Leacock's *Canada*: The Book That Booze Bought

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With assets in the billions of dollars, the Bronfman family is known primarily as the owners of the Seagram Company, the world's largest distilling corporation. Although the Bronfmans control a wide network of commercial interests, the family has never attempted to establish itself as a publishing house. From time to time, the Seagram Company has issued in-house newsletters and journals. These include the *Seagram Spotlight* (1936-53), *Proof* (1941-52), *Horizons* (1958-62), and *Distillations* (1981-). From its annual reports the company has reprinted and distributed in booklet form various studies of public interest such as *The St. Lawrence Seaway: The Realization of a Mighty Dream* (1954), *The Story of the United Nations: Its Service to Humanity* (1955), and *Canada and the United States: Neighbours in Democracy* (1960). Other publications sponsored by the company such as *Fun at Cocktail Time* (1934), *Distiller's Grain Manual* (1942), and *Seagram's Sports Almanac* (1955) are obviously more ephemeral in nature and were never intended to promote civic consciousness.

In 1940, however, when Canada had just entered the Second World War, Samuel Bronfman, the head of the family and the president of the Distillers Corporation – Seagrams Ltd., commissioned Stephen Leacock to write a history of Canada. Privately published the next year by the House of Seagram, *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future* expresses Leacock's personal interpretation of Canada's rise to nationhood. Unlike later well-known general histories by J.M.S. Careless, Donald Creighton, A.R.M. Lower, and W.L. Morton, Leacock's *Canada* is not the work of a professional historian engaged in primary research. Rather, the book should be read as a popular account of the nation's history, written with enthusiasm by a man who loved his country dearly and who saw its existence threatened by outside forces. This is not to say that Leacock was incapable of writing documented history in a serious vein. His early works such as *Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks: Responsible Government* (1907) clearly attest to the rigours of his scholarship.

Approximately 165,000 copies of Leacock's *Canada* were distributed by

Seagram's. Oddly enough, the book is still considered by many booksellers, especially American booksellers, to be a collector's item. *Bookman's Price Index* (vol. 22, p. 451), for example, records the following detailed entry from a bookseller's catalogue:

LEACOCK, STEPHEN. *Canada*. Montreal, 1941. Large 8vo., cloth-backed buckram, armorial plates on front cover, orig. glassine jacket, slipcase, first edition, limited. Mounted presentation slip from Samuel Bronfman, president of Seagrams, tipped in, pictorial endpapers and several other illus. in color and black and white by various Canadian artists. [J. Stephan] Lawrence [Chicago, Illinois] 50-931 1981 \$ 125¹

Aside from the fact that Leacock is an author whose books are collected, there are perhaps two reasons why collectors and booksellers are deceived into thinking that copies of this book are scarce. First, the misleading phrase, 'A PRIVATE AND LIMITED EDITION,' occurs on the copyright page. This phrase is repeated on Seagram's presentation card enclosed with the book: 'It is as a service to thinking Canadians that we send you this copy of the private and limited edition of a great history of a great country by a great writer.' Secondly, in terms of printing, illustration, and design, the book, even by today's standards, is truly a fine specimen of Canadian craftsmanship at its best. Almost every page is printed in two colours. After the 'body' type was printed in black ink, marginal annotations and other decorative work were printed in beige ink. One admirer of Leacock has stated: 'Nothing could have been more sumptuous.... Altogether the book is a work of art and is likely to be a collector's item for some hundreds of years.'²

The deceptive nature of 'limited' editions, with specific reference to Leacock's *Canada*, has recently received brief comment from John Mappin, a noted Montreal bookseller. Mappin rightly points out that limited editions often have a special kind of ersatz magic, and he quotes John Carter's statement that 'the more ignorant the owner [i.e., the collector] the more potent the magic.'³ Unfortunately, Mappin's account of Leacock's *Canada* does not entirely agree with the archival record of the book's composition and publication. In a brief reply to Mappin, I have remarked that the book's publishing history is indeed interesting and complex and merits greater discussion.⁴ This essay attempts to tell the story in full.

Leacock's *Canada* has also been discussed by Leacock's biographers, but their accounts, like Mappin's, are based chiefly on reminiscences, in particular an amusing speech given by R. Henry Mainer at the Leacock Memorial Dinner on 29 June 1953.⁵ According to Mainer, Bronfman had

little 'faith in Canadian "get-up". So he got an expert from New York to supervise the whole business.' The expert, R.C. Napier, discussed the matter with M. Furniss, the mechanical superintendent of the Gazette Printing Company of Montreal. Napier asked 'Who are we going to get to write it?,' and Furniss answered without hesitation, 'The best man I know is Stephen Leacock. He's the most widely read, and he's very well known.' Nonplussed by Furniss's apparent knowledge of Canadian writing, Napier replied 'Well, who is this fellow?' When Leacock was asked whether he was interested in the project, he cabled back with instructions to Bronfman's associates to take the train to Orillia and to bring their fishing poles. On a summer's day in 1940, after a tiring journey, they arrived late in the afternoon and went fishing. Shabbily attired and unshaven, Leacock looked like a country bumpkin. He retired early that evening leaving his guests shaking their heads. 'Sorry, but this fellow's no good,' Napier complained. 'He's just an old "has-been." There's no use for us wasting any time hereabouts listening at all.' The next morning began badly since Leacock's guests were provided with no breakfast. When they had given up the last shred of hope, Leacock walked in with a sheaf of notes. 'Gentlemen,' he announced, 'I was up about five this morning, and I have this whole thing drafted out.' The deal was supposedly struck then and there with the understanding that the manuscript was to be in the hands of the Gazette printers by 15 February 1941. A week before the due date, Leacock reportedly arrived at Montreal with the completed manuscript. Furniss expressed great surprise that Leacock had managed to finish the job in such short order. 'Oh, that's nothing,' Leacock modestly disclaimed. 'The men in my class at McGill ... [are] ... mighty smart fellows.... I split the history of Canada into five parts, and I gave each fellow a part. They looked at the whole business and wrote it out, and all I did was edit it.' Several days later, after discovering a few mistakes in the manuscript, Furniss contacted Leacock and asked 'What will we do about it?' 'You fix them [the mistakes] up,' Leacock quipped. 'I expect there'd be dozens of them.'⁶

