The Early History of the Macmillan Company of Canada, 1905-1921

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WHEN THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA RECEIVED ITS ONTARIO charter to set up in business on the 15th of December 1905, Canada was in the midst of its most prosperous and expansive period since Confederation. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his Liberal government had won their third consecutive term of office a little more than a year before. The country's population was only just slightly over six million, but western immigration had reached a point high enough to permit the creation of two new provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, whose status was finally assured with the passage of the so-called Autonomy Bills on September 1 1905. Capital for manufacturing purposes was both plentiful and relatively cheap, with the result that industrialization, particularly in Ontario, proceeded at an unprecedented rate. The economic boom in Canada did much to foster a broadly based optimism that found expression in various ways. Politically, for example, Canada had for the first time contributed to the defence in an imperial war in 1899; and culturally, one might mention that between 1868 and 1898, the number of copyrights issued annually had increased from 34 to 702. It was, as Carl Berger so aptly put it, 'the age of Canada's great barbecue'.¹

George L. Parker has noted that during the years of the Laurier prosperity, from the mid-1890s to the first World War, no fewer than fourteen publishing firms were established in Toronto.² Many of them, including Macmillan, were Canadian subsidiaries of British or American houses and were set up by their parent firms in order to take advantage of the growing Canadian market for school and trade books issued in New York or London. Sir Frederick Macmillan, the head of the English company when the Canadian house was formed, was very explicit in this regard: 'The primary business of the Macmillan Company of Canada is to sell the publications of the New York and London houses, and the only kind of publishing which ought to originate in Canada is the production of school books authorized by one or

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other of the Provincial governments.¹³ George P. Brett, the head of the New York house and, like Sir Frederick, a director of the Canadian branch from its founding, felt much the same way: 'Primarily our intention was, in establishing the Canadian house, to work thoroughly in that market our many and important new books.'¹⁴ In the beginning, then, there was no question of creating a list of native Canadian writers whose manuscripts may have been presumed to have gone unpublished for lack of a strong indigenous publishing industry. The Copp Clark Company and the Morang Company had until 1905 been acting as Canadian agents for the Macmillan houses in London and New York respectively; but as Canada's population grew (between 1901 and 1911 the increase was 35 percent) it became obvious to the parent firms that greater advantage of this new and expanding market could only be taken by opening an office whose exclusive job it would be to push Macmillan books.

The Canadian branch opened its doors on January 1 1906 in offices located in Toronto at 27 Richmond Street West, a building which it shared with the Canadian branch of the Oxford University Press. Its capital stock was only \$20,000 and the staff was a small one of three or four. The first president was Mr. Frank Wise, who was born in Lincolnshire in England in 1868 and who had emigrated to the United States where he went to work for the New York office of the Macmillan Company in April of 1895.¹⁵ Wise's ten years experience in the New York house naturally stood him in good stead when he came to Canada to head the Toronto branch, and his English birth was a mark in his favour also. Imperial sentiment was still enormously strong in Canada at this time; one has only to look at the Macmillan list during the Wise years to understand the continuing nature of his commitment to 'the old country' and to imperialism generally. The earliest identified volume to bear the Toronto: Macmillan imprint is, symbolically enough, a book by Kipling: *Puck of Pook's Hill*, dated 1906. Kipling, of course, came with the Macmillan name, and was to play an important part in the dissolution of the Wise regime, for the fact that Macmillan lost Kipling to S.B. Gundy in 1918 was one of the first in a series of events which would lead eventually to Wise's resignation. Wise published a number of books which were important expressions of the imperialist cause, among them Colonel Denison's memoirs, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity* (1909), Lionel Curtis's *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (1916), as well as his own patriotic pamphlet *The Empire Day by Day* (1910). He published a Canadian edition of Sir Edward Coke's pamphlet *Why The Empire Is at War* in 1915, and he undertook to have the work translated into French and issued by Macmillan as well. Andrew Macphail, the editor of the *University Magazine* at McGill University and an important supporter of the imperial cause, was a close friend of Wise's, and Wise also attempted to bring

Stephen Leacock into the Macmillan fold – not as a humorist, but as the proposed author of a book on the tariff, one of the issues around which the whole mooted question of Canadian nationalism and the imperial connection was debated intensely.

