
The publication of Mary Jane Edwards’s scholarly edition of *The Golden Dog* is a high-water mark in the scholarship of early Canadian literature. It is both a massive tome in itself and the culmination of one of Canada’s most important scholarly projects, the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEECT). The Centre has been in operation for more than thirty years. While other series of critical and scholarly editions will come and go, it seems certain that the fastidious and thorough efforts of CEECT are not likely to be repeated in English Canada. Consider first the impressive amount of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funding required to support such a multi-volume project over three decades and secondly the vision, commitment, and tenacity of Mary Jane Edwards as CEECT’s general editor. She was with the project from its beginnings at Carleton University in 1979, and she made it the major undertaking of her academic life. While she has had her critics over the years, no one can gainsay her achievement in overseeing a series of texts designed particularly to reflect “most nearly” each author’s intention.

*The Golden Dog* edition is the twelfth and final CEECT text, and it is certainly the largest. The paperback edition is one of the heaviest books I have ever held. Over 1150 pages in length, it weighs in at close to five pounds. Length and weight aside, it is a masterly piece of scholarship. As such, it is the culmination of Edwards’s career and her unwavering commitment to reclaiming the early literature of this country as it was meant to be.

It seems fitting, then, that Edwards should serve as editor for both the first and last book in the series, though that was not her original plan. She set the standard for her assigned editors at CEECT with her edition of *The History of Emily Montague* (1985). Elizabeth Brady, who in 1976 compiled a bibliographical essay on *The Golden Dog* for the Bibliographical Society of Canada, was named as editor of the Kirby volume, but she had to withdraw from her commitment when the CEECT project was well underway. Thus, William Kirby’s novel had to languish to the end.

In fact, it has been over a decade since the eleventh volume in the series, Catharine Parr Traill’s *The Backwoods of Canada*, appeared. In the meantime Carleton University Press, which had published the
series from its inception, had closed down and turned the project over to McGill-Queen’s University Press. During CEECT’s final years, Edwards had to complete her research into the publishing history of *The Golden Dog* and deal with the limited funding and infrastructure available to her at this concluding stage of the series. Undaunted, she persevered and has produced “a critically reliable text of Kirby’s iconic work … that places this text in as complete a historical context as possible” (xx). And what a story this hefty volume has to tell – of authorial effort, disappointment, and stubbornness on Kirby’s part, of crushing copyright laws as they affected him and other Canadian writers, of thoughtful and supportive literary friends, of willful and deceitful publishers, and of the problems every Canadian writer – then as now – faced in seeking payment and a readership for his or her book.

William Kirby (1817–1906) is an interesting case. English-born and a Loyalist by heritage, he immigrated to Cincinnati in 1832 with his family where he received an advanced education while working as a tanner. In the aftermath of the Rebellions of 1837, he came north in support of the British cause, settling in “old Niagara” (Niagara-on-the-Lake). Still, early on he developed a passionate interest