NINETEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY: TO THE LAND BEHIND

My subtitle "to the land behind" is from an Eskimo dance song, certainly of the nineteenth century, if not before. The song itself is a record of a journey between the Coppermine and the Tree Rivers in the Canadian Arctic. One of the refrains in the song is arrestingly simple and relevant, I suggest. It is this:

wishing to begin to walk
wishing to begin to walk
to the land behind I proceeded to walk

So I would begin with a song from the North out of the oral tradition of the Eskimo. It is a dance song, a journey, one more happy than sad.

There were other sub-titles considered for this paper: the present condition; the future experience; and, after Shakespeare, let us hear the chimes at midnight. But something of these later. Obviously with such a subject as nineteenth-century Canadian bibliography the problem has been to select at the risk of conscious and unconscious omission. Out of the selection and the omissions will come our discussion.

A song about a journey in the North involves a landscape, snow, footsteps in that snow, where in the Arctic the snow is windblown and hard, sometimes soft and treacherous. It is tempting to develop this metaphor in terms of bibliography and literary studies – the high road of the literary scholar and the low road of the steadily plodding bibliographer (already I echo Professor Fredson Bowers). Yes, to the nineteenth century and Canadian bibliography it is a journey on high roads, low roads, and on all levels.

Then, of course, we must remember, before we leave the notion of a journey, that the Eskimo knows, recognizes and reads the signs of wind, sun and rain on his page of place. As bibliographers, in order to find the land behind, there is, I suggest, an immense task of knowing, recognizing and reading the signs, of recording the nineteenth century, of recording what is waiting there on microfilm (rain), in print (sun and snow), not only to discover the pieces but to put them together as landscape, as the land behind.

In his conclusion to *A Literary History of Canada* edited by Carl F. Klinck, Northrop Frye made the following observation about the one hundred years we would venture to look at to-day:

"all the evidence points to a highly articulate and argumentative society in nineteenth-century Canada."

We all are aware of this but it needs to be said, in whatever context. Anyone familiar with our check lists of printed books and newspapers would agree with Professor Frye's comment.

It is important for us to consider the many ways that bibliographical investigation is taking place on all fronts. Let us select several recent titles of articles from the three leading bibliographical journals in English as examples:

in *The Library* (June 1971)

"Book-Jackets, Blurbs and Bibliographers"

(certainly a nineteenth-century topic)
 in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*
 (volume 65, First quarter, 1971)
 “The First Edition of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*;
 A Census”
 and in the same issue;
 “Compositors C and D of the Shakespeare First Folio”; and in *Studies in Bibliography* (University of Virginia;
 volume 24, 1971)
 “Woozles in Brontëland: A Cautionary Tale”
 and in the same number:
 “Mechanized Textual Collation and Recent Designs.”

Such titles of current bibliographical study suggest ways we must adopt.

As far as Canadian bibliographical studies are concerned it is a waste of time to attempt to defend what has or has not been done in the past or to justify what must be done in the future. The staggering dimensions of the pile of facts are before us — of these we are aware. The condition and development of bibliographical studies (and except for several notable exceptions, it has been a development of the enumerative) were outlined, somewhat over-optimistically I believe, by W. Kaye Lamb in his paper “Seventy-Five Years of Canadian Bibliography” in the *Transactions* of The Royal Society of Canada.¹ We know of the valuable cataloguing efforts of Georges Faribault whose works appeared in 1837 and 1845; Henry James Morgan’s *Bibliotheca Canadensis, or A Manual of Canadian Literature* (1867) is a nineteenth-century bibliographical landmark and his biographical dictionaries of 1898 and 1912 are well known; Willet Ricketson Haight published the first part of his *Canadian Catalogue of Books* in 1896, and there were others — Dionne, Gagnon — to provide a sketch of some of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canadian bibliographers. Having recently finished reading the proofs of the revised edition of the *Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies*, I cannot help but feel that we must begin to walk bibliographically in all directions. The field is wide and far to roam in.

There is a striking parallel that suggests itself here. Marie Tremaine’s superb *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* has left us knowing a great deal more about eighteenth-century Canadian bibliography than about nineteenth. This is surely a similar situation to that which has developed in Europe, where I suggest more is known about the imprints of the years 1455-1500 than about those which followed, say from 1500 to 1550 and beyond.

What seems important to-day is to acknowledge work done in the past and to look at what may well be our present and future experience — not, I hope, to be identified or considered part of something diagnosed as “future shock.”