I mention all of this in order to set in some perspective that enviable reputation for publishing Canadian books which Macmillan was later to acquire; Wise himself seems to have had relatively little concern for Canadian writing as such, and his board of directors certainly had none. Of the roughly 160 books published between 1906 and 1921 under the Macmillan of Canada imprint, only 26 percent are by Canadian authors, and the vast majority of these books are non-fiction titles of the sort previously mentioned. As a bookman, Wise knew that Canadian schools were increasingly vociferous in their demand for textbooks that were Canadian in terms of reference, even if these sometimes amounted to no more than American texts superficially doctored to remove their more flagrant Americanisms. But he complained persistently about the unwillingness of the Canadian reading public to buy fiction by American and British authors, and in a letter to George Brett of February 11 1909, he remarked, 'If you remember, at the time of our establishment here, I suggested, in a fit of banter, that the motto for the Canadian house should be "Canada pro Canadienses," and I think that it would have been a most appropriate one.'⁶

Anti-Americanism was particularly strong during the period following the Reciprocity Agreement of 1911 and in the early years of the war. But it constituted only one part of the overall picture of the book trade in Canada which was, to say the least, a complicated and difficult business. English books, no less than American ones, were not easy to sell in the Canadian market, largely because of differing tastes and British ignorance of Canadian conditions. Books by Canadian writers suffered from the fact that the Canadian market was too small and far-flung to support native manufacturing, and the books themselves, as Frank Wise wrote in an article published anonymously in *The Author*, were often 'of so local an interest that it would not pay a publisher in London or New York to produce [them] or even take a fair quantity if produced in Canada.'⁷

The situation all in all was such that very few Canadian publishing houses could survive on trade books alone. None, certainly, could survive on Canadian books, and most therefore acted as agents for a variety of foreign houses. There were exceptions such as McCleod & Allen, who were basically a fiction house, but most Canadian publishers prospered by engaging in the textbook business, and Macmillan of Canada was certainly one of these. Many of the early books which bear the Macmillan imprint are textbooks: George Mitchell's *Introduction to Latin Prose* (1907), John

Waddell's *A School Chemistry* (1907), H.S. Hall's *Junior Algebra* (1908), L.H. Bailey's *Beginner's Botany* (1911), and so on. A very few of these texts were written by Canadian teachers. The Mitchell book is of some interest as it seems to represent the first indigenous project of the Canadian house, and was first issued in 1907. Mitchell taught classics at Queen's University, and his Latin text became a standard which was successful enough that a revised version was published in 1920. It is, however, slightly inaccurate to call this book an indigenous project. It has a triple imprint, New York, London, and Toronto, and there is no doubt that Wise could not have published it on his own. The textbook market was potentially a very lucrative one, but at the same time it was a hazardous and expensive undertaking to commission, illustrate, and set into type a book which in the end might not be chosen for authorization by the provincial education departments. The majority of Macmillan textbooks in the early period (for example, the Bailey and Hall titles) were English or American Macmillan books on which Wise was able to put his imprint.

Some idea of the uncertain nature of the textbook business – and in this regard the Canadian market was a pale reflection of the cutthroat American market for texts – can be given by referring to the competition for Ontario readers. For a period of twenty years beginning in 1884, three publishers, W.J. Gage, Copp Clark, and the Canada Publishing Company, had an exclusive contract to supply public school readers to the Ontario government. The government had supplied the plates for the books, as well as establishing the retail price and discounts, and the publishers had merely to produce and distribute the books. All of this was carried out without tenders being called and without any minimum standards of quality being fixed. The publishers naturally endeavoured to produce the cheapest book possible in order to maximize their profits. In Frank Wise's words, they 'printed them on a most inferior paper and bound them stabbed with wire staples onto muslin, and used in the covers a poor quality of pulp board.'⁸ Furthermore, a government Text Book Commission, whose findings were published in 1907, established that the publishers had gone so far as to force the government to renew the contract in 1894 by convincing the English copyright holders to assign exclusive rights on certain material (Tennyson's work, for example) to the three companies, thus virtually ousting any competitor's reader from the market.⁹ After the report of the Text Book Commission was issued, the government decided to create its own readers, have stereo plates made, and then request various publishers to submit tenders for the printing of the books. The result was perhaps just as discouraging to Canadian publishers as the former situation had been, for the Eaton Company won the contract by offering to do the work on a break-