Mainer in fact had no direct involvement in the publication of Leacock's *Canada*. The events described in his entertaining speech are based on a conversation with his friend Furniss. The complicated story of the book's coming to press is somewhat drier, if one may be allowed to use that word in connection with a distillery.

The earliest surviving planning documents now at the Seagram Museum in Waterloo, Ontario, reveal that for Bronfman's associates, the general subject matter of the book was clear from the outset. It was to be an illustrated history of Canada with references in the text to the Seagram Company or alternatively without internal references but with an appendix devoted to the company. What was not clear was how this was to be

accomplished and who was to write it. An early memo sets out four possibilities: a work in a statistical vein; an anthology of Canadian epics; a narrative on the Canadian regiments which would appeal to the armed forces; and lastly, a history of the years since Confederation in which significant national and international events would be described with the concurrent growth of Seagram's in the background. The same memo rejected the 'statistical' approach on the grounds that the 'Federal and Provincial Governments have issued a considerable number of these' and that lacking popular appeal, such a book would soon 'be laid aside and forgotten.' The planning committee advised that an anthology of epics would probably have the greatest chance of success.⁷

The epics, 4,500 to 5,000 words each, were to be executed in a romantic style by well-known Canadian writers. The explorations of Lief the Lucky and the landing of Jacques Cartier in the Bay of Chaleur were considered to be suitable topics relating to Canada as a whole. With respect to the provinces, stories such as the Charlottetown Conference and the expulsions of the Acadians were suggested. The authors who were listed to write individual stories included Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, Robert Choquette, Katherine Hale, and Duncan Campbell Scott. Three writers were chosen as candidates to complete the entire book: E.C. Woodley, editor of several journals and author of such works as *Legends of French Canada* (1931) and *Canada's Romantic Heritage* (1940); B.K. Sandwell, editor of *Saturday Night*, who later wrote a commentary to *Cities of Canada: Reproductions from the Seagram Collection of Paintings* (1953); and Sandwell's good friend, Leacock, the retired professor from McGill, who was known chiefly for his books of humour, but who had displayed a penchant for historical writing.⁸

Bronfman and Leacock never corresponded on their joint venture. It would appear that they met only once, when Bronfman had finished reading Leacock's manuscript and had suggested several minor changes to it.⁹ With the exception of this meeting, they worked through intermediaries. It is not known whether Leacock was the first candidate on Seagram's list or whether the company had already approached other writers. In July 1940 the Gazette Printing Company was asked by Seagram's to undertake all aspects of the physical production of the book. Seagram's choice of the Gazette Printing Company, a firm that could trace its lineage to Montreal's first printer, Fleury Mesplet, was a happy coincidence. Not only did this give the planned book an historical provenance but the firm had also printed Leacock's first book of humour, *Literary Lapses*, in 1910. Although Furniss would credit himself as having 'first mentioned your [Leacock's] name [to Seagram's] in connection with the proposed book,'¹⁰ it was the president of the Gazette Printing Company and the Montreal

Gazette, John Bassett, who first wrote to Leacock inquiring whether he would talk to representatives from the *Gazette* and Seagram's. In his letter Bassett explained that the book would document Canada's historical development and would also focus on the growth and diversification of Canadian business and industry with a separate chapter on the Distillers Corporation – Seagrams Ltd. 'I believe the story would run to fifty or sixty thousand words,' Bassett stated. 'However, should you agree to undertake a work of this character, the company [Seagram's] would be guided by you as to the form it should take.'¹¹

'The idea sounds very attractive and happens to be a thing I have long wanted to do,' Leacock replied by telegram.¹² Napier and Furniss were both invited to come to Orillia and to bring their fishing rods. But they were not the best of companions because Napier disagreed with almost all of Furniss's suggestions. Furniss, for example, suggested that Leacock could describe the development of Canadian cities under the general theme of 'Then and Now.' Leacock was shown a dummy of the book. All the illustrations were to be done by the landscape and marine painter, Charles W. Simpson, who may have known Leacock from their participation in the Pen and Pencil Club at Montreal. Bronfman liked Simpson's style, though Napier did not, and Leacock mentioned C.W. Jefferys as an alternative artist to Simpson. Leacock was expected to write a commentary to the illustrations. He convinced Napier and Furniss that 'the main interest is in the writing, with the pictures subservient to it, and not the other way around as ... planned ... originally.'¹³

It may appear peculiar that an established author of Leacock's stature would want to write a history of Canada for a distilling company. But Leacock was a staunch anti-prohibitionist who had stated on one occasion that he would 'write articles against prohibition at any time for any paper for nothing.'¹⁴ His house at Orillia, which he had dubbed Old Brewery Bay, had been built on the grounds where a brewery formerly stood; the mere mention of its name could make people 'feel thirsty by correspondence as far away as Nevada.'¹⁵ His books were filled with fictional characters who in one way or another had benefitted from the positive effects of alcohol. In *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, for example, there is a reference to 'a little toddling princess ... who owns fifty distilleries in her own right.' In the same book, when the elders of St. Osoph discover that the site of the rival church, St. Asaph's, has been bought by a brewery, they 'followed suit and moved their church right against the side of an expanding distillery.'¹⁶ Leacock had gone so far as to write an entire book, *Wet Wit & Dry Humor*, satirizing prohibition, and in which he made the roguish comment:

Alcohol is doomed; it is going; it is gone. Yet when I think of a hot Scotch on a

winter evening, or a Tom Collins on a summer morning, or a gin rickey beside a tennis court, or a stein of beer on a bench beside a bowling green – I wish somehow that we could prohibit the use of alcohol and merely drink beer and whiskey and gin as we used to.¹⁷

Shortly after the visit of Furniss and Napier to Old Brewery Bay, Leacock wrote at some length to Napier. He reaffirmed his enthusiasm for the project and explained how he conceived the nature of the work. What was required was not merely a trade advertisement, but a full-scale history, a book that would earn the gratitude of the Canadian public:

It should show in its foreground, the passing lights and shadows of romantic history, the adventure, the exploration, the long years of conflict in arms, that make up our wonderful history of Canada; but behind all this the truer and deeper colours of the background would reflect the life of the people, the brave adversity of their pioneer days, and their gradual emergence into the plentitude of our industrial power.¹⁸

Leacock was not adverse to having a final chapter as an addendum devoted to Seagram's contribution to Canadian industry. Such a final chapter he was prepared to write, but he did not think it advisable for it to appear under his own name. The edition, he agreed, would be distributed to the friends of Seagram, and a small part of it would be bound up as an 'édition de luxe.' He promised to finish the manuscript by 15 March 1941. He allowed six weeks for printing and binding, so that the book could be sent out by 1 May 1941. The illustrations, he thought, could also be completed before this date. As to financial remuneration, he preferred to leave that to written communication and 'not to engage in higgling [haggling].'¹⁹

The question of Leacock's fee placed Seagram's in a quandary for they had no real idea as to how much he commanded for a similar kind of undertaking. Furniss informed Leacock that the Gazette Printing Company had estimated that all 'the work might cost about \$30,000.00.' He inquired whether Leacock would accept \$4,000 or \$5,000.²⁰ Naturally Leacock opted for the higher figure which was confirmed by Seagram's several weeks later. In doing so, he transferred to Seagram's 'all book rights, serial rights and every other right, Canada, Britain, colonies and [the] United States.'²¹

As was his custom, Leacock returned to Montreal for the winter season in late September 1941. This made him available to the representatives of the Gazette and Seagram's. For their consideration he prepared a synopsis entitled 'The Story of Canada: The Rise of a Great Country.' Whereas the synopsis has eight chapters, the book would have ten. He stated in his

synopsis that 'it would seem more reasonable in view of the scope and purpose of the book to lay rather less stress upon the French Canada of the habitant than is usually done.' He obviously changed his mind about this because in the book there is a chapter on 'British America and French Canada 1713-1763' where he discusses the growth of New France, the French explorers, the expulsion of the Acadians, and the Seven Years' War. Leacock also added a final chapter, 'Canada as a Future World Power.' He wanted the book 'to emphasize success not failure,' to express optimism in spite of the gloomy news of the war in progress, and to convey 'pride in the past and belief in the future.'²²

Initially Leacock was consulted about the illustrations that would highlight the text. The Gazette dummy, which he had seen during the visit of Napier and Furniss to Orillia, allowed for '12 full colour, full page illustrations; 12 one-colour, full page illustrations; and 36 single colour illustrations for chapter headings, chapter endings, initials, etc.'²³ This original plan for the illustrations was altered subsequently to fit Leacock's text. In the book there are ten full-colour illustrations, twenty-one black and white ones, endpapers in black and white depicting a panorama of Canadian industry and agriculture, and many other illustrations in beige and black for the title page, chapter decorations, and maps. The extant manuscript and typescript of the book in Leacock's papers indicate that the maps derived chiefly from Leacock's own sketches. Furniss believed that 'the utilization of more than one artist is unnecessary.'²⁴ However, a team of nine artists, including F.H. Varley, H.R. Perrigard, and Jefferys, but excluding Simpson, was eventually commissioned to do original paintings for the illustrative work.²⁵ On Leacock's instructions, an art advisor was engaged in November 1941. The advisor was Adam Sherriff Scott, a muralist and landscape and portrait painter, whose dominant style was characterized by close attention to recreating an historical scene in detail. Although Leacock stipulated that the advisor 'would not dictate nor veto,'²⁶ he also realized that 'the selection of illustrations is outside of what I am paid to do and outside of my control.'²⁷ When he suggested that a picture by Peggy Shaw, which was showing in the Spring Exhibition of Montreal's Art Association, should be used as the book's frontispiece, his request was turned down, and he was told that the picture in question was just not in the same class as the paintings by the other artists.²⁸

Leacock apparently finished the writing of *Canada* in the first few days of February 1941.²⁹ The publisher, George C. Harrap & Co. Ltd. of London, had already inquired about a possible British edition the previous August. The news of Leacock's writing of the book had been leaked to his agent, Paul Reynolds, and from Reynold's English associate, John Farquharson, to Walter G. Harrap.³⁰ Several other publishers including Dodd, Mead,

Doubleday, Doran and Co., and Houghton Mifflin Co. made similar inquiries.