As stated earlier the process of selection in talking about nineteenth-century Canadian bibliography has been difficult. My intention is to offer one man’s opinion of the kind of studies needed — enumerative, historical, descriptive, and to a lesser extent analytical and textual bibliography (I happen to feel that it is

¹Royal Society of Canada. *Transactions*, Third Series, vol. 51 (June 1957).

important to have full bibliographical evidence about editions of, say, Haliburton, before one would attempt a proper edition of even his best-known work, *The Clockmaker*), all this with the firm intention of sounding an alarm — of describing the kind of studies which need to be done before, well, before it is too late. What I have to say will be largely personal; this is unavoidable, I think, when we consider what bibliography is, at many stages: a largely personal pursuit. It will have to do mainly with the details, the facts, the parts required to block in the landscape.

A well known translator, entomologist, and novelist, Vladimir Nabokov — note that he is both scientist and artist — has this to say about detail:

In art as in science there is no delight without the detail . . . unless the details are understood and remembered all “general ideas” (so easily acquired, so profitably resold) must necessarily remain but worn passports allowing their bearers short cuts from one area of ignorance to another.²

Permit me to list first what we do not have, as far as basic general works in the whole field of bibliography in Canada are concerned:

- 1) we lack a bibliography of Canadian printing and publishing;
- 2) we lack a chronology of Canadian printing and publishing development;
- 3) we lack a substantial history of Canadian printing and publishing;
- 4) we lack a history of Canadian bibliography itself; perhaps it is too soon to expect this kind of undertaking although such a work suggested itself after a reading of W. Kaye Lamb’s paper mentioned earlier.

This almost painful list could be continued without difficulty.

I do not wish to explore reasons for these major deficiencies; these are simply the facts as they are. And yet it is not difficult to understand why. Nineteenth-century bibliographical Canada is uncharted, uncovered, almost unknown. It is not surprising that none of these works exist.

Let us look at the extent of work required. If nothing else arises from this colloquium — if we at least arrive, mutually, at a clearer notion of what needs to be done — then there is hope for major work in the future, whether we go together or apart. Have we a useful list of bibliographical work in progress? The answer is NO. Ways of working together, on what cries out to be done, may be considered during informal discussions at this colloquium.

The tendency to confine ourselves to enumerative bibliography in the past has been healthy and wise; it has also been less onerous and it has been narrow in scope. We shall hear from Dr. Lunn about the National Library’s check list of nineteenth-century imprints from 1867 to 1900. We are all aware of the ambitious and energetic pursuit and recording of imprints up to 1867 by that indefatigable collector Lawrence Lande. What would we do without such great collectors? We have had others but certainly not enough.

Yes, we have recorded imprints in history, but have we looked at imprints, particularly the wide variety of nineteenth-century titles, in other enumerative ways? What compilations and check lists are there of imprints by publisher, by printer, by engraver, by lithographer (who can look at nineteenth-century

²*Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, vol. 23, no. 32 (August 10, 1964) pp. 427-28.

printing in England, America and Canada without considering the spectacular developments in lithography, for instance?) Few, if any, enumerative approaches to nineteenth-century book study have been made. But as was pointed out, we were "a highly articulate and argumentative society in nineteenth-century Canada". As listed in the first edition of Reginald Watters's splendid *A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1950*, in the poetry section alone some 485 poets published approximately 740 volumes of poetry. Poetry is articulation — what do we really know, as bibliographers, of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry publications in English? Happily, Professor Watters's *Check List*, in its second edition, is now in the press and we shall know more.

I am not suggesting that enumerative bibliography is second-class or overdone, nor is it without its very real excitement. Having dealt somewhat generally with it I would tell you of a few high moments experienced in the compilation of a check list now under way of the titles published by John Ross Robertson, founder of *The Evening Telegram*. These are titles published in paperback and many appeared in serial form as well as in the columns of his daily newspaper. How else do we discover what many Torontonians were reading almost one hundred years ago? Such titles make up the "Canadian Common Reader," the "Canadian Working Man's Fiction," if you will.

In copies of *The Evening Telegram* examined from November 1877 to December 1881, a short period, a large number of novels appeared, often two or three running concurrently in serial form. Robertson began his series of paperback novels under the title "Robertson's Popular Library; The Cheapest and Best Reading Anywhere," and other series were established depending upon the price of the book. Prices ranged from ten cents to forty cents. Rarely was a book priced as high as fifty cents. In the 1870s and 1880s Robertson pirated and otherwise acquired Canadian and American writers. Such titles as *My Wayward Pardner*, *A Fair Barbarian*, *The Worst Boy in Town*, *Vladimir the Nihilist*, or *The Czar's Spy*, *Love Works Wonders*, *A Woman's Temptation*, *That Husband of Mine* were common and remind one of the Beadle and Adams publications. Other titles, which appeared at the same time were: *A Tramp Abroad*, *Mark Twain's Sketches*, *Tom Sawyer*, *The Innocents Abroad*. Gordon Roper's admirable article "Mark Twain and His Canadian Publishers: A Second Look"³ covers the Twain publications. However it is still possible to find another edition of *Tom Sawyer* not listed in Blanck or Roper. Robertson's 1879 edition of *Tom Sawyer* seems to have appeared in April of that year. On Friday, April 4, 1879, the following notice appeared in *The Evening Telegram*:

READY TO-DAY — ROBERTSON'S EDITION

TOM SAWYER,

By Mark Twain

20 CENTS

For sale by all dealers

³ Bibliographical Society of Canada, *Papers*, vol. 5 (1966) pp. 30-89.