even basis. The advantage to them, and it was a large one, was the free advertising. Every primary school student in the province was now to have a reader which bore prominently the Eaton name.

Many other examples of the keenly competitive market for textbook contracts could be given. Copp Clark, who lost a number of valuable contracts when the Ontario government began the practice of making some of its own texts, prepared a speller and offered it to the Department of Education at a price which allowed a margin of only $\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ per copy between their own costs and the wholesale price.¹⁰ The government, naturally, was not about to decline such a tender, as the cost of textbooks had always been a political issue of some importance in Ontario. Frank Wise, who was among the publishers who gave testimony to the Text Book Commission, though he had only been in the business in Canada for less than a year, seems to have been remarkably successful in securing contracts for textbooks. The *Hall Algebra* was authorized in Ontario as early as 1908 and the *Ontario High School Laboratory Manual in Chemistry* in 1909. It was not until 1912, however, that Macmillan of Canada fully established itself as one of the most important textbook publishers in Canada, and the reason for this was Macmillan's acquisition of the Morang Educational Company Ltd.

The Morang purchase was unquestionably the most important occurrence during the Wise years. George Morang was an American who had come to Canada as head of the Toronto office of Appleton and Company, and in 1899 established his own publishing house.¹¹ By 1910 he had, according to Wise himself, 'the best Canadian list of school books'¹² in the country. Despite his phenomenal success, however, by early 1911 Morang was in financial difficulties. His wife's mother owned a majority of the stock in the company, and although in ten years he had won a large number of important textbook contracts in Ontario and the other provinces, the company had so far not been able to issue any dividends. It was, furthermore, in rather serious debt: as of mid-May 1912, Morang's liabilities included a \$90,000 bank loan, a \$72,000 account with the three printers in Norwood, Massachusetts, who produced most of his books, as well as \$10,000 in miscellaneous debts. To compound his problems, Morang had seriously injured himself in a fall in the spring of 1911, and his protracted absence from the office had badly affected his business.

Wise and Morang had preliminary discussions in April 1911, and by June, Morang had set a price of \$200,000 on the business. To put this figure in context, I might note that it represented well more than double the total annual sales of Macmillan at the time. To add to the complexity of Wise's financial position, only a year before he had spent just over \$61,000 for land and the construction of a new building at 70 Bond Street into which Macmillan had moved in June 1910. Nevertheless, he was able to persuade Sir Frederick

Macmillan and George Brett to back him sufficiently to allow an offer of \$115,000 to be made to Morang, contingent on his acceptance by June 15 1911. This amount represented only 58 percent of Morang's asking price, however, and he refused.

The following January, Morang's position having worsened, he reopened negotiations and offered his company for \$150,000 – \$115,000 for plates and copyrights and \$35,000 for his bound and sheet stock. The single major impediment at this stage lay in the fact that, although Morang had extensive major contracts to supply history and geography texts as well as supplementary high school English and foreign language readers to the Education Departments in Ontario, the West, and the Maritimes, the contracts stipulated that they could not be assigned to any other party. This meant that much of the value of the plates and copyrights existed on paper only, and Macmillan had no assurance that in buying Morang's books they were also acquiring his authorizations. Negotiations continued until May 1 1912 without any satisfactory resolution. By this time Morang's liabilities were such that he was forced to accept Wise's original offer of \$115,000. The detailed negotiations had been, according to Wise, an 'Augean mess.'¹³ The money was raised mostly through bonds held by the Norwood printers and the London and New York houses, and through the Toronto branch '[plac-ing] a mortgage on every blessed thing we possess.' The purchase brought Wise several valuable textbooks: *The Public School History of England*, *The Public School History of Canada*, the *Ontario High School Physical Geography*, the *Ontario High School History of England*, the *Ontario High School Ancient History*, the *King Edward Music Readers*, and the *Nova Scotia Readers*.¹⁴ It brought him also an agreement from Morang not to go into competition for a period of ten years and the services of the top educational salesman in Canada, John Saul, who had been with Morang since 1902. It was Saul's connections and abilities which helped to ensure that the Morang contracts were assigned to Macmillan by the various provincial authorities.

