

Early Canadiana in the Osborne Collection

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If early "Canadiana" for children were restricted to books written by residents born and bred in Canada, we should have a very limited number to claim, good, bad, or indifferent. Our boundaries are expanded to include any book about Canada by authors who may never have visited our shores, any book written by travellers passing through our country, any book by short-time residents, books by people Canadian-born even though they have relinquished their citizenship, books by people who have been adopted as Canadian citizens, books with Canadian imprints or identified with Canada by title. All these categories are represented in our special collections of children's books at the Boys and Girls House of the Toronto Public Library: the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books (1476-1910) made up of books published in England, the Lillian H. Smith Collection of children's books published in English since 1910, and the Canadiana Collection. Since you are probably already acquainted with such books as *Anne of Green Gables* and *Beautiful Joe*, I plan to tell you about books that are less well known, beginning with one published in 1604.

A Paraenesis to the Prince is a poem of counsel and admonition addressed to the ten-year-old Prince Henry Frederick, the eldest son of King James VI of Scotland, by his tutor Sir William Alexander, who was a statesman and a poet. It was written the year King James brought his family of children to England, when Prince Henry was ten years old. This Prince of Wales was a popular and intelligent young man. He died suddenly at the age of eighteen, in 1612, after a game of tennis. The cause of death was officially diagnosed as typhoid fever. It is interesting to speculate what course England's history might have taken if Henry, a friend and admirer of Sir Walter Raleigh, had lived to become the King of England. On the death of the Prince, William Alexander was appointed to the household of Prince Charles. Alexander assisted King James in the writing of the Psalms. Although it may not be generally recognized, some of the Psalms of David, as found in the King James Version of the Holy Bible, can be claimed as Canadiana because in 1621 Alexander was given jurisdiction over Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and the northern section of the United States which entitled him to use the 'mines and forests, erect cities, appoint fairs, hold courts, grant lands and coin money'. After the coronation of Charles I, Sir William was created Earl of Sterling with the added title, Viscount Canada. He and his son sponsored a programme of colonization, but Alexander died insolvent.

According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* "his noble poverty is the best vindication of his integrity".

A full century after *A Paraenesis to the Prince* was published, a book by "T.H." appeared: *A Short Way to Know the World: or, The Rudiments of Geography*. A chapter is devoted to Canada.

Q. How is Canada situated?

A. It is situated between the 266th and 330th Deg. of Longitude, and between the 40th and 63d Deg. of North-Latitude.

Q. How is it bounded?

A. It is bounded on the North with the North Sea, and on the South with Florida, on the East with the North-Sea, and on the West with New Mexico and the Tartarian Ocean.

Q. What kind of Country is it?

A. It is a Country which consists of great Variety, but in general it is a good Country, and agreeable to our Northern Constitutions. Mountainous, marshy, and rocky in many Parts, but has plenty of good Pasture and Corn-Land, well water'd with good Rivers in others, which produces good Store of Grain and Fruits, and some Mines of Silver, and the Woods, with which it also abounds, are likewise well stock'd with all kinds of Venison.

Q. How is Canada divided?

A. It is divided into Eleven Parts, Three in the North, and Eight in the South.

Q. Which are these Parts?

A. They are the Provinces of Canada, New-Britany, New-France in the North and the Province of New-Scotland, New-England, New-York New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina In the South. This, as you can see, was when we were all one happy family and before our neighbours chose to leave us.

In 1748 the publisher, John Newbery, devoted twelve pages to Canada in *Geography made familiar and easy to Young Gentlemen and Ladies, being the sixth volume of the Circle of the Sciences, &c. Published by the King's Authority*. The book has a question and answer format which bears a close resemblance to those asked and answered by T.H. John Newbery also devoted most of one volume to the New World in the twenty-volume edition of *The World displayed, or A Curious Collection of Voyages and Travels, Selected from The Writers of all Nations. In which the Conjectures and Interpolations of Several vain Editors and Translators are expunged*. This was published for J. Newbery at the Bible and Sun in St. Paul's Church-Yard in 1760. You can read here of Sir William Alexander (or Viscount Canada) and of his attempts to divert the emigration of Scots from Poland, Sweden and Russia to America.

