above a happy soil. 33

This intense loyalty to Canada is evident in practically all of Mrs. Leprohon's poems. In Looking Forward, written for her small son, a sort of reverie in which she wonders what he will do, and how he will act in manhood, she still expresses her love for Canada:

Let love of God and love of thy kind,
Like tendrils around it closely wind;
Blending those feelings of purest worth
With love for Canada, land of thy birth. 34

Winter in Canada is somewhat of an attempt at a dramatic monologue. It seems that someone has disparaged Canadian weather in Mrs. Leprohon's presence. The scolding tone of her reply would, however, hardly recommend the poem as an immigration lure.

Nay, tell me not that, with shivering fear,
You shrink from the thought of wintering here,
That the cold intense of our winter time
Is severe as that of Siberian clime,
And, if wishes could waft you across the sea,

34  Leprohon, p. 85.
You, tonight in your English home would be.

What! dare to rail at our snowstorms, why
Not view them with poet's or artist's eye?
Watch each pearly flake as it falls from above,
Like snow plumes from some spotless dove,
Clothing all objects in ermine rare,
More sure than the bright robes which monarchs wear.

Only tarry till Spring on Canadian shore
And you'll rail at our winters, then, no more,
New health and fresh life through your veins shall grow,
Spite of piercing winds - spite of ice and snow,
And I'd venture to promise, in truth, my friend,
'Twill not be the last that with us you'll spend.

Seemingly, Mrs. Leprohon was giving the magazines and her reading public the products for which they were willing to pay, but nowhere does her poetry challenge interpretation or analyzation. The best that can be said for her poems is that they are a sincere expression of her regard for her native land, and indicate the general patriotic frame of mind which conduced to the furthering of Confederation.

Paradoxically, some of the most patriotic poems and those which capture a truer vision of Canada are those which make no reference either to patriotism or to Canada. Among the chief contributors of poems of this category are Charles Sangster and Charles Mair. These are also the better-known poets of this era. Charles Sangster, a
native Canadian, is considered Canada's chief pre-Confederation poet. This may be poor praise by the norms of present-day criticism, but Sangster is, nevertheless, capable of describing the Canadian landscape more graphically than any other poet of the pre-Confederation period.

One of his most enthusiastic poems is Sonnet XIII from Sonnets, Written in the Orillia Woods, August 1859.

I've almost grown a portion of this place;  
I seem familiar with each mossy stone;  
Even the nimble chipmunk passes on,  
And, looks, but never scolds me. Birds have flown  
And almost touched my hand; and I can trace  
The wild bees to their hives. I've never known  
So sweet a pause from labor. But the tone  
Of a past sorrow, like a mournful rill  
Threading the heart of some melodious hill,  
Or the complainings of the whippoorwill,  
Passes through every thought, and hope, and aim.  
It has its uses; for it cools the flame  
Of ardent love that burns my being up-  
Love, life's celestial pearl, diffused through all its cup.  

This sonnet is a deviation from the regular Petrarchan form of octet and sestet, or the Shakespearean quatrains and final couplet. It is also worth noting the points at which Sangster chooses to depart from uniform metre. One of the important sources of the variety attained is the location of pauses at various points in the poem.

The opening lines are divided into three distinct thoughts by the placement of three complete internal pauses. The first two thoughts mark definite observations of this particular spot in a Canadian woods. There is no attempt, however, to dwell objectively on these aspects of nature. "Each mossy stone" is there for the poet's sake; "the nimble chipmunk ... never scolds" him; the birds have "almost touched" his hand. This brief meditation is, then, but a prelude to the purely subjective theme of the poem. "I've never known/ So sweet a pause from labor" is a transitional line. The mood of a certain Canadian woods is in accord with that of the poet. Nature is in sympathy with him. In the peace and friendliness of the woods and its small creatures he finds the perfect objective correlative for expressing the cooling of "the flame of ardent love." This is a deeper and different aspect of Canadian nature. Of course, it carries overtones of Byron's "bleeding heart", but nowhere does it descend to the maudlin. The subjective "I" is lost in the universal experience - that nature has the power to soothe and soften emotional stress.

This sonnet has no clear-cut proposal and resolution. Sangster merely gives the composition of place, and then proceeds to show how nature is one with him in sympathy. The hesitant, meditative mood
created in the first part of the poem by the run-on lines and caesuras, suddenly sweep into a more racy metre, accentuated by the three end rhymes, "rill"; "hill"; "whippoorwill"; concluding with the longer line "Passes through every thought, and hope, and aim."
The thought is summarized in the last three lines, unlike the Shakespearean sonnet, which sums up the resolution in a final couplet. Nowhere is the thought subordinated to the rhyme. "Aim" ends one thought; "flame" belongs to the final thought. And yet, closer analysis shows that everything Sangster has been saying is only a lead-up to the final line. This final line makes a conspicuous departure from the prevailing iambic pentameter. The word "Love" interrupts the regular flow of the preceding lines. It forces a pause, bringing in an unexpected break in a line which contains the major point, the effective conclusion of the entire poem. The universality of "love" and its proper hierarchic place at the apex, is contained in "celestial pearl" and "diffused." The same "Love" which at once tortures and consoles the poet is born in heaven and permeates all creation. This sets up an interesting ambivalence. The same "Love" which is the cause of the poet's suffering is also the cause of his consolation. What begins, seemingly, as a nature poem, ends as a metaphysical.

There is no doubt that Sangster "thrilled" to the Canadian
scene, that he is the first Canadian poet to strike near the national heart. His inspiration rose beyond the idea of a mere political union. The publication in 1856 of his *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, and Other Poems* established a prominent place for him in Canadian literature, but it was in his later publication in 1860 of *Hesperus and Other Poems and Lyrics* that he showed a deeper insight into nature and her moods. Among his patriotic poems, "A Song for Canada" did much to foster the national sentiment that seven years later culminated in Confederation. One of his poems which received wider acclaim than any other by a Canadian poet at that time is "The Rapid". This lyric is vivid, and its language and rhythm combine for a perfect imitation of the swirl and sweep of the rushing Canadian rivers:

All peacefully gliding,
The waters dividing,
The indolent batteau moved slowly along,
The rowers, lighthearted,
From sorrow long parted,
Beguiled the dull moments with laughter and song;
"Hurrah for the Rapid! that merrily, merrily Gambols and leaps on its tortuous way;
Soon we will enter it, cheerily, cheerily,
Pleased with its freshness, and with with its spray."