In September 1940, just prior to Leacock's arrival in Montreal, Napier sent him a short history of Seagram's. Another copy of this history was sent to him again in March 1941. Leacock wrote a concluding chapter based on this history which he entitled 'L'Envoi: The House of Seagram to Their Friends.'³¹ The chapter was written to give the impression that the author was not Leacock but a company spokesman. It was never published. Why Leacock's 'envoi' was not included in the book is not clearly ascertainable from the extant archival record. A reading of this unpublished chapter reveals two probable reasons for its exclusion. Quite unnecessarily, Leacock vehemently attacked the anti-prohibitionists at a time when they had already lost their war against the consumption of alcohol. He also portrayed Bronfman somewhat excessively as the good corporate citizen. Regardless of how accurate this portrait of his benefactor may have been, such unstinting praise would probably have backfired and proven to be an embarrassment for Bronfman. In the place of the 'envoi,' a black and white drawing of Seagram's appeared without text.

A bound set of page proofs was sent to Leacock for his correction in late July 1941. 'It is certainly a handsome book,' he commented with distinct pleasure, 'beautifully bound, with striking illustrations, and the printing seems to me a splendid piece of work and a credit to the country.'³² Several of the artists were still hard at work finishing their paintings in August. R.T. Ferguson, who had replaced Napier as Leacock's contact at Seagram's, was doing all he could to hasten the book's publication. 'So the presses should start humming in the near future,' he informed Leacock.³³

In September 1941 a set of galleys was submitted for review to the Montreal poet A.M. Klein who worked for Bronfman as a public relations advisor and as the principal writer of his correspondence and speeches.³⁴ The paths of Klein and Leacock had crossed more than a decade earlier when Klein had taken several courses in political economy taught by Leacock at McGill. Klein made an extensive critique of *Canada* in which he questioned generalities and objected to ethnic slurs and potentially offensive phraseology. In the draft of his book, for example, Leacock had advocated that immigration to Canada should be restricted to the British Isles, 'buttressed with the adherence of the kindred Scandinavians and the Dutch.' 'The tone is highly discriminatory,' Klein wrote in opposition to this view. 'France is conspicuously absent amongst the racial groups praised, and many elements will probably find this insulting.'³⁵ It is doubtful whether Leacock was ever aware of his former student's role in the publication of *Canada*. Klein's critique was given to Ferguson who discussed each specific objection with Leacock in three separate meetings.

After their first meeting together Ferguson reported:

In general Dr. Leacock's attitude was that in matters which were merely phraseology, he would make whatever changes we wished, although he said that in doing so we would be taking away some of the virility of the book.... He was quite agreeable to modifying his references to immigration, saying that his intention was to prohibit the immigration of those who were in arms against us and not those whose countries had been over-run.³⁶

Saul Hayes, the chief administrator of the Canadian Jewish Congress, had also been asked to read the galleys of Leacock's book. Both Klein and Hayes wanted a longer foreword in which Seagram's position as a socially responsible corporation would be portrayed in a positive light. Little did they realize that Leacock had already written an 'envoi' for precisely this purpose. Leacock greatly resisted making any changes to his foreword, and he only added a final paragraph that briefly mentioned Seagram's social contribution.³⁷ Bronfman's preface, ghostwritten by Klein, was mailed to Leacock on 24 November 1941. It would appear that the book was finally printed, bound, and ready for distribution shortly thereafter.

Although Leacock was grateful for Seagram's sponsorship of *Canada*, he was not completely happy with the company acting as its sole distributor, and he wanted to regain control of the book. He suggested to Ferguson that there should be a deluxe edition that would be given to individuals 'at a fixed date with no previous notification or announcement.'³⁸ Of this deluxe edition, he wanted two hundred copies sent 'to England, to leading people noted for their imperial interest, such men as the Rt. Hon. L.S. Amery and Sir Edward Peacock, both very old friends of mine, and Lord Beaverbrook etc., etc.' He also thought it appropriate for those people still living whose names were mentioned in the text to receive a copy, 'for example Sir William Mulock, General McNaughton, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, [and] Mr. Guy Ross.'³⁹ A commercial edition, selling at a substantial price and with a new title page, he suggested, could be issued by Seagram's a few weeks later, but he expected sales of this edition not to be great.

Leacock hoped that Seagram's would quickly dispose of the copyright in *Canada*, once these two so-called editions had run their course. He was prepared to pay \$1,000 to Seagram's for the privilege of bringing out a genuine trade edition with an established publisher six months after Seagram's began their distribution. His plan was to revise the book and to issue it without illustrations. Although he was told that his proposal was feasible in principle, the copyright would always remain with Seagram's and no edition would ever be published outside the company. Leacock also pursued the idea of a French translation. He wrote a long letter in which he

stressed the need for a skilled, fluent rendering in French that would capture the nuances of the English text. 'If this book were properly translated it would score a great hit,' he predicted, 'and the schools could use the two versions as exercises for their pupils.'⁴⁰ But like his proposal for a separate trade edition, his suggestion of a French translation fell on deaf ears.

Leacock did not expect that Seagram's would keep *Canada* in print for twenty-six years. Between 1941 and 1967 there were twelve printings: 1941, 1943 (twice), 1945, 1947, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1958, 1961, 1964, and 1967. By 1955 58,000 copies had been distributed, 73,000 by 1961, and 165,000 by 1967.⁴¹ Unfortunately, the early printing records relating to the book have not survived. A list, probably compiled in late 1941, gives a total of 7,995 copies that would be needed for the first impression (595 to government, 2,000 to high-ranking educators and libraries, 400 to newspapers and magazines, and 5,000 to executives).⁴² One can conjecture, therefore, that the first impression probably comprised at least 8,000 copies. In July 1943 Ferguson reported to Leacock that not a single copy of the first impression remained. 'An order for 7000 copies has been placed with the "Gazette" but it will be about a month before deliveries are made,' he told Leacock.⁴³

The deluxe 'edition' is in full red calf with gilt tooling on the leather bordering the endpapers and all edges gilt. The author's name and the title are stamped in gilt on the front cover and on the backstrip, and a four-colour reproduction of the Canadian coat of arms is mounted on the front cover. The standard 'edition' is bound in dark blue buckram and light blue cloth with gold and black lettering and the Canadian coat of arms on the front cover. It has a beige glassine dust jacket and a blue cardboard box. Bronfman's signature is reproduced in facsimile at the end of the preface, Leacock's at the end of the author's foreword.