The Elements of Geography, Short and Plain. Designed as an Easy Introduction to the System of Geography in Verse, by Robert Davidson, Esq. Designed for the Use of Schools, With or Without Seven Copper Plates was published in 1787. It includes Davidson's *Geography epitomised; or, A Tour round the World Attempted in Verse [for the sake of the memory]* which was first published in Philadelphia in 1784. What makes

this eligible for the field of Canadiana is the dedicatory letter addressed "To British Youth and the Young People at Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia". It begins: "My dear young friends", and includes: "It will give me great Pleasure to be a Page or Footman always to introduce that amiable and condescending Genius, Robert Davidson, Esq. into your Company. He is, I am informed, a Tutor in one of the American Seminaries of Learning [the University of Pennsylvania]. He may truly be stiled an excellent Teacher of Geography. We the People of England, are greatly obliged to him for his Care and Labour to improve us: and I trust we have Humility and good Sense enough to learn from an American. True Genius is confined to no one Climate or Quarter of the Globe. It knows no Party in Politics, it scorns all the Quarrels of Kingdoms and States, as utterly unworthy of a Moment's Regard."

Our earliest book with a Canadian imprint is *Selected Fables of Aesop, and other fabulists*, by Robert Dodsley. It was published in Montreal in 1810. "Printed and Sold by J. Brown". The Advertisement on the verso of the title-page gives evidence of why few books were produced in Canada. It reads:

CASH Given for clean Linen and Cotton RAGS, and OLD ROPES, and any thing made of hemp, flax or cotton, by James Brown, at the St. Andrew's Paper-Mill or at his Book-store, Montreal. It is an old proverb, "That a penny saved is as good as a penny earned"—Many are crying out, "What an extravagant price do Stationers and Booksellers ask for paper and books." If you wish to have paper and books cheap, SAVE ALL YOUR RAGS. There is no family so poor, in this country, that has not some RAGS TO SPARE, or which they are not obliged to spare every year; and they may as well lay them aside for Paper-makers as to throw them into the street. Perhaps there is no family, poor or rich, that could not, in the course of a year, save rags sufficient to furnish their children with writing paper and school books.

The search for the North-West Passage that took place in the years following the Napoleonic Wars captured public interest, and many books were soon made available for the reading pleasure and edification of children. In 1818, the year Sir John Ross set sail for the unknown waters of Baffin Bay with Lieutenant W. E. Parry as second in command, Maria Hack wrote *Winter evenings, or Tales of Travellers* in four volumes. Volume III is devoted to the Arctic. She wrote it in the popular dialogue form as conversations between a well-informed mother and her two inquisitive children, with chapters on "Adventures in the Arctic Ocean", "A Visit to the Esquimaux", and "A Winter on Charlton Island" taken from the published records of three explorers.

William Edward Parry published the official journal of his voyage in the *Hecla* and the *Griper* in 1821. An extract was reprinted from it in the first issue of *The Select Magazine for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons* published by F. Houlston and Son in January, 1822. (F. Houlston was Mrs. Frances Houlston who carried on her husband's publishing business for about thirty years after his death.) In 1824, Mary Anne Hedge wrote *The Young Orphan Sailor-Boy; or Young Arctic Voyager* which was published by the Quaker firm of Harvey and Darton. A twelve-year-old boy, Charles, is shown Parry's journal. He is

tremendously excited, and hopes he can be a sailor and perhaps accompany Parry on his third Arctic voyage. Charles' father, seeing the boy's excitement produces a journal kept by the boy's grandfather and titled "The Narrative of the Orphan Sailor-Boy"; it makes up most of the book.

John Harris, the successor of the publisher Elizabeth Newbery, brought out *Northern Regions; or, A Relation of Uncle Richard's Voyages For the Discovery of a North-West Passage, and an Account of the Overland Journies of Other Enterprizing Travellers* in 1825. Descriptions of the activities and entertainments of the crew during a long Arctic winter, as recorded by Parry in his published journal, are related to the two boys by their uncle. In Part II when Uncle Richard is off on Parry's second expedition, their father tells them about Franklin's long trek of 5500 miles from Fort York to Great Slave Lake, returning to York Factory over the Barrens. The customs of the Indians are described in detail. The Osborne Collection is fortunate in holding the original water-colours from which the twenty-four copperplates in the book were engraved. These form part of the Beach Collection of about 350 original illustrations for books published by John Harris from 1819 to 1826. A facsimile of this book was published in 1970 by the Johnson Reprint Corporation of New York, in cooperation with the Toronto Public Library, in their series, "Early Children's Books".