The same advertisement appeared on April 5 and 7. Also on April 7 another edition by a Toronto publisher was given space in *The Telegram*:

THE ROSE LIBRARY — No. 1
The Adventures of
TOM SAWYER,
By Mark Twain
ILLUSTRATED
PRICE 20 CENTS

Large type, good paper, clean press work, and fine illustrations is a marked feature of this new Popular Library.

For sale by booksellers and newsdealers, or
Sent post paid on receipt of price by

ROSE-BELFORD PUB. CO'Y.
TORONTO

This particular edition is listed in Roper but not in Blanck.

The Robertson edition (1879) continued to be advertised throughout April and as late as August of the same year. Another Twain publication, *Mark Twain's Sketches*, was published in book form in May 1879 by Robertson at 25 cents a copy. The book appeared in instalments in *The Evening Telegram*, beginning in April. Robertson's advertisement says in part:

This is the ONLY COMPLETE
Edition, and Contains
SEVENTY-TWO SKETCHES.

A 15 cent edition just published
contains only
TWENTY-TWO SKETCHES.
It is therefore incomplete.

Do not be imposed upon, but
ask for, and see that you get,
ROBERTSON'S EDITION

The full-column advertisement lists the contents of the Robertson edition (all 72 sketches) and then goes on to list the contents of the incomplete Belford, Toronto, "15 cent edition".

I have not seen the Robertson (1879) edition of *Tom Sawyer*, and am therefore aware of the treacherous ice upon which I stand; however, its steady appearance in the advertisements of Robertson's Popular Library, provides sufficient reason to look further. Here, then, is a tentative offering to perhaps the new edition of the "Check List of Canadian Editions of Mark Twain's Work"

which accompanies Professor Roper's sound and pioneering work in nineteenth-century Canadian-American publishing history.

The close link between Canadian, American and English book publishing is a developing field of study. If one reads *The Globe* during the years 1891-1893 one finds that Twain's *The American Claimant* (copyright by the author) appeared in seven instalments; that Kipling contributed several articles and essays which are unrecorded in any bibliography; that R.L. Stevenson's *The Beach of Falesa* appeared in six instalments in 1892 as did *David Balfour* in seventeen parts in 1892-1893; and that the only Canadian appearance of the Canadian writer Sara Jeannette Duncan's novel *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* was in fourteen parts in the columns of *The Globe*, between January 14, 1893 and April 15, 1893, inclusive, the same year the work appeared in book form in the United States and England.

The field is open for a far wider approach to enumerative bibliography in the field of nineteenth-century Canadian printed materials.

If we turn to the historical face of bibliography in the nineteenth century in Canada the index of the features of its countenance is a condensed one. The face is almost blank. Few are the studies of publishers, printers, or the printing, publishing, and bookselling industry. What do we know of the type, the paper, the presses, the people — where did they come from and when, and where did they go?

Even a cursory look at the wide variety of publishers' imprints from Toronto, their many and changing working relationships and their local and foreign partnerships, indicates that a history of publishers in this country and of their business connections with English and particularly American publishers is needed if we are to know more about our economic, cultural and social history. The directories of Toronto and other centres have not been systematically studied to trace the ups and downs of the printing and publishing trade in the nineteenth century. The number of printers, engravers, artists and others associated with the production of reading matter is an indicator of the importance of the trades at any one time. No study has been made of watermarks to be found in papers used in all types of printing up to, say, 1850. The importation of paper directly from Europe, from continental Europe via England, or via the United States, has its own story to tell.

Where was paper made and where are the records, not only of the paper mills, but of the type foundries, the manufacturers of presses and of their equipment? And of the printers themselves, their customs and their unions? Who will make a thorough search of *The Inland Printer* for reports from Toronto and Montreal, the major publishing centres? What archives are there in such places as Chicago, Boston, New York, Burlington, Vermont, and other centres where printers met at conferences, where publishers conferred, where our writers went to publish? This is not to speak of the business papers of publishers, printers and others, some of which must be stored in banks and other repositories in Toronto.

The Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories records for us the papers of eighteenth and nineteenth-century publishers. Should not these be the object of advanced research and editing with the intention of publishing them?