These two formats are strictly speaking not different editions, but binding variants. Indeed the use of the work 'edition' to contrast the leather-bound copies from those in buckram and cloth is even more misleading in light of the fact that the entire book was re-set in 1951.⁴⁴ Consequently, there are two editions of the book: five impressions of the first edition and seven of the second. In the first edition there are some copies bound in red leather (probably sheets bound from the first printing) and the commonly found copies in buckram and cloth. Presumably the second edition consists only of copies bound in buckram and cloth. When copies in buckram and cloth from the two editions are compared, they are distinguishable by differences in pagination, size, the cardboard box, and the colour of the endpapers. Copies of the first edition, for example, measure 268 x 193 mm whereas copies of the second measure 262 x 184 mm. There are fewer pages in the second edition, and the colour illustrations do not have tissue

guards. Although the Gazette printers, in setting the second edition, attempted to follow the page breaks of the first edition, the page breaks were not always the same and the printers did not make all the requisite changes in pagination to the table of contents and to the list of illustrations. In the list of illustrations for both editions, for example, Ernst Neumann's black and white drawing of the House of Seagram is said to be on page 259. The illustration appears on this page in the first edition, but in the second, it occurs on page 251. The pagination of Leacock's narrative is the same in both editions, but several blank pages were deleted from the second edition.

Deluxe copies of *Canada* are scarce.⁴⁵ Between December 1942 and April 1943 Bronfman sent approximately one hundred and twenty of them to various dignitaries and acquaintances.⁴⁶ Sir Edward Beatty, Vincent Massey, King George V, Eleanor Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill were among the recipients. Leacock and Bronfman both apparently autographed these deluxe copies. In Bronfman's case not only are the copies signed by him but they are elaborately inscribed. The real author of Bronfman's inscriptions was Klein who diligently tailored each inscription to the respective recipient. The deluxe copy that was sent to W.L. Mackenzie King, for example, was inscribed as follows:

For William Lyon Mackenzie King,
Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada.

Who brings to industry the message of humanity, to his country the message of the Carillon, and to the great cause of our age, the message of his leadership, this first copy of *Canada: the foundations of its future*, is respectfully inscribed as being with undisputed priority his, the marks of whose statesman's trowel are everywhere apparent upon those foundations.⁴⁷

It is difficult now to estimate how many deluxe copies there were. A reasonable guess would be in the neighbourhood of three to four hundred. A Seagram's inter-office memo, dated 31 January 1963, refers to '165 of the special red-bound copies' on hand in early 1962, and the memo then states: 'We still have 154 copies of the special red edition.'⁴⁸

'What Canadian company gives away a \$5 item on request, with no proof of purchase, no sales gimmick, no nothing, and has been doing it for the past 23 years,' *Marketing* magazine queried in 1964.⁴⁹ In January of that year, individuals were writing to Seagram's for copies at the rate of over six hundred per month. Company officials had just caught up with some fifteen hundred requests received since the previous August.⁵⁰ The cost of *Canada* per copy in 1941 was \$2.25. It rose to \$5.30 by 1964.⁵¹ Seagram's

was able to claim a tax exemption for incurred printing costs.⁵² Copies were sent free of charge to ships of the Canadian navy, military establishments in Canada and overseas, all members of parliament, embassies, heads of state, prominent businessmen in communities across the country, schools and public libraries, and any Canadian who wrote to the company requesting a copy.⁵³ *Canada* was never advertised by Seagram's. The only promotion the book received came from Seagram salesmen and by word of mouth from recipients to their friends and neighbours.

Although *Canada* is an historical work and should be judged by scholarly criteria, the book is also a literary achievement that bears the unmistakable stamp of Leacock's style and wit. The reader is told, for example, that the Norsemen 'gathered boatloads of American grapes, and presumably made wine and anticipated the horrors of the prohibition era by nine hundred years' (p. 15). There are jokes about McGill (p. 17) and Montreal's University Club (p. 40). The description of the growth of Ontario settlement after Confederation (pp. 156-57) is reminiscent of Mariposa in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. The book also abounds in the choicest of epigrams. It contains, for example, Leacock's provocative statement which, while hardly original, was undoubtedly still true in 1941: 'There is not as yet a Canadian literature in the sense indicated. Nor is there similarly a Canadian humour, nor any particularly Canadian way of being funny' (p. 215).

Leacock's claim that Canada lacks a distinctive national literature was echoed by Dorothy Duncan, Hugh MacLennan's first wife and an author in her own right. In an address to the Women's Art Society of Montreal in 1943, she remarked that Canada's cultural dependence on Great Britain and the United States is 'a handicap to a great literature.' She regarded Joseph Howe as Canada's first great Canadian writer, and she referred to Thomas Chandler Haliburton 'as the second great Canadian writer and the only truly Canadian satiric humorist.'⁵⁴ Duncan's address sparked an editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* that surely must have been written by John Bassett. The author used the opportunity to promote Leacock's *Canada* in glowing terms. 'If we have not now "a basic Canadian point of view" this book may well supply it,' Bassett argued. 'The spirit of Canada is there, the source from which our literature must spring.'⁵⁵ The *Gazette* editorial in turn prompted a brief exchange between Duncan and Leacock, though Duncan's letter is not extant. In reply to Duncan's request for a copy of *Canada*, Leacock stated: 'I am sorry to say that I have parted with all control of the book.' He advised her that she could probably obtain a copy by writing to Seagram's. He praised Duncan's *Here's to Canada* (1942) and concluded his letter with the following appropriate piece of doggerel.