The year 1825 also saw two editions published of *A Peep at the Esquimaux; or, Scenes on the Ice* with forty coloured plates, from original drawings, written "by a Lady". She was inspired by the private journal of Captain Lyon published in January, 1825. The hand-coloured illustrations have been redrawn from his illustrations for Parry's journal

The well-known writer of boy's books, Robert Michael Ballantyne, was a later traveller in the Arctic. He served with the Hudson's Bay Company for six years, from 1841 to 1847. After his return to Scotland he began to write adventure stories, several of which have Canadian settings. Among the best known are *Snowflakes and Sunbeams; or, The Young Fur Traders, A Tale of the Far North*, published in 1856, *The Dog Crusoe and His Master, A Story of Adventure in the Western Prairies* (1861), and *Ungava: a Tale of Esquimaux-Land* (1858), with illustrations by the author.

Several writers journeyed to other parts of Canada. Frederick Marryat travelled from Lake Superior to Montreal in 1837 and returned to take part in the Rebellion of Lower Canada the following year. His experiences provided material for *The Settlers in Canada. Written For Young People*, published in two volumes in 1844. It would seem that Samuel Clark, a partner in the Darton firm, also visited Canada during 1837 and 1838. *Tales about Canada: by Peter Parley*, edited by the Rev. T. Wilson, a pseudonym of Samuel Clark, was published in 1839. Samuel G. Goodrich, the American writer who was the original "Peter Parley", lists this book as one of the most notorious of "English counterfeits and impositions". The book sounds authentic. He covered much of Marryat's route, but we could find no record that he accompanied him. It may be that he relied on information which Marryat provided.

Children's early Canadiana is indebted, also, to women who accompanied their husbands on tours of military duty in Canada. Among

these were Mrs. Diana Bayley, the wife of Captain Henry Addington Bayley who was stationed in lower Canada in 1824. "Charlotte Elizabeth", who wrote anonymously under her Christian names, spent two years in Nova Scotia with her husband, Captain Phelan of Kilkenny, Ireland. Mrs. Juliana Horatia Ewing spent two happy years in 1866 and 1867 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where her husband Major Alexander Ewing was stationed. When in Canada she wrote the third and fourth parts of *Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances*. I am especially pleased to claim this book as early Canadiana.

Catharine Parr Strickland and her sister, Susanna, were both successful writers of children's books in England before they emigrated to Upper Canada in 1832, Catharine as the wife of Lieutenant Thomas Traill, Susanna as the wife of Lieutenant J.W.D. Moodie. They both endured the hardships and adventures of pioneer life and remained in Canada for the remainder of their years while continuing their literary careers. Before coming to Canada, Mrs. Traill had written *The Young Emigrants; or, Pictures of Canada. Calculated to amuse and instruct the minds of youth* (1826), which was compiled from letters received from friends who had settled "two miles from the shore of Lake Ontario, distant from York [Toronto] about thirty-six miles". A facsimile of this book is now available in the Johnson Reprint series, published in 1969. Mrs. Traill, an authority on wild flowers, had a most productive literary life. Her last book, *Cot and Cradle Stories* (1895), was published when she was 93 years old. Her first story was accepted when she was fifteen. During those seventy-eight years of writing she received no rejection slip. The Osborne Collection received from her great grand-daughter, Mrs. Eric Duke Scott, a manuscript list made by Mrs. Traill in her old age of all her published children's books. Perhaps her best known book written before her marriage was *Little Downy, the History of a Field Mouse* (1822) published when she was twenty. Her first Canadian children's book was *The Canadian Crusoes; a Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* (1852). *Lady Mary and Her Nurse; A Peep into the Canadian Forest* (1856) was first published serially in the *Maple Leaf: a Juvenile Monthly Magazine*, beginning in 1853.

Early authors who were born in Canada or who lived most of their lives here will be represented today by Margaret Murray Robertson and the Reverend Egerton Ryerson Young. Miss Robertson was born in Aberdeen in 1823 and emigrated to Canada at the age of nine. Her father was the minister of the Congregational church in Sherbrooke, Quebec. She taught at a Ladies Seminary in Sherbrooke and told stories during the sewing hours for the pleasure of her pupils. *Christie Redfern's Troubles* (1866) and *Shenac's Work at Home* (1868) are both set in the Scottish settlement of Glengarry. They were published thirty years before Ralph Connor wrote his successful books about this area, and one wonders what debt he might have owed his predecessor. *The Bairns: or Janet's love and service, a story from Canada* was first published in 1870. The Osborne Collection has the eighth edition of 1878 "completing the eleventh thousand". A biographical account of this popular but forgotten author was published in *Sunday at Home* in 1896.