It took Wise six years to pay off the bonds with which he was able to buy the Morang Educational Company. The fact that this six-year period included several years of the first World War when the book business suffered extensively from decreased markets, rising prices, and shortages of manpower and material gives some indication of Wise's business acumen. By adapting already existing Macmillan books and adding to these the Morang texts for whose preparation he had not had to pay, Wise was able to create a large educational division at comparatively little cost and risk. This was without argument his greatest contribution to the solidity and reputation of the Macmillan Company of Canada. Textbooks were to remain the stable financial base that provided profits which could be used to publish

trade books whose market was much smaller and whose profits were comparatively unpredictable. The success of the Macmillan Company of Canada during and after the years of Wise's presidency testifies to the accuracy of W.H. Clarke's words:

The truth about book publishing in Canada lies in the recognition of the fact that it resembles a pyramid, the broad base of which is formed out of the solid mass of the educational book market—a market which in its volume and extent and in its continuity of demand affords almost the only permanent or reasonably dependable factor in a publisher's sales budget and forecast. Although the capturing of a portion of this market may take years of hard work and careful and intelligent planning, it does afford a certain element of security when once achieved.¹⁵

Textbooks account for slightly more than 53 percent of the books published before 1921 under the Macmillan Company of Canada imprint. Of the remainder, slightly less than 15 percent are fiction, only 3 percent are poetry, and the remaining 29 percent are non-fiction books, including history, economics, and biography. Only a small number of the trade books were actually manufactured in Canada. The normal practice was to import books either in sheets or, preferably, bound, because the duty was lower, and to substitute a cancel title leaf for the British or American one when the market was considered potentially large enough to warrant the creation of a Canadian issue in this manner. In many cases, of course, the Toronto house did no more than act as agent and merely distributed the American or British edition of a book. It is difficult to discern a pattern in the decisions made as to whether or not a given novel, for instance, would be issued under the Toronto imprint. When Macmillan of Canada was founded, the fiction boom, though perhaps in the decline, was still going strong, and in particular, one can find a number of American novels with a Toronto: Macmillan of Canada title page. Examples include Jack London's *Before Adam*, *The Iron Heel*, and *The Sea-Wolf*; Winston Churchill's *Mr. Crewe's Career*, *The Crossing*, and *A Modern Chronicle*; Gertrude Atherton's *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times*, as well as several books by Kipling, all published between 1906 and 1910. Other books published by the same authors during these years, however, seem not to exist in Canadian issues, perhaps because of the unpredictable nature of the fiction market. It seems likely that with some experience, Frank Wise came to understand more thoroughly how difficult it was to sell, in Canada, books which were extremely successful in England or the United States.

Perhaps the best way to give some concrete sense of some of the problems which faced Wise and his company is to take a specific example, and the books of H.G. Wells afford a good one. Wells had become a Macmillan