Twelve years after the publication of Sangster's *The St. Lawrence and the Saquenay, and Other Poems*, Charles Mair published *Dreamland and Other Poems* thus adding another national voice to that of Sangster's. What has already been said regarding Sangster's involvement with nature in *Sonnet XIII* applies equally well to a variety of Mair's poems. In *Wood Notes* Mair records the effect on him of a particular Canadian woods:

The moss is green upon the tree,
The leaves are green upon the spray,
And I will rest beneath the shade,
And watch their ceaseless revelry.
Know ye the wild anemone?
'Tis blooming here alone for me, --
The lilies and the blue-bells too,
And violets gemmed with drops of dew.

Awake ye woods, unwonted strains!
They wake indeed afar and near.
The wild blood dances through my veins,
And glorious breathings meet mine ear.
The sounds, the voices and the throng
Of joyful birds, the whisper low
Of tree and stream entrance me long,
And thrill my being as they flow.

Like Sangster, Charles Mair's best poems come out of an experience which is characteristic of Canadian life. But, whereas a Canadian woods could "cool the flame" for Sangster, it has the opposite effect on Mair. "The wild blood dances through my veins,/ And glorious breathings meet mine ear." If knowledge is received according...
to the mode of the knower, then it would seem that nature is observed and interpreted according to the temperament of the poet. It is the spring of the year, the spring of the poet's manhood, and the spring of a new country. The whole tone of the poem is one of awakening.

It is, however, framed and remote. There is no attempt to involve the reader. It shows the influence of Wordsworth who declared "Life is energy of love," and, like most of Wordsworth's nature poems, shows a concern, not so much with the description of the scene as the sensation it has generated.

Another of Charles Mair's better poems is *August*. The landscape and the very season itself are distinctively those of Canada, and are accurately observed.

Dull August! Maiden of the sultry days,  
And Summer's latest born! When all the woods  
Grow dim with smoke, and smirch their lively green  
With haze of long-continued drought begot;  
When every field grows yellow, and a plague  
Of thirst dries up its herbage to the root,  
So that the cattle grow quite ribby-lean  
On woods stalks whose juices all are spent;  
When every fronded fern in mid-wood hid  
Grows sick and yellow with jaundice heat,  
Whilst those on hillsides glare with patchy red;  
When streamlets die upon the lichen'd rocks,  
And leave the bleaching pebbles shining bare,  
And every mussel shell agape and parched,  
And small snail-craft quite emptied of their crews;  

39

Mair, pp. 119-124.
Such a poem prompts a re-consideration of the persistent criticism that all the poetry in Canada at this time was derivative, and was overwhelmingly "romantic" in tone. Surely some distinction should be made between realism of treatment and realism of intention. Even a poet of the "Romantic School" can still treat his subject realistically, and this poem is an example of such treatment. No effort is made to gloss over the burned-out, parched land after a hot Canadian summer. August offers a distinct contrast to all the lush growth and lively promise of a Canadian spring as in Wood Notes. Rhyme has been abandoned, and each word seems to have been chosen with consummate care and skill. The symbolism of the plague with its accompanying thirst and fever is sustained throughout the poem. "Every field grows yellow; "juices are all spent" in "woody stalks". "Every fronded fern .../ Grows sick and yellow with jaundice heat/ Whilst those on hillsides glare with patchy red"; " ... streamlets die ... /And leave the bleaching pebbles shining bare/ And every mussel shell agape and parched."

What is represented here may be no more tangible than a state of mind, yet it remains the indispensable substance of the poet's creation, no less than does Keat's "Ode to Autumn" which this poem resembles in form and diction, or Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" with its comparable "fever" imagery. Thus the impressions of August in
Canada conveyed expressly by the imagery are augmented by the connotative power of individual words and phrases. The poem is August personified, presented as a none too pleasing picture - dull and spend. It may be the declining years of Charles Mair. The springtime of youth is gone, and the golden summer days are over. If so, a Canadian August is for the poet a particular experience. On a literal level, the poet has merely addressed August in terms which reveal selected aspects characteristic of that month. On a connotative level, Mair has seen the rich promises of summertime fade and wither under a blazing autumn sun, and through his fever-stricken imagery, he comments on the disillusionments of life. Thus, at all times, Canada offered to Charles Mair a variety of scene and season in which he found the inspiration for the expression of his every mood and experience.
CHAPTER IV

MISCELLANEOUS * MENTIONING CONFEDERATION

It is understandable that many of the poems in this section would scarcely merit the classification of "poetry". The subject matter is, for the most part, topical, and does not lend itself to lofty musings. But it was an exciting time in Canadian history, and, for those who had the urge or the vision, there was much to write about. There was vast expansion, with railways opening up the country across the prairies to the Pacific Coast. There was ample subject matter - wheat farms, Indians, cowboys, buffalo, Mounted Police. There were the ever-lively political issues. The country was caught up in these enthusiasms, and anyone who could write was encouraged to do so. Indeed, the "well-meaning friends" who were so often responsible for the encouragement, were probably more kind than discriminating. Nevertheless, they rendered at least one service to Canada, for these "poems" have caught the spirit and sentiment of a vital "moment" in Canadian history.