The Reverend Egerton Ryerson Young was born in Upper Canada

in 1840. He was ordained in 1867 and went the following year as a Methodist missionary to Norway House in Manitoba. After he retired in 1888 he began to write books about his adventures and experiences. His books for boys include *Three Boys in the Wild North Land* (1896) and *The Children of the Forest* (1904).

Although Canadians did not have a flourishing publishing trade at this time, we must have been a book-buying public. It is otherwise difficult to explain why publishers in England would issue special editions for Canada. The periodical *Young England* was also published as *Young Canada*. The publisher, Frederick Warne, who published *Young England's Nursery Rhymes* in 1887, also published, simultaneously, *Young Canada's Nursery Rhymes*. It is slightly abridged for such rhymes as "Old King Cole" and "Queen Anne, Queen Anne" are omitted. Mr. Warne may have had the mistaken notion that we had republican tendencies! The only textual change is that Spring comes to England in February and to Canada in May.

The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books has made its own contribution to Canadian children's books. We resurrected a woman who had passed out of living memory, Miss Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon. The Canadian Association of Children's Librarians have elected her to an equal footing with Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway by naming the award given annually to the illustrator of the best Canadian children's book "the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Medal". She became known to us in 1959 when the late Gerald Wilkes gave us the manuscript of *An Illustrated Comic Alphabet* which Miss Howard-Gibbon had made in 1859 for her young pupils attending the school she conducted in Sarnia, Ontario. Through a series of coincidences we discovered that she was the grand-daughter of the Duke of Norfolk. Her unusual and melodramatic story is published in the end-piece of the facsimile edition published for the first time in 1966 by the Oxford University Press (Toronto). This is the only book where a biographical account of this Canadian woman artist may be found. We have claimed, without dispute, this manuscript, which illustrates the old rhyme "A was an Archer, and shot at a frog", as the first Canadian picture book. The Canadian Collection also holds what may be the first published Canadian picture book, an author's presentation copy of *Now the Day is Over*, Sabine Baring-Gould's lovely evening hymn, illustrated by Mrs. Charlotte Schreiber, R.C.A., and published by Hart & Rawlinson in Toronto in 1891. We are indebted to Mr. Howard Schreiber for much of our information about these women. We have learned from a family tradition that Miss Howard-Gibbon was the person who first discovered the artistic talents of Ernest Thompson Seton when she gave volunteer art lessons in the Toronto schools in 1873 when Seton was thirteen years old. Mrs. Schreiber became his patron in his adult years.

The first recipient of the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Medal was Elizabeth Cleaver. It was given for her illustrations for *The Wind Has Wings* (1971). This is of special interest to us at Boys and Girls House because it was at a gathering here, to celebrate the publication of the facsimile of our manuscript of Eleanor Mure's *Story of the Three Bears*, that she met, for the first time, William Toye, the Editorial

Director of the Oxford University Press. By the end of that afternoon she had a commission to illustrate this anthology which was being prepared by Mary Alice Downie and Barbara Robertson.

And now I invite you to leave the Little Theatre of Boys and Girls House and go to the front of this building that still bears the name of the Victorian house that had to be demolished in 1963. There you will find the Osborne Room and a display of original art. You can see the manuscript of Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon's Alphabet, original water-colour collages for *The Wind Has Wings* by Elizabeth Cleaver, and the original illustrations for *The White Archer* by James Houston who gave them to the Lillian H. Smith Collection in grateful acknowledgement of his debt to the children's library of the High Park Branch. You may also see the manuscript dummy of *Harry the Dirty Dog*, for Harry is a Canadian dog. His illustrator, Margaret Bloy Graham, was born and educated in Toronto. Elizabeth Cleaver, Mary Alice Downie, Margaret Bloy Graham, and James Houston are all members of our 'Friends of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections', organised in 1966. It now has a world-wide membership of about four hundred and fifty people interested in children's literature. Brochures are available from Boys and Girls House, 40 St. George Street, Toronto, Canada.