author in 1903. The Account of Books on Hand, which itemizes the stock that the Canadian company received from London and is dated December 31 1906, includes ten copies of Wells's *Twelve Stories and a Dream*. There is some evidence that there was a Canadian issue of *The War in the Air* (1908), but I have been unable to locate a copy. The first documented Canadian issue is *Tono-Bungay* (1909) which was published in England by Macmillan and in the United States by Duffield. Wise preferred the English edition, but the Duffield contract stipulated that the American company had the Canadian market, and Wise therefore had to import from the south, though he thought the Duffield edition 'a beastly looking book.'¹⁶ Macmillan purchased 500 copies, bound, with a cancel title. How well it sold is unfortunately not recorded. Several of Wells's subsequent books went to other Canadian publishers, and it was not until 1914 that Macmillan of Canada had another chance to handle a Wells book, *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*. By this time Wells's reputation was such that he could demand a hefty price, and Wise had to pay an advance royalty of \$800 on his order for 3,500 copies from New York. Wise was somewhat diffident about such a large order. He remarked to George Brett, 'I quite appreciate the fact that Wells is a big man in the novel way, although up here he is considered to be for a picked audience rather than for the general reader in much the same way as Hewlett and Locke.'¹⁷ In the event Wise was right to be cautious, as Macmillan was able to sell only 1,500 copies of *Harman*. The war had intervened and the market for most fiction had declined. Wise also complained with some justice that 'Mr. Wells is writing something all the time'; he was saturating the market with his own books.¹⁸ These two facts in combination caused Wise to lower his order to 1,500 copies for Wells's next two books, *Bealby* and *The Research Magnificent* (1915). There is no record of the sales of the latter book, but of *Bealby* only 800 copies were sold.

The next Wells novel was much more successful. *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (1916), which the Toronto booksellers, out of affection for Albert Britnell, the owner of a well-known local bookstore, called Mr. Britnell Sees It Through, was certainly the best-selling Wells novel that Macmillan published in Canada.¹⁹ Wise rather recklessly placed an advance order for 5,000 copies, in part because freight problems and paper shortages had become increasingly troublesome as the war continued, and he did not want to be short of copies of what promised to be Wells's most popular book in several years. His gambling paid off in this instance, as *Mr. Britling* eventually sold some 20,000 copies in Canada.

With *Mr. Britling* there surfaced a problem which had plagued the company before and which would continue to do so for years. Cassells had published the novel in England (Wells had gone to Cassells from Macmillan

beginning with this book), and some book jobbers were importing the colonial edition into Canada for sale at a lower price than the Macmillan issue. With Wells's next novel, *God the Invisible King*, the problem became more acute. The buyer for the book department at Simpsons, for example, told a Macmillan salesman that he could buy the book more cheaply from Cassells, and was doing so.²⁰ Wise raised the problem with George Brett in New York in the hope that Brett would complain to Wells's agent, but nothing apparently was done.²¹ In the circumstances Wise could presumably have sued the jobbers who were illegally importing the Cassells edition into Canada, but the probable success of such a suit was clearly outweighed by the expense and publicity which it would incur. Wise's solution instead was to print his own edition of Wells's next novel, *The Soul of a Bishop*. As soon as the book was ready in New York, a set of stereo plates was made and shipped to Toronto where W.R. Phillips and Company printed an edition, probably of 5,000 copies, for Macmillan. Since the book was manufactured in Canada, the Canadian market was secure. This solution was impractical, however, for all but the most popular writers of fiction, as normal sales for a novel – usually in the range of 250 to 1500 copies – could not cover the expense of Canadian manufacture. Wise was able to use *The Soul of a Bishop* to demonstrate to his competitors that he would not stand idly by and watch his rights being trampled; but in plain fact he could not have done the same with a novel by May Sinclair or Gertrude Atherton, as the cost would have been prohibitive. It is doubtful if even *The Soul of a Bishop* was successful enough to justify Wise's decision, for though the inventory records show that the 3,625 copies on hand on March 31 1918 were gone by stock-taking time a year later, Wise speaks in a letter of 'the very bad set-back the trade had on *The Soul of a Bishop*.'²² The book was probably remaindered.

It has been noted that most fiction was imported and sold on an agency basis; that is, Macmillan merely distributed the American edition in the Canadian market. A few writers such as Wells and Winston Churchill were sufficiently popular to warrant the additional expense of a cancel title leaf which would bear the imprint of the Canadian house. Only rarely was the Canadian issue actually printed in Canada. Winston Churchill's *The Inside of the Cup* (1913) sold an astonishing 30,000 copies in Canada in an edition which used the American sheets with a cancel title leaf, and the success of this title led Wise to have Churchill's next book, *A Far Country* (1915), printed in Canada from plates supplied by the New York house. This, however, was a rare exception to the normal procedure. Never, as far as I know, during the Wise years was a novel by an English or American writer actually set up in Canada. Author contracts normally lumped the Canadian market with the American, but even had that not been the usual practice, the

Canadian market was simply too small to warrant the expense of duplicating the typesetting a second or third time.