In the Preface to Pencillings By the Way, the author "P. J. B." gives an exemplification of all these various aspects:

I assure you, gentle reader, it is with no ordinary sensation of fear, mingled with confidence, that I venture to present to the appreciating reading class of our new Dominion this little poetical rosary of scenes pencilled during a vacation visit, which so importunately crowd in upon my memory at all times that I have concluded the best way I can
dismiss them, without any offence, is to send them home in the coat of Esau, trusting with all the solicitude of Rachel that they may receive the blessing, if not of criticism, at least of consideration, from the hands of kind friends, who may not perceive in my rude manner of expression the voice of a poet; yet, may feel the good intention of one, who would not sell the memory of his country for the mess of practical routine that daily surrounds him. ...I do it merely to satisfy the wish of a few friends, who are anxious to see me ventilate my intellect in the shape of some literary effusion.

A typical verse from the small volume is "Chebucto":

The boat, up the basin to Sackville is sailing,
All freighted with beauty and music so gay:
How oft have I pensively leaned o'er its railing
And thought I saw Halifax running away:
As if she awoke from a mental distraction,
And ran all her might to catch Commerce and Art;
But tripped, like a child, into Confederation,
And, sorry too late, she now hangs on her skirt.

"P. J. B." had made a commentary on Chebucto in the Preface already quoted:"I must add, that this little effusion is but a poor expression of Chebucto scenery, which might equally compare in many respects with that of the much talked-of Hudson. There is no wealthy metropolis, certainly, hanging upon its skirts to

\[\text{P. J. B., "Preface", Pencillings By the Way (Montreal, 1868).}\]

\[\text{P. J. B., p. II.}\]
entice the fashionable tourist to dream away the sultry weeks of summer in painful luxury; yet, there is a little world of picturesque ness hanging about Chebucto in all its wild luxuriance, unattended by any dissipating circumstances, and which is equalled only by the unparalleled hospitality of its inhabitants." It would seem that the Maritimers had acquired a defensive attitude quite early in Canadian history, an attitude which has been shared by the rest of Canada, in varying degrees, up to the present time. But the more enthusiastic Canadians of the Post-Confederation period probably felt, like Wordsworth, that "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive..." It was, indeed, a most opportune time for the aspiring poet, for, in post-Confederation Canada, it was more important that the verse be written by a Canadian than that it be poetry.

In keeping with this exuberant spirit, Robert Awde, in *Our Fair Dominion*, gives a rollicking war song to the tune of "Marching through Georgia."

The bugle sounds a call to arms! Our gallant corps reply; We're ready for the great North West! We'll make the rebels fly.

Hurrah for Canada our home! We'll fight until we die, To keep intact our fair Dominion.
Chorus

Hurrah! hurrah! for Britain's old renown;
Hurrah! hurrah! for country, Queen and Crown;
Tho' Fenian hordes with Riel may join, we'll put rebellion down,
And keep intact our fair Dominion.

We are the heirs of wealth untold, from East to Western sea,
And proud that we, of all earth's sons, are freest of the free.
Already dawns the morning of the future yet to be,
The glory of our fair Dominion. 42

Obviously, the creation of the new Dominion had not meant severing ties with Britain. The direct reference to the Fenian invasions is an oblique admission of the chief psychological reason which had compelled the four British colonies to seek strength in union.

Another important reason for Confederation - the need to strengthen the economy of the country - is indicated in another of Awde's poems, Dominion Day.

We bask in the sunshine of freedom today,
And sing "Our Dominion forever!"
United to each and to England we pray
The changes of time may ne'er sever.

Some of us are noisy - in speech somewhat free;
Yet, count him a foe that would sever -
As subjects of Britain most loyal are we,
And wish to remain so forever.
On Confederation we somewhat rely,
By mutual concessions to live;
And from one another we're hoping to buy

Whatever each Province can give.
Our notions of trade, even crude tho' they look,
Have brought out this point, in our thinking,
'Tis better to lead the horse out to the brook,
Than cart all his water for drinking.
As England receives all our surplus of food,
To feed all her thousands, 'tis clear,
'Twould give us less trouble, and do us more good,
To have them located out here.

To this end our people have voted N. P.,
To give manufacture protections,
And thus do we hope by industry to see
The last of hard times and dejection;
When Canada, great, but not standing alone,
And union a realized fact,
Shall form a grand outpost to strengthen the throne,
And keep our allegiance intact. 43

The depression of 1873 came at a most difficult time for Canada,
when substantial revenues and credits were needed to subsidize an
expensive program of expansion, particularly in railway construction.
That same year saw the defeat of John A. Macdonald, as the result of
the Pacific Scandal. Failure of the new Liberal government to draw up
a reciprocity agreement with the United States threw Canada back on
her own resources, and offered Macdonald the opportunity to rally to
the Conservative party those industrial groups whose expectation of
favors from the Liberals had been disappointed. It was a chance to

Awde, pp. 18-20.
promote a change of policy towards the United States and to show that country that if it had refused reciprocity of trade, it must accept reciprocity of tariffs. "National Policy" became the slogan in the political campaign, and swept the Conservatives back into power in the 1878 election. Though the National Policy proved to be no elixer for all the Canadian ills, still it did express the desire of Canadians to build a vigorous and independent national economy as the very life-blood of a successful Confederation. It is this spirit which prompted much of the Confederation verse, as a sort of propaganda vehicle.

Railway expansion was recognized as an absolute necessity in building a unified nation, and was subject matter for more than a few of the poems. In The Poems of John C. Colgan "The Iron Horse" is in praise of the C. P. R.

***
Then happy Canada! your lot is blest;  
The shortest throughfare from east to west  
And eastern fabrics of the choicest brand  
Will swell the commerce of this happy land.

Your precious mines and flowing wells of oil  
On every side reward the sons of toil.  
Exhaustless forests, filled with pine and oak,  
Invite the hardy woodman's felling stroke  
To lay those giant kings of nature low.  
And clear the virgin soil for wheat to grow.
Let Grit and Tory both unite their force
To speed the progress of the Iron Horse.
With resolution brave let all agree
And stretch his iron bands from sea to sea.
Linked with your mother by those virtues three;
Firm faith, bright hope and heavenly charity,
Or linked to Sam for better or for worse
By iron rail and smoking Iron Horse. 44

The last stanza is delivered with a strain of wry humour. To leave the security of "Mother Britain" for a marriage with "Sam" does not seem a very desirable prospect for Canada, even if it should mean economic security.