One is tempted to use the descriptive phrase “unexplored fields”, but these are what I am tracing, if only superficially, and they await the bibliographer.

Perhaps the most prominent name in this context is that of William Lyon Mackenzie. The story of Mackenzie as printer is still largely folklore. Here we have an editor, compositor, legislator, traveller, rebel, one of the most colourful (red wig and all) characters, whose last pathetic notebook of debts and credits, dated 1861, the year of his death, reveals something of the man Mackenzie, who was once a printer and always a printer. How is it that we know virtually nothing of this side of Mackenzie? Where is the study of Joseph Howe and his printing and publishing life?

Descriptive bibliographies of nineteenth-century Canadian writers: do we have anything that remotely resembles the kind of studies made of American and English authors? There is William F.E. Morley’s revised bibliography of Major John Richardson, to be published soon in monograph by the Bibliographical Society of Canada. If there are others, then they languish unpublished somewhere. I expect it strikes you as strange, as it does me, that there is no definitive bibliography of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, no collection of his letters, no definitive edition of his works. Yet Haliburton is called the “father of American humour”. How many editions are there of *The Clockmaker*? Sixty? More likely seventy. To have *The Clockmaker* treated as Hawthorne’s, as Stephen Crane’s works are being described and edited, would be a significant contribution to Canadian, American and English nineteenth-century bibliographical studies. And there are other authors whose work requires detailed attention in the descriptive bibliographical way: the indexes of the *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* or the *Check List of Canadian Literature* compiled by Professor Watters are rich in suggestions: Robert Barr, James De Mille, Sara Jeannette Duncan, May Agnes Fleming, Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, Charles G.D. Roberts and many others.

As I mentioned at the beginning I do not intend, nor do I think it necessary, to go over past omissions; nor to complain about the lack of sympathy and understanding for bibliographical studies in this country. The library schools, departments of English, libraries and foundations have neglected such research for a variety of reasons. We must wake them up and encourage those in whose eyes the fires are waiting to be fanned. That subvention is lacking, that interest is lacking, that knowledge is lacking — these are obvious to us all. But these obstacles I suggest can be overcome. The journey is there, as I said earlier.

I have not been asked to prepare a plan of action to promote bibliographical study. But it is obvious to those attending this colloquium that much thought must be given, and strong action taken, to acquaint ourselves first, then students, English departments, libraries, and library schools, and above all, such institutions as the Canada Council, with the meaning and the implications of that all-too-embracing word, bibliography. We are in the beginning stages of “wishing to begin to walk” because it has been our experience in organizing this colloquium that the word “bibliography” is not only not understood by the Canada Council, for example, but it is at the very bottom of the hell box. It has one face and one face only, that of the check list, and “anyone can glue one of

those together"! Obviously the Council has been stung and has withdrawn itself from lending support to "bibliographers".

In brief it would seem necessary for this Society to act as follows:

- 1) to approach the Canada Council regarding its present negative policy regarding bibliography, to submit to it an enlightened statement of what is involved, and to show that bibliography is legitimate; to offer to discuss the matter with Council officials in person;
- 2) to contact library schools, graduate departments of English, and wherever bibliography is taught, to encourage a more serious and scholarly approach to the subject;
- 3) to draw up major and minor bibliographical undertakings where individuals and institutions would be able to work together;
- 4) to provide an annual list of bibliographical works in progress, this list to be rigorously edited and all items scrutinized as to their suitability for publication;
- 5) to encourage individual bibliographical study in whatever form it may take;
- 6) to pledge itself to the aims of its founders:
"to promote bibliographical publications; to encourage the preservation and extend the knowledge of printed works and manuscripts, particularly those relating to Canada; and to facilitate the exchange of information concerning such rare items."

My subtitles were, first: to the land behind; second, the future experience; third, let us hear the chimes at midnight. With respect to the first I think I have sketched some of the features of the landscape and it will be our future experience to pick up fragments and make the land a fit place in which to study our cultural past — our social history. Now to the chimes: Arthur Lower in his introduction to *Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Canada* makes reference to Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part II, and it seems to fit here. Mr. Justice Shallow has as his guest that well-known man-about-the-world Sir John Falstaff, who was Shallow's fellow-student. Shallow talks to Mr. Justice Silence of days past: probably not days passed in the library:

"Ha, cousin Silence, that thou hadst seen that, that this knight and I have seen! Ha, Sir John, said I well?"

Falstaff puts it in a nutshell, comments social historian Lower:

"We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow."

I suggest that we, who are interested in nineteenth-century Canadian bibliographical study have not yet heard the chimes at sunrise, nor have they rung for us at noon. For these we must work and wait; then on to those most sweet and telling of all — the chimes at midnight. These are the experiences in nineteenth-century Canadian bibliography before us.

DOUGLAS LOCHHEAD