The fiction market was much more voluble and unpredictable than the education field, and it had the additional problems of short-lived fashion and dependence on advertising. A constant complaint in the Wise-Brett correspondence was New York's inability to supply dummies and advertising material far enough in advance for the Macmillan salesmen to use them on their fall and spring trips. In the case of Wells's *The Research Magnificent*, Toronto had nothing but one set of empty covers to sell from as late as a week before the publication date of September 14 1915.²³ Booksellers were evidently unwilling to place advance orders for books even by established writers without knowing what they were buying. With a first novel this reluctance was naturally much increased. To this must be added the fact that because the New York house lavished the same care on the production of its fiction as it did on its other books, the cost at which it sold copies to Toronto often necessitated a higher retail price than the standard novel would fetch. The cost to Toronto of Wells's *Joan and Peter* (1918), for example, was such that it should have been sold to the trade at discounts based on \$1.75 retail, though most fiction at the time sold for \$1.50 or \$1.60 and sometimes for less. Wise pointed out that at that price they would get almost no advance orders, and would only be able to sell the book if it 'caught fire.'²⁴ It did not.

With the miscellaneous group of books which fall under the heading of non-fiction, Wise felt freest to initiate publishing projects in Toronto rather than merely to take a share of an edition published elsewhere. Many manuscripts which came to him, particularly of academic books, had to be sent on to New York for a decision because the Canadian market was too small for the Macmillan Company of Canada to bear the initial costs of typesetting, printing, and binding. But some of the roughly fifty non-fiction books which Wise published were truly Canadian projects, among them *The Kulturkampf* (1909) by Gordon Boyce Thompson, *Introductory Educational Psychology* (1909) by S.B. Sinclair, *History of the County of Lennox and Addington* (1913) by W.S. Herrington, *The Dawn of a New Patriotism* (1918) by John Hunt, and even *Mrs. Parson's Manual for Women's Meetings* (1918) by Lydia Parsons. Wise had very little interest in poetry, but of the three books by Canadian poets which he published, mention might be made of Laura McCully's *Mary Magdalene and Other Poems* (1914). The poems themselves are justly forgotten, but the book is as well-designed and well-produced a volume as any issued by the company in its first fifteen years.

The freedom to issue books of its own was only granted to the company by its directors because of Wise's ability to make the Toronto branch financially successful in a very short time. The directors – Sir Frederick Macmil-

lan and George Brett in particular – kept very close control of Wise’s activities, and many decisions, both of a publishing and a fiscal nature, had to be referred to New York or London. When Wise was eighty-two he wrote a letter to John Gray, then manager of the Canadian house, in which he spoke of ‘the personal pique of old Sir Fred,’ and of George Brett’s sympathetic feeling of ‘never [knowing] when his own head would roll into the basket.’¹²⁵ This may give some idea of his relationship with the parent houses, though one must balance this unguarded statement against one made in 1916 to Harper Brothers when Macmillan was hoping to acquire the Canadian agency for the Harper list: ‘The Macmillans in Canada have a separate charter and are a company entirely separate from either the New York house or the London house, although, of course, they work in close affiliation with both.’¹²⁶ It would not be unfair to say that in large measure Frank Wise’s relationships with London and New York fluctuated according to the profits which the Canadian house showed. Until the war the Toronto branch grew and profited extraordinarily well. In 1908, for example, George Brett wrote to Wise that ‘there are few mercantile businesses which show such growth as yours with the same time [two years], particularly in the book business which usually in its first years is not a very profitable one.’¹²⁷ Profits for the year ending March 31 1910 were just under \$18,000, which was a very creditable sum. However, the year 1913, as if it were an omen of the war years to come, was in Wise’s own words ‘the worst we have had since starting,’¹²⁸ and by the following summer Wise was lamenting to Brett that ‘business here is now notable chiefly by its absence in every line.’¹²⁹