This prevailing sentiment of John Colgan is expressed in some of his other poems. In "Farewell to the Observer" he says:

----------------------------------
Two Sons of Mars prefer their claim,
Who fought on many a field of fame
And foiled the Yankee Fenian scheme
   Of Annexation;
And who would fight through fire and flame
   For Confederation. 45

But he seems to reach the peak of national fervor in A Word in Season.

Shun the Tory, Grit and Fenian,
Who would blast our young dominion
   With a secret plan,
God Himself is love and union,

45 Colgan, p. 12.
Serve Him best you can.

Think with love and veneration,
How that grand Confederation
   Joined us all in one;
Practise Christian toleration,
   Every sect and clan.

Let the maple leaf and beaver
Be our union beadge forever,
   Peace our constant aim;
Show our friends across the river
   We are free as they.

Let them see there's no disunion
In our happy young dominion,
   No intestine wars.
Then a fig for all their minions,
   And their stripes and stars.

Take a humble ploughman's warning
Mind your business night and morning
   Let the world wag;
Keep the lamp of freedom burning
   Round our native flag.

Such sentiments must have had a strong public appeal, and were probably as powerful in influencing public opinion and national policy as were the editorials of the day.

Since any political fiasco was sufficient to call forth another poem, it is understandable that the "Great Pacific Scandal" would not be passed up. The engineering problems entailed in

46 Colgan, pp. 22-23.
constructing a railroad to the Pacific coast, paled into insignificance in comparison with the political and financial obstacles to be overcome. The work of construction was to be a private enterprise, and two groups entered into competition for the contract. One was formed in Toronto under the presidency of Senator D. L. Macpherson; the other was formed in Monreal under Sir High Allan, who enlisted the support of American capitalists. In order to ensure the return of the Conservatives to power, since the Liberals were adverse to the construction of the proposed railway, Allan contributed some $350,000 for campaign funds. But the success of the Conservatives was short-lived. In spite of the fact that the government immediately set to work to reorganize Allan's Company so that the Toronto group could be brought in and American control eliminated, the Liberals seized upon the opportunity in the session of 1873 to lay charges of bribery against Macdonald. Though he denied that there was any corrupt bargain and that such contributions of money were simply normal political operations, public sentiment was aroused and a vote of censure in Parliament brought the fall of the government. The Liberals took office. The elections of 1874 in which the Conservatives were defeated, were excitedly described in the "Globe" as "the Thermopylae of Canadian virtue."
"Alphonso Stilleto's Poetization of the Incipient Stage of the Great Pacific Scandal" is an exemplification of public indignation and of outraged "Canadian virtue". Twenty-nine pages precede the short excerpt included here:

"It means that for pelf
The men who ruled Canada sought, and would place
Our country in debt, and themselves in disgrace!"

...Glad would I be
To come, and to learn of the whole that transpired,
Which causes Canadians thus, to have ired.

And, first, may I tell you Canadians sought
To build a great Railroad, which by them was thought,
Should run from Atlantic, their boundary East,
And reach the Pacific, ere it should have ceased.

Macpherson declared, that Canadians should
Build all of the road if they possibly could.

These quasi-Canucks doubtless thought the Sir Hugh?
To build such a road were a sorrowful few.
He, hence, had recourse to the land of the Stars,
To help the slow coaches, give place to the cars.

We only need prove that a Government few
Would sell to Americans what they should keep
Within their own fold for Canadian sheep.

The problem of railways was closely connected with a successful Confederation. British Columbia had laid down the terms of a railroad

Alphonso Stilleto's Poetization of the Incipient Stage of the "Great Pacific Scandal", pamphlet, 29 pages(Montreal, 1874).
as condition for joining Confederation. But even the desire for western settlement had not outweighed the growing hostility toward the project which the "Globe" attacked as "a rash and may be disastrous step at the dictation of a handful of people 2,500 miles away." 48 Obviously, such a lengthy poem as the one just quoted shows that the average man was interested.

One of the longest poems, however, dealing with every aspect of Canadian life in this particular era is Canada First an Appeal to All Canadians by A Toronto Boy. Some explanation of the Canada First movement may be in order here.

In the seventies there arose the 'Canada First' movement, whose object it was to unite Canadians on a basis of moral idealism and cultural fervour. Its founder, William Foster, described it as 'an intellectual movement', as a 'direct product, in some measure of that higher culture which the universities and colleges of our land are steadily promoting', and for a few years it enjoyed wide support. There was, then, recognition of the fact that a nation does not achieve greatness by a merely material expansion. Never before had Canadians been as ready as in these first three decades after Confederation to welcome a native literary movement, and this public responsiveness undoubtedly had something to do with the marked increase in the quantity and quality of literature during the period. 49

The poem is divided into sections and is printed in a 16 page pamphlet.


49 Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto, 1961), p. 36.
The following are a few excerpts pertinent to Canadian independence and expansion.

Let Eighteen-eighty, close Colonial life,  
    And Canada a nation now become!  
We court no bitter feelings, war, or strife,  
    But we must have an Independent Home.

A colony, a Nation ne'er can be  
    And proud ambition rises with our years,  
Our aim is noble, 'tis this land to see  
    A Greater Britain, founded without tears.

The older nations of the earth may ask,  
"Why than, should Canada desire to change?  
Why cut the British cords? Why cease to bask  
In Britain's glorious sunshine? This seems strange?"

Not stranger, than in stripling grown a man,  
Thoughts, yearnings, rise, that urge him far to roam,  
'Twas ever thus since first the world began; -  
Strong natures seek an Independent Home.

Thus, Canada a manly course would steer;  
To treat direct with nations now would choose;  
On equal footing meet them as their peer,  
Nor henceforth, rights and claims by proxy lose.

Then grand Great Britain! let this son go free,  
To raise a new Republic to his name;  
The faults and follies of Columbia, he  
Will shun, and rise to strength, to wealth and fame.