It needs no Samuel Bronfman
It needs no Sheriff Scott
To make a book that has a look
Of something that it[']s not.

For every page is charming
And every chapter filled
With simple truth disarming
All thought that it's distilled.⁵⁶

Since *Canada* was never published in the traditional sense, reviews continued to appear many years after it was first issued. With one major exception, the reviews were highly favourable both to Leacock's story and to the book considered as an aesthetic object.⁵⁷ The exception was A.G. Bailey's critical notice in the *Canadian Historical Review*. Read today Bailey's review reminds one of the reviews of the works of Pierre Berton and Peter Newman written by academic historians. Bailey criticized Leacock for not making 'use of numerous special studies which now appear indispensable to the general historian.' Either by haste or caprice, Leacock was unnecessarily selective, and he had omitted the telling of important events in his chronicle. Bailey instanced a number of these omissions such as the siege of Beauséjour in the expulsion of the Acadians. He also questioned several of Leacock's generalizations. Was the continent really empty before the coming of the Europeans, Bailey asked? Similarly, he queried, is it a certainty that the Mayans migrated across the Atlantic? But the review was not altogether damning. *Canada*, Bailey conceded, was written with colour and zest, and it was impossible not to be carried along by Leacock's infectious enthusiasm and by his abiding faith in the country's future.⁵⁸

One misconception about *Canada* is that it was 'banned from the schools of Ontario because it had been published by a liquor company.'⁵⁹ In fact the opposite is true. Not only were more copies of the book distributed in Ontario than in any other province, but the book was also recommended as a text for grades six, seven, and ten by Ontario's Ministry of Education.⁶⁰ But the misconception does have some basis in fact elsewhere in the country. In 1959 Seagram's was told to stop distribution of the book in British Columbia because its distribution contravened the anti-advertising sections of the B.C. Liquor Act (specifically section 83). When the provincial archivist, Willard Ireland, was asked his opinion of the Liquor Board's ruling, he pointed out that the book had been in the provincial library since 1941. No fuss had been made in British Columbia in 1953 when the Governor General presented the Calvert Trophy for the Dominion Drama Festi-

val or in 1955 when Seagram's exhibit of Canadian paintings was prominently displayed.⁶¹ The incident occasioned an editorial in the *Vancouver Sun* in which the editor bluntly commented: 'That such a book as this should be fouled by this petty law is disgusting. No. Not even Stephen Leacock would laugh.'⁶²

The greatest misconception about Leacock's *Canada* – namely, that it is 'a private and limited edition' – is difficult to dispel, in spite of the evidence presented in this paper. The story of the book's publication should serve as ample warning to any collector that a statement of limited edition does not guarantee rarity. If the phrase 'limited edition' is to have any meaning, the edition must carry a statement of the actual number of copies printed, and individual copies should be numbered and signed.⁶³ Even this practice, by itself, would not prevent unscrupulous publishers from running 'their so-called limited editions through the presses more than once.'⁶⁴ In publishing *Canada*, however, the House of Seagram had the best of intentions, to inspire faith in Canadian ideals through its gift of the best in Canadian book-making.

NOTES

- 1 The asking price is not untypical. Catalogue 66 (item 264) issued in Jan. 1984 by Quill & Brush of Bethesda, Maryland, lists another copy for \$150. See also Van Allen Bradley's *The Book Collector's Handbook of Values*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: Putnam, 1982), p. 336, where the market value of the book is said to be between \$125 and \$150.
- 2 *Address by Louis Blake Duff Given at a Dinner by the Stephen Leacock Memorial Association on the Occasion of the Unveiling of a Bronze Bust of Stephen Leacock by Elizabeth Wyn Wood* (Fort Erie, Ont.: Review Company, 1951), pp [10-11].
- 3 John Mappin, 'Privately Published Limited Editions,' *Amtmann Circle Bulletin*, 3 (Summer 1985): 5-7. Mappin's source of information was Donald J. Deans who worked for Seagram's in public relations. See also John Carter, *ABC for Book-Collectors* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), p. 115.
- 4 Carl Spadoni, 'The Publishing History of Leacock's *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future*,' *Amtmann Circle Bulletin*, 3 (Fall 1985): 11-12.
- 5 Born and educated in Orillia, Mainer was a frequent contributor of short stories to Canadian magazines. His principal work is *Nancy McVeigh of the Monk Road* (1908). See Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, 2d ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), p. 725.
- 6 Tape recording located at the Simcoe County Archives. Mainer's speech is summarized in Ralph Curry's *Stephen Leacock: Humorist and Humanist* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 310-11, where Furniss's name is misspelled. Two errors in the account concern the time at which Leacock signed the contract for the book and the amount he was actually paid to write it. Also, in his

correspondence with Leacock, Furniss identifies his position as the Gazette's sales manager.