During the war, Macmillan, like every Canadian publisher, had a number of difficult circumstances with which to contend. Provincial governments slashed or eliminated library and school book appropriations, the price of paper increased at alarming rates, and book manufacturing experienced constant delays because of the absence of workers overseas. As early as September 1914, Wise cut the salary of his staff of almost thirty by 20 percent, but no amount of retrenchment could make up for the loss of textbook business which the war brought. In 1919 Macmillan did \$281,000 worth of business, but high material costs (and it must be remembered that textbook contracts were normally made as much as two years in advance and at a fixed price), added to an exchange rate of 15 percent on the American dollar, meant that the house was doing little more than operating on a ‘break-even basis. In 1918 Wise broached with his directors the possibility of Macmillan building its own manufactory in order to bypass the long delays and high costs of farming out work to outside printers, but the price of \$40,000 for a combined printing plant and bindery clearly eliminated that idea.

The financial report for the year ending March 31 1919 provoked this

response from Sir Frederick Macmillan: 'You will not be surprised to hear that we are rather alarmed at the position of the Canadian Company and that we think that a great change will have to be made in its methods to put it on a satisfactory footing.'³⁰ A year later the situation had not improved much, and to make matters worse the company was involved in a suit with its western distributors, the Macvicar-Newby Agencies. It is impossible properly to apportion the blame for this disagreement, but it is at the least indisputable that this was not the first time that Wise had had difficulties in his business dealings. An arrangement with Clarke Brothers of Winnipeg to distribute Macmillan books in the West in the early years had also ended unamicably, and the Macmillan archive contains copies of not a few letters from Wise to either London or New York in which he was forced to deflect various criticisms which individuals had directed over his head. In the last extant letter from Sir Frederick Macmillan to Wise, Sir Frederick remarked: 'I do not propose to go into the question [of the Macvicar-Newby disagreement] with you except to say that it is another example of your unfortunate practice of getting on bad terms with people with whom you have to deal.'³¹ There is some evidence also that Wise was not entirely scrupulous in his manner of doing business, though in ways in which he probably differed but little from other publishers. For example, in 1910 he hoped to gain authorizations for two books, George M. Wrong's *Introductory History of England* and Eva Tappan's *Canadian History*. Part of the contract with the Ontario government stipulated that the books had to be manufactured in Canada, but Wise tried in secret to have the texts typeset by the J.S. Cushing Company in Norwood, Massachusetts. Much to the annoyance of Wise, Cushing sent proofs by mistake to the Morang Educational Company, 'the one firm,' as Wise complained to Colonel Cushing, 'who will probably go out of their way to bring these facts to the attention of the government.'³² Morang wasted no time in doing just that, and Macmillan lost the contracts.

The difficult economic climate of the immediate post-war years, Wise's litigious character, as well as the rather serious defection of John Saul to Gage at the end of January 1919, all combined to lead to Wise's resignation early in 1921.³³ Wise had seen the company through its fledgling years and had set it on a reasonably firm financial base. To a degree, however, he was a victim of his own nature, for the Canada of 1921 was a markedly different country from the Canada of 1905. It was not in Wise to respond to the growing literary nationalism of the post-war years; his conservative tastes and old world loyalties had very quickly gone out of fashion. One might liken Frank Wise to Arthur Meighen – both were adept and distinguished men in their ways, but they were not the men for their time. Meighen, of course, was defeated in the election of December 1921, and it is an interesting coincidence that in the same year the Macmillan Company of Canada was taken

over by Hugh Eayrs, a man who not only published Mackenzie King's books, but who shared King's suavity, his acute political sense, and his commitment to prosperity and style. Eayrs took over at a difficult time (he called the company's situation 'a mess').³⁴ Despite all that Frank Wise had been able to accomplish, it was left to Eayrs to put into practice George Brett's conviction that a publishing house 'is deeply and inescapably personal; [and] that only the devotion and individuality of its chiefs can make it or preserve it.'³⁵