Such an appeal for complete independence from Britain is evidence that individual Canadians were often far in advance of their government's policies, since it was not until the Halibut Treaty of 1923 that Canada was permitted to sign any document independently of Britain.
The appeal continues:

Nor deem that Annexation is involved;
Our hearts on Independence, set are sure!
We love our home, as ours, and are resolved
On Independence, - Annexation's cure.

We cannot love the soil we never trod,
Yet kindly think of our forefather's land;
But Canada's our own; each lake, brook, sod,
Hill, vale, falls, river, wood and rocky strand.

A comparison with the freedom and prosperity of the United States is more than mildly satiric:

The question must be asked, -"What is our age?"
"Is the Republic elder of the two?"
At least 'tis shown by History's true page,
That Canada, though young, is scarcely new.

Yet see the contrast, and let Britain say
Is she quite blameless of our low estate;
On one side progress, wealth and powerful sway;
On ours - well - on the theme we won't dilate.

But monarchy has blame, and British gold
Has flowed into our elder brother's hands
What has our fealty earned, when all is told?
It leaves us child-like still in swadding bands.

Not to our lands have emigrants in shoals,
Flocked from the British Isles to swell our ranks;
Of those we get some poor, infrequent doles;
The best pass through, and leave no cash nor thanks.

This is the general tenor of the poem, but one particular stanza illustrates that the concept of independence within a Commonwealth
under the Crown was not even embryonic.

And casting off thy rule, with thy consent,
We would in peace, with mutual blessings part.
Suggest no king - we'll choose a President -
As a Republic, we our race would start.

Sections II and III follow with approximately fifty-one stanzas
relating Canada’s glories, natural beauty and accomplishments,
followed by an appeal to change all the names of cities that are the
same as those of the Old World. The final stanza of this section is
humourously satiric:

Go change thy name; no longer ape the Great!
Change all those names or dread the vain bird’s doom,
We must in kindness thy false pride berate,
Jack-daw, absurdly tailed in peacock’s plume.

The appeal for national poets in Section IV only emphasizes the
irony of the Canadian situation - that there was no great poetry to
be put at the service of such strong conviction.

The Poets of the Nation must appear!
We want our ballads - none are written yet!
Canadian lilts and songs, the youthful ear
Ne’er hears when nurse or mother soothes her pet.

All these sentiments are part of the "Canada First" campaign which the
poet weaves throughout each section and with which he concludes the
poem.

Canada first! the feeble cry we hear;
Despise it not, the next shall be a shout!
A new-born nation shall at once appear;
Though feeble, its importance never doubt.
And now, with earnest, hopeful, warm appeal,
To all Canadians, who their country prize,
We close this effort for Canadian weal;
Unite! Combine! The Nation organize.

Native and foreign-born, combine'. unite!
A patriotic stand shall win our claim;
Roll up your numbers for the National fight;
Let "The Dominion" justify its name! 50

It may be that such a poem was more inspirational than would appear at the present day. For just as there are abuses which resist the zeal of reformers but which are amended at the first breath of laughter, so might an enthusiastic, patriotic poem like this one, dispel the general apathy where many an editorial had failed.

Some of the poems of this type are, however, on a somewhat higher poetic plane. The same love of country and desire for a united Canada are there, but the tone is more subdued. One such poem is *Dominion Day Idyll*:

Time was when man to man we stood in strife;
Sword clashed on sword, crimsoned with ghastly gore,
And orphans mourned, and widows wailed their dead,
While weeping earth strewed leaves her slaughtered children o'er.

50

*Canada First an Appeal To All Canadians by A Toronto Boy*, Pamphlet 16 pages (Toronto, 1880).
Long years have passed and smoothed those furrows down
That rugged hands once raised to hide the slain;
But now we battle on a bloodless field,
And strive to build one mighty land from main to main.

Our fathers build those monuments of stone,
To tell what France had lost and England won;
Their children we—let us a nobler raise,
Founded on land and sea—the fairest 'neath the sun.

From Labrador to fair Vancouver's Isle,
From Erie's shore, far as the Arctic seas,
One banner's folds waves o'er Canadian homes,
One arm defends our rights and guards our liberties.

There is evidence here of a more conscious art and of disciplined emotion. The uniformity of the abcb rhyme scheme and the iambic pentameter line is relieved by the final Alexandrine in each stanza. The poem is developed chiefly by comparison and contrast, beginning with a scene of slaughter and mourning, and building up to the point of comparison between early Canada and the "now". The present struggle is no less real though no longer bloody. The first battles were fought with swords for the conquest of a country; those being fought now are by moral persuasion for the preservation of a nation.

"Monuments of stone" bear witness to the valour of "our fathers", but "their children" would build a "nobler" monument—a wide, free nation.

51
Rev. Duncan Anderson, Lays of Canada, and Other Poems (Montreal, 1890), pp. 24-32.
Words are chosen with economy and judgment, and there is evidence that the sound is meant to be "an echo of the sense". The clashing swords are crimsoned, but, by implication, so are the leaves that fall in autumn upon the graves of the dead - "While weeping earth strewed leaves her slaughtered children o'er." The melancholic mood is created not only by the pathetic fallacy of the "weeping earth" but more especially by the long vowels—e's and o's, the connotations of "mourned" and "wailed" and by the Alexandrine. The alliteration in "widows wailed.../While weeping earth strewed leaves..." adds emphasis, and seems to have come in response to the poet's mood as a natural result of striving after accurate expression.

The transition to the present is rather skilfully executed not so much by the statement of the "long years" as by the reference to the levelling of the grave mounds. Then the poem builds up to the climactic statement - the monuments of stone have crumbled but the monument of a prosperous united nation will not. The final stanza resolves the problem - a nation, if it is to expand and endure, must be united under "one banner's folds" and under one government. "One arm defends our rights and guards our liberties."

The comparative restraint of such a poem is probably a more accurate expression of the general concern for Canadian unity than
is the more boisterous effusion of much of the verse of this time.