- 7 Memo titled 'Subjects for Books,' 3 pages, [ca. 1940], Seagram Museum, Waterloo, Ont. (hereafter smw). Company documents are quoted with the permission of smw. I am grateful to the museum's archival staff for assistance.
- 8 List titled 'Suggested Authors Who Might Write the Complete Story,' 1 page, [ca. 1940], smw.
- 9 'Over a sherry in my office, the professor, whom I'd never met before, and I agreed that we could do without a questionable adjective applied to Newfoundlanders, a slipping reference to Winnipeg (afterall, my hometown!), and two quite unnecessary remarks about some prominent politicians. It was all very amicable.' Bronfman quoted by David M. Legate, *Stephen Leacock: A Biography* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 234.
- 10 Furniss to Leacock, 7 Aug. 1940, Stephen Leacock Memorial Home, Orillia, Ont., (hereafter sl).
- 11 Bassett to Leacock, 16 July 1940, sl.
- 12 Leacock to Bassett, 18 July 1940, sl. Leacock's unpublished letters are quoted with the permission of his literary executor, Mrs. Barbara Nimmo.
- 13 Furniss to Leacock, 12 Aug. 1940, sl.
- 14 Quoted by Curry, *Stephen Leacock*, p. 147.
- 15 Leacock, 'Mariposa Moves on' in *Happy Stories Just to Laugh at* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1943), p. 204.
- 16 Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (New York: John Lane; London: John Lane, the Bodley Head; Toronto: Bell & Cockburn, 1914), pp. 10, 203.
- 17 Leacock, 'The Strenuous Age' in *Wet Wit & Dry Humor, Distilled from the Pages of Stephen Leacock* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931), p. 192.
- 18 Leacock to Napier, 20 July 1940, smw.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Furniss to Leacock, 7 Aug. 1940, sl.
- 21 Leacock to Furniss, [9 Aug. 1940], sl.
- 22 Leacock, 'The Story of Canada: The Rise of a Great Country,' typescript, 4 pages, [Sept. 1941], smw.
- 23 Furniss to Leacock, 12 Aug. 1940, sl.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Practically no documentary evidence is available at sl or smw on *Canada's* illustrative work. Mappin has kindly provided me with the following information which he obtained from Deans. Bronfman asked the president of the Royal Canadian Academy (RCA) to recommend the artists. They were chosen on their standing and membership in the RCA. (Several of the artists, however, were not members of the RCA at the time; Adam Sherriff Scott, for example, was elected to the RCA in 1944.) The artists were paid between \$500 and \$800 per painting and as high as \$1,000 in certain instances. The paintings hung in the offices at Seagram's,

- but many of them found their way into the homes of company executives.
- 26 'Memorandum re Illustrations – Canada Book,' enclosed in Leacock's letter to R.T. Ferguson, 2 Nov. 1940, SMW.
- 27 Leacock to Napier, Furniss, and A.E. Evans, enclosed in Leacock's letter to Ferguson, 23 March 1941, SMW.
- 28 Scott to Ferguson, 27 March 1941, and Ferguson to Leacock, 29 March 1941, both at SMW. One of Peggy Shaw's paintings, 'College Calling,' was used as the frontispiece to Leacock's *Too Much College* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939). She was the daughter of Mrs. H.T. (Fitz) Shaw, a close friend of Leacock who assisted him in the preparation of several of his books.
- 29 Transcription of shorthand note, 4 Feb. 1941, SL.
- 30 George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. (Walter G. Harrap) to Leacock, 15 Aug. 1940, SL.
- 31 Enclosed with Leacock's letter to Ferguson, 3 April 1941, SMW.
- 32 Leacock to Ferguson, 26 July 1941, SL.
- 33 Ferguson to Leacock, 12 Aug. 1941, SL.
- 34 Usher Caplan, *Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982), pp. 84, 86, 192; Caplan, 'A.M. Klein: An Introduction' (Ph. D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1976), pp. 84-85. See also Saidye Rosner Bronfman, *My Sam: A Memoir by His Wife* (Erin, Ont.: privately printed at The Porcupine's Quill, 1982), pp. 59-60.
- 35 Klein, 'Memorandum: The Making of Canada by Stephen Leacock,' 19 Sept. 1941, [p.2], Klein Papers, National Archives of Canada, MG 30, D 167 (hereafter NAC). Quotations from Klein's unpublished writings are made with the permission of Colman and Sandor Klein. I am grateful to Mr. Ronald Finegold, the librarian of Montreal's Jewish Public Library, for drawing my attention to the Klein Papers.
- 36 Ferguson, 'Memo of Conference with Dr. Leacock,' 27 Sept. 1941, p. 1, NAC.
- 37 Ferguson, 'Memo of Conference with Dr. Leacock – 18 Oct. 1941,' 20 Oct. 1941, 2 pages; Ferguson to Bronfman, 27 Oct. 1941, enclosing a letter from Leacock, 26 Oct. 1941; and Hayes to Bronfman, 29 Oct. 1941. All at NAC.
- 38 Leacock to Ferguson, 22 April 1941, SL.
- 39 Leacock to Ferguson, 26 July 1941, SL.
- 40 Leacock to Ferguson, 2 April 1943, SMW.
- 41 Deans to M.M. Schneckenburger, 5 Sept. 1957; Deans to F. Healy, 3 Jan. 1958; Deans to Schneckenburger, 15 June 1959; 'Fact Sheet [on Leacock's *Canada*],' 1 page, Nov. 1977. All located at SMW.
- 42 'Government,' [1941-42], 3 pages, NAC. Another list at NAC, dated 31 Dec. 1942, itemizes 21,101 copies needed for a later distribution.
- 43 Ferguson to Leacock, 19 July 1943, SL.
- 44 Deans to Schneckenburger, 5 Sept. 1957. 'The first 5 editions [i.e. impressions] were printed from the original type but to assure the continuance of high quality and fine printing, the entire book had to be re-set for later editions [i.e. impressions].'