NOTES

- 1 Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 189.
- 2 George L. Parker, 'The Canadian Author and Publisher in the Twentieth Century,' in *Editor, Author, and Publisher: Papers Given at the Editorial Conference, University of Toronto, November 1968*, ed. William J. Howard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 34-5.
- 3 Frederick Macmillan to Frank Wise, 11 October 1910. This and the other unpublished letters quoted are in the Macmillan Company of Canada Archive at Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., Canada.
- 4 George Brett to Frank Wise, 25 February 1915.
- 5 Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), p. 1180.
- 6 Frank Wise to George Brett, 11 February 1909.
- 7 [Frank Wise], 'The Book Market in Canada,' *The Author* 23 (1913): 111.
- 8 Frank Wise to George Brett, 10 December 1909.
- 9 Ontario. Text Book Commission. *Report of the Text Book Commission 1907* (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1907), pp. 10-12.
- 10 Frank Wise to George Brett, 11 February 1909.
- 11 Elizabeth Hulse, *A Dictionary of Toronto Printers, Publishers, Booksellers and the Allied Trades, 1798-1900* (Toronto: Anson-Cartwright Editions, 1982), p. 182.
- 12 Frank Wise to George Brett, 10 January 1912.
- 13 Frank Wise to George W. Anderson, 14 June 1912.
- 14 Frank Wise to George Brett, 17 October 1912.
- 15 W.H. Clarke, 'An Art, a Craft, and a Business,' in *William Henry Clarke 1902-1955: A Memorial Volume* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, n.d.), p. 7. Clarke worked for Macmillan in the 1920s.
- 16 Frank Wise to George Brett, 19 March 1909.
- 17 Frank Wise to George Brett, 4 April 1913.
- 18 Frank Wise to George Brett, 26 July 1915.
- 19 Frank Wise to George Brett, 8 November 1916.
- 20 Frank Wise to George Brett, 2 June 1917.
- 21 In 1924 Hugh Eayrs, president of the Macmillan Company of Canada, went so far as to write directly to Wells regarding his book called *A Year of Prophecy*. Eayrs was selling the book in Canada in competition with the Ryerson Press, who claimed that they had the Canadian market through Fisher Unwin, the English publisher of the book. Hugh S. Eayrs to H.G. Wells, 18 December 1924 (Wells Archive, University of Illinois Library, Urbana-Champaign, Ill., U.S.A.).
- 22 Frank Wise to George Brett, 26 July 1918.

- 23 Frank Wise to George Brett, 8 September 1915.
- 24 Frank Wise to George Brett, 26 July 1918.
- 25 Frank Wise to John Gray, 16 May 1951.
- 26 Frank Wise to Harper Brothers, 9 March 1916.
- 27 George Brett to Frank Wise, 22 January 1908.
- 28 Frank Wise to George Brett, 24 November 1913.
- 29 Frank Wise to George Brett, 26 August 1914.
- 30 Frederick Macmillan to Frank Wise, 10 September 1919.
- 31 Frederick Macmillan to Frank Wise, 9 December 1920.
- 32 Frank Wise to J.S. Cushing, 14 February 1910.
- 33 He was succeeded by Hugh S. Eayrs, whose appointment took effect on February 2, 1921.
- 34 Hugh S. Eayrs to Frederick Macmillan, 13 April 1921.
- 35 Quoted in Charles A. Madison, *Book Publishing in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 264.

Illustrations are courtesy of the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., Canada.

PUCK
OF
POOK'S HILL

BY
RUDYARD KIPLING

Toronto
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED
1906

The title page of the Canadian edition of Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, the first book published under the imprint of Macmillan of Canada.

Mary Magdalene

and Other Poems

By
Laura E. McCully

TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA, LTD., AT ST. MARTIN'S HOUSE
MCMXIV

The title page of Laura E. McCully's *Mary Magdalene and Other Poems*, an early example of original publishing by Macmillan of Canada.