This desire for a nation united in heart as well as in government is reiterated in various poems. William Douw Lighthall has included one in his selection of Canadian Poems and Lays:

Shall we not have one race, shaping and welding the nation?
Is not our country too broad for the schisms which shake petty lands?
Yea, we shall join in our might, and keep sacred our firm Federation,
Shoulder to shoulder arrayed, hearts open to hearts, hands to hands.

There are a number of "Anthems" and "Songs" in a collection entitled Sawney's Letters and Cariboo Rhymes. "The New Dominion" serves as an example:

O! land of the maple and beaver, we love
To hear thy praises afar;
Federation thy strength, Dominion thy name,
Thou bright and new shining star;
May wisdom, strength and power combine,
To make thee a giant so grand,
While from ocean to ocean thy empire extends,
Hail, Dominion, our own fatherland!

Chorus

Hail, New Dominion, thou glorious and free!
Soon may thy empire span from sea to sea!
Dear Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Red River
And Columbis allied with you,
With Canada joined, say who can e'er sever
A country and flag firm and true;
Thy sister Columbia, whose resources are many,
Would improve 'neath thy fostering hand,
Then, say come with us, thou land of the West,
We'll make one great fatherland.

The cajoling attitude towards "Columbia" contrasts with that of some of the political malcontents who would just as soon have excluded "Columbia" from Confederation as support the plan for the requested railroad.

A selection of Confederation poems would not be complete without at least one of those dedicated to D'Arcy McGee. The part he played in Confederation as one of its "Fathers" is too well-known to need explanation.

In Memoriam: D'Arcy McGee

Well mayst thou mourn, fair Canada!
Well mays' st thy hot tears fall,
As on his bier, with downcast eyes,
Thou spread' st the funeral pall;
For in thy dear adopted son, there dwelt
A mighty power
To grapple with thy enemies in danger's trying hour.

Yes! loved McGee! though never more
The music of thy voice
Shall thrill us with its melody and
Bid our hearts rejoice;
Yet, under this Dominion, long thy name shall be a spell

To children's children through the land
thy grand heart loved so well. 54

What greater tribute could be paid Confederation? Not only was it
the theme of song and verse, but it could claim the loyalty and the
life of a man like D'Arcy McGee.

CHAPTER V - EVALUATION

The story of Confederation is incontestably dramatic and peculiarly Canadian. It is the story of how a handful of colonists gradually worked out a solution to the problem of freedom and control. But, just what relation is there between this historical event and the poetic output of Canada during the period 1855-1880? Desmond Pacey says: "The relation between a society and its literature are hypothetical and obscure, and no simple arrangement of cause and effect can be discerned or proven. Perhaps the nearest we can come to a formulation of the relationship is to declare that a state of high excitement within the community, together with some powerful stimulus from outside, is likely to result in the creation of a vivid and vigorous body of writing. These conditions ... were present in Canada as a whole during the first years of her existence as a federated nation." 55

Excluding such better-known post-Confederation poets as Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, or Isabella Valency Crawford, as well as the French-Canadian poets, whose works fall outside the scope of this thesis, what is there to be said for the many "little poets" whose verses found their way into the journals, newspapers, school texts and song books of Canada, and in some cases, into the journals of other lands. Did they create a "vivid and vigorous body of writing" or were there extenuating circumstances which imposed constraint or

55 Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto, 1961), p. 35.
prevented the full flowering of genius? In a discussion of "The Sixties Group" in *Poetry in Canada*, R. E. Rashley says:

> It was the misfortune of the pioneer poets that their world never realized itself in a large unified physical form, nor, as the chance of history fell, in a social or philosophical form. The physical and commercial forces which created the settlements went on to destroy their importance. The colonies had not realized their possibilities as individual organizations before it became apparent that the colonial organizations were in themselves inadequate to the defence and development of the areas which they could control and, in 1867, a national concept was implemented. ... being a late arrival in the world, Canada is not required to work out its own modulations from one movement to another. When one mode of expression has served its purpose there are models for the new easily available.  

This is one view of the "pioneer poets" which would imply that they were victims of their colonial status. It also poses the question of the imitative or derivative qualities of their poetry. Before considering the validity of these arguments, however, it may be well to see what other opinions have been propounded.

In *Canada and Its Provinces* published in 1913, there is an estimate of Alexander McLachlan, certainly one of the most popular poets of his time:

> ... McLachlan's love of men and of nature won him many admirers, but, while his verse appeals to the heart, every poem he penned has serious flaws due to a lack of self-criticism. Had he devoted much of the time he gave to composition to studying the masters of English verse, he might have achieved something really fine in poetry, but his work as it stands is commonplace and defective and adds nothing to Canadian literature,

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even though, from the great heart of the poet and the mind eager to enjoy nature and to cause others to enjoy it with him, he will continue to find readers among those who care much for feeling and little for art. 57

Interestingly enough, the Reverend Hartley Dewart, in his "Introductory Essay" to Selections from Canadian Poets, written at the time McLachlan's poetry was being published, takes practically the opposite view. Writing about both Charles Sangster and Alexander McLachlan, Dewart says:

Among those who have most courageously appealed to the reading public, and most largely enriched the poetic literature of Canada, the first place is due to Charles Sangster. The richness and extent of his contributions, the originality and descriptive power he displays, the variety of Canadian themes on which he has written with force and elegance, his passionate sympathy with the beautiful in Nature, and the chivalrous and manly patriotism which finds an utterance in his poems, fully vindicate his claim to a higher place in the regard of his countrymen, than he has yet attained. Alexander McLachlan has also evinced that he possesses in a high degree the gift of song. In the opinion of many, he is the sweetest and most intensely human of all our Canadian bards.