- 45 A copy in red leather sold at the Montreal Book Auction in the early 1970s for \$85. See *Book Auction Records*, 80 (1974): 558. In 1987 another copy was offered for sale by Joseph Patrick Books, Recent Acquisition No. 10 (item 97), for \$200.
- 46 'Red List,' [Dec. 1942 – April 1943], 9 pages, NAC.
- 47 Several drafts of this inscription and of many other inscriptions are at NAC in Klein's hand. Klein even drafted the inscription for his own deluxe copy. See Caplan, *Like One That Dreamed*, p. 86. It is questionable whether Mackenzie King's copy was the first printed copy of *Canada*. On Mother's Day in 1942 Samuel Bronfman presented his wife with a copy of *Canada* which was inscribed: 'First among the people of Canada to whom this book is dedicated are the mothers thereof. First among the mothers of Canada is she to whom this first volume is inscribed, my wife, and our mother, mainstay of our happy family life.' See Saidye Rosner Bronfman, *My Sam*, p. 63.
- 48 Allan Bernfeld to Schneckenburger, 31 Jan. 1963, SMW.
- 49 'Gin Quiz,' *Marketing*, 6 March 1964, p. 25.
- 50 Bernfeld, 'Story on Leacock Book for MARKETING,' 2 pages, Jan. 1964, SMW.
- 51 Deans to F. Healy, 3 Jan. 1958, and Gazette Printing Company (R.S. White Jr.) to Bernfeld, 13 April 1964, both at SMW.
- 52 Bernfeld to Deans, 10 Aug. 1961, SMW.
- 53 'Fact Sheet [on Leacock's *Canada*],' 1 page, Nov. 1977, SMW.
- 54 'Dorothy Duncan Tells Women's Art Society National Consciousness Needed,' *Gazette* (Montreal), 9 Feb. 1943, p. 5.
- 55 [John Bassett?] 'A Literature for Canada,' *Gazette* (Montreal), 12 Feb. 1943, p. 8. When he received an inscribed deluxe copy of *Canada*, Bassett commented: 'Of course I cannot say anything about the beauty of the book, because it might be considered bad taste on my part, as President of the Printing House which produced it for you.... I know you [Bronfman] had in mind, in publishing this book, the thought that by so doing you would inspire Canadians to have a greater pride in and a deeper love of their country. This purpose I feel will be achieved.' Bassett to Bronfman, 30 Sept. 1942, SMW.
- 56 Leacock to Duncan, 15 Feb. 1943, Hugh MacLennan Papers, McGill University Library. Leacock's doggerel is a parody of the twelfth stanza of 'Riders of the Plains' (1878), which is generally ascribed to Constable Thomas Boys of the North West Mounted Police. The stanza is quoted by Leacock on p. 189 of *Canada*.
- 57 Some reviews are the following: [Rhys Crossin], 'A Handsome Book about Canada,' *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 March 1952, p. 14; Jean Béraud, *La Presse* (Montreal), 6 Feb. 1943, p. 28; Howard S. Ross, *Monitor* (Montreal), 13 Jan. 1944, p. 15; Catherine Cumming, *Sarnia Gazette*, 2 Aug. 1962, p. 14; and Roger Duhamel, *La Revue Moderne* (June 1943): 15-16. SMW has a file of reviews, but unfortunately many of these lack pertinent bibliographical data. Excerpts from reviews are quoted in 'Press Comments Hailed Book, Seagram Role,' *Horizons* 5 (Jan. 1962): 1-2. With tongue in cheek Klein reviewed *Canada* in the *Canadian Jewish*

- Chronicle*, 19 Feb. 1943, p. 4, extolling Bronfman's preface as 'one of the finest credos for Canadians that has ever been published.'
- 58 A.G. Bailey, *Canadian Historical Review* xxiv, no. 3 (Sept. 1943): 306-08. The only other harsh comment that I have encountered about *Canada* is Carl Berger's dismissal of the book as 'an indifferent history of Canada.' See Berger, 'The Other Mr. Leacock,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 55 (Winter 1973): 38. See also Ian Ross Robertson, 'The Historical Leacock' in *Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal*, ed. David Staines (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1986), p. 34.
- 59 Mappin, 'Privately Published Limited Editions,' p. 7.
- 60 Ontario. Department of Education, *Visual Education Catalogue*, supplement to no. 1, (Sept. 1949): 55.
- 61 'Leacock Book Banned, B.C. Liquor Board Doubles as Censor,' *Vancouver Sun*, 2 Feb. 1959, p. 6.
- 62 'Leacock Won't Laugh,' *Vancouver Sun*, 2 Feb. 1959, p. 4. The banning of the book also raised a howl of protest from the *Sun*'s book editor. See Donald Stainsby, 'Fresh Literary Breeze Matched by Foul Odors from Victoria,' *Vancouver Sun*, 7 Feb. 1959, p. 5. According to Bernfeld's 'Story of Leacock Book for MARKETING,' Seagram's was also not permitted to mail copies of *Canada* to Saskatchewan residents. I have been unable to verify whether in fact this was the case.
- 63 The most blatant example of a Canadian author's work that I have come across, where the term 'limited edition' has been rendered meaningless, is Ralph Connor's *The Man from Glengarry: A Tale of the Ottawa* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1901). It was advertised as a 'special edition limited to 50,000 Copies.' See Russell Ash and Brian Lake, *Bizarre Books* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 161. The authors refer to Connor's book as the 'World Record "Limited Edition."'
- 64 Margaret Haller, *The Book Collector's Fact Book* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1976), p. 177.