In elaborate elegance and wealth of descriptive power, in the success with which he has treated Canadian themes, and in something of Miltonic stateliness and originality of style, Sangster has certainly no equal in this country. But in strong human sympathy, in subtle appreciation of character, in deep natural pathos, and in those gushes of noble and manly feeling which awaken the responsive echoes of every true heart, McLachlan is equally peerless. That they should be so little known to the reading public of Canada is a matter of sincere regret. Taking into consideration the subtle delicacy of thought and elevation of style which distinguishes much of his poetry, it is not difficult to understand why Sangster should be comparatively

57 Canada and Its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and Their Institutions By One Hundred Associates, ed. Adam Shortt, A.G.Doughty(Toronto, 1913), XII, p.571.
unappreciated by the great mass of readers; but that the sentiments of sympathy with humanity in all conditions, and the protests against every form of injustice and pretension, so simply and earnestly expressed in McLachlan's poetry, should secure so few admirers, is a fact that, in spite of all possible explanations, is by no means creditable to the taste or intelligence of Canada. 58

This is, obviously, unmitigated praise, without even a hint of the adverse criticism evident in the later assessment. Dewart goes on to say: "Enough, however, has already been achieved, to be an earnest of the better things for the future pledge ... it will not always be Winter with Canadian poetry. Should the soft Spring breath of kindly appreciation warm the chilly atmosphere, flowers of greater luxuriance and beauty would soon blossom forth, to beautify and enrich our literature. If these anticipations are not realized, it is not because there is anything in the country itself un congenial to poetry." 59

Nor can it be alleged that Canada lacked discriminating critics. All poetry was not necessarily labelled "good" just because it was Canadian. The author of Leisure Hours, A Selection of Short Poems came in for some scathing commentary in the July 16, 1870 edition of "Canadian Illustrated News": "The author of this little pamphlet

58 Edward Hartley Dewart, "Introductory Essay", Selections from Canadian Poets (Montreal, 1864), p. XVII.

59 Dewart, p. XVII
(38 pages) of weak and watery rhyme, tells us in his preface that the pieces' are the pencillings of a minor.' We are glad to learn this, and sincerely trust that when Mr. Lanigan reaches man's estate he will devote himself to more useful employment than the jingling of silly sentences together to be called Poems. 'When I was a child I spoke as a child, 'etc., but babyhood is intolerable when it outlives the 'teens'."

What, then, would be the most just appraisal of the poets of the last half of the nineteenth century. It would seem that the early twentieth century assessment is already implicitly contained in Dewart's lament - "so few admirers." but the fact remains that "it is not because there is anything in the country itself uncongenial to poetry". and confirms Rashley's statement that the Canadian poets of this era were "victims of their colonial status."

This leads to the question of "imitation and derivation", and presents another aspect from which to evaluate these lesser Canadian poets. A number of considerations in relation to this question may be proposed.

First, should their poems be placed alongside those of their American contemporaries - "weighed in the balance, and found wanting"? Or should they be considered in reference to the beginnings of a
country? What sort of patriotic poetry (and patriotic verse is seldom good verse) was being written in American colonial days?

One illustration may serve as an example. Nearly one hundred years before Confederation, when America was emerging into nationhood, Philip Freneau wrote "To the Memory of the Brave Americans":

At Eutaw Springs the valiant died;
The limbs with dust are covered o'er -
Weep on, ye springs, your tearful tide;
How many heroes are no more!

They saw their injured country's woe;
The flaming town, the wasted field;
Then rushed to meet the insulting foe;
They took the spear - but left the shield.

Led by thy conquering genius, Greene,
The Britons they compelled to fly;
None distant viewed the fatal plain,
None grieved, in such a cause to die -

But, like the Parthian, famed of old,
Who, flying, still their arrow threw,
These routed Britons, full as bold,
Retreated, and retreating slew.

Now rest in peace, our patriot band;
Though far from nature's limits thrown,
We trust they find a happier land,
A brighter sunshine of their own.

60

As a patriotic poem, this has no more, probably less to commend it for inclusion in an anthology than has "Dominion Day Idyll" by Anderson. Yet *The American Tradition in Literature* has this to say for Philip Freneau:

Judged in his own time by his political opponents as a "writer of wretched and insolent doggerel", an "incendiary journalist", Philip Freneau was nevertheless our second important poet. His double role as poet and political journalist in the transitional age of the Revolution is consistent with the contradictions of his poetry. Freneau was neo-classical by training and taste yet romantic in essential spirit. He was also at once a satirist and sentimentalist . . . a poet of Reason yet the celebrant of "lovely Fancy" . . . As a poet Freneau heralded American literary independence; his close observation of nature (before Bryant) distinguished his treatment of indigenous wild life and other native American subjects. . . . Freneau did not establish trends, but he represented qualities that were to be characteristic of the next half century. He has been called the "Father of American Poetry", and it is ultimately in a historical estimate that Freneau is important . . . he is worthy of study as a cross-section of an intensely significant period in our political and literary history rather than as an intrinsically wise political theorist or a profound creator of poetic beauty. 61

There is no attempt here to apologize for Philip Freneau. He has grown in stature from his own day when he was considered only a "writer of wretched and insolent doggerel." He is taken for what he is - a transitional poet - and as such he finds his place in American literature.

On the contrary, it is regrettable that there has been a tendency for Canadian literary critics to downgrade the very poets who performed a comparable service for Canadian literature. One of the chief objections is that their poetry shows the influence of the Romantic and Victorian poets - Wordsworth, Byron, Tennyson. To this objection, another early American poet, William Cullen Bryant, may serve as a refutation. He is considered the most revered spokesman of his age. Yet, many of his poems, particularly his early ones, reflect the influence first of the neo-classicists, then of the "graveyard school" and finally of the romanticists. This has in no way, however, diminished his stature or deprived him of a permanent place in the history of American literature.

It is encouraging to find later, and even recent Canadian critics and poets spurning the earlier inferiority approach, and affirming that Canadian poetry of the late nineteenth century and even that of the earlier Loyalist period needs no apologies.
Ray Palmer Baker has this to say: "Though the Loyalist poets never achieved artistic independence, several of them occasionally hit upon lines which are superior to those of all their contemporaries except Freneau. In satiric force and pathos they surpass the achievements of their antagonists. The most remarkable aspect of their poetry is a passionate love of their native land." 62 And speaking of Sangster, he says: "More sensitive and more richly endowed with spiritual insight, he occasionally reaches heights that the author of Evangeline and Hiawatha never achieves. Lacking education and opportunity for development, he inevitably falls beneath the New England poet in scholarship and taste. Nevertheless, in a small way, his place in Canada corresponds with that of Longfellow in the United States." 63

Again, such praise is not for lack of perspicacity. Regarding Sangster's volume The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay, Baker agrees with the Criterion which criticized it adversely. He says: "With rare good sense, however, the Criterion, standing apart from the majority of periodicals, remarked that if Sangster had burned three-quarters of the contents and printed the remainder, he would have had an excellent


63 Baker, p. 165.
A more recent critical assessment has been made in the "Introduction Note" to Canadian Poems edited by Louis Dudek and Irving Layton:

Enough poetry has been written in Canada by now to permit the cutting of more than one swath through it. Canadian poetry represents a recent and short branch of English poetry - the life of Charles Mair spans almost the whole period, from 1838-1927 - and in general our poetry parallels the movement of British literature from Victorianism to the modern period. The weakness of late nineteenth century poetry and the excesses of modern poetry are to be found in Canada as well as elsewhere. We do not need to apologize for Victorian moralism and sentimentality as a particular Canadian vice in the eighties and nineties, nor for the lyrical exhaustion which followed. . . . All these signs of the times exist in England and America as well as in Canada. . . . the reading and recognition of poets still follow national lines. . . . But the domestic cultivation of literature is still necessary. In the United States, American poets are mainly read; in England, British poets. If we are to have a literary life in Canada we must pay attention to our own literature. The world will of course steal our Shakespeare (if we had one), but it will ignore our Herricks and our Lovelaces.

For the most part, Canadians have ignored their Herricks and their Lovelaces, or in many cases have considered them only transplanted Britishers. Baker contends, on the contrary, that, "Despite the large contribution of Scotland . . . the elements which have determined the progress of Canadian Literature

Baker, p. 160.

have been distinctively American." 66 He claims further:

Although the literature of Canada until the Confederation was that of the United States, and the background consequently is the same, the political relations of the Dominion have obscured the issue. It is everywhere assumed as a matter of course that the foundations were laid by Englishmen. This assumption is untenable: they were laid by men whom generations in the New World had made American in habit and thought...Canada has never been a direct intellectual colony of England. Until the Confederation the literary forces potent in Massachusetts continued unimpaired in the North. The literature of the United States was the literature of Canada. 67

Ray Palmer Baker, it would seem, did not consider this as complimentary to Canadian Literature for he goes on to say, "Until 1867 it was American in its lack of color, its lack of imagination, and its lack of artistry. Since then it has been Canadian." 68

But it isn't so easy to dispose of all pre-Confederation and Confederation poetry. There may be some basis for Mr. Baker's assumptions in regard to Canadian prose but the poems of this era are Canadian in thought and sentiment. In spite of their short-comings, they cannot be ignored for they are the emotional

66 Baker, p. 183.


response and reaction of Canadians to their native land. They are sincere attempts to record the awe and admiration and loyalty felt for "this fair Canada." They show to what extent the beauty of the Canadian landscape and seascape are worthy of song. They are the first faint beatings of the national heart of Canadian poetry. In a Canadian Tradition in Literature it is to be hoped that the "unsung" poets of the Confederation will find a place.
APPENDIX I

My Own Canadian Home

E. G. Nelson Morley McLaughlin

Tho' oth-er skies may be as bright, And oth-er lands as

fair; Tho' charms of oth-er climes in-vite, My wand'ring foot-steps

there; Yet there is one the peer of all, Be-neath bright heaven's

dome; Of thee I sing, O hap-py land, My own Ca-na-dian home.

This is presumably an adaptation of the poem as written by G. W. Johnson, and was sung in Canadian schools at least into the 1920's.
APPENDIX II

The following poem by Andrew Spedon was too lengthy to be included in the chapter on specific Confederation poems, but since it exemplifies Canadian patriotism at its peak, it is here given in full.

Our New Dominion

Canadian Patriotic Song

All hail our New Dominion,
Which spreads from sea to sea!
All hail our glorious Union
Of hearts both brave and free,
On rivers, vales, and mountains,
On lakes and lovely isles,
On forests, fields and fountains,
The Queen of Nature smiles.

Chorus: Then shout the nation's chorus,
And hail the UNION-DAY
Three cheers for loyal Canada,
Hip, hip, hurra, hurra!

Where stood the settler's shanty,
The stately mansion stands,
And fields adorned with plenty,
Were hewn from forest lands.
We send an invitation,
And hail with helping hand,
Th' oppress'd of every nation,
To this, our happy land.
Chorus - Then shout, etc.

We fondly love to cherish
The name of fatherland,
Whose glories cannot perish,
Like footmarks on the sand;
Yet still in kindred union,
We proudly love to claim
Our British-born Dominion,
Besides, an honor'd name.
Chorus - Then shout, etc.

No tyrant rules our nation,
No slavery taints our soil;
But men of every station
Are free-born sons of toil;
The fruits of honest labor
Adorn our fertile land,
Each man's a brother-neighbor,
Who helps with willing hand.
Chorus - Then shout, etc.

We will maintain our station,
Yet strive to live in peace,
With every other nation,
In hopes that war may cease;
But in our country's danger
United we shall stand,
To crush the foreign stranger,
Who dares to touch our land.

Then shout the nation's chorus,
And hail the UNION-DAY
Three cheers for loyal Canada,
Hip hip, hurra, hurra!
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! 1

1 Andrew Spedon, The Canadian Minstrel (Montreal, 1870), pp. 8-9.
SELECTED CHECK LIST
of
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Anonymous

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Port hope, Ansley, 1855. (BVaU)

Heavysege, Charles. *Jephthah's Daughter (and Twenty Sonnets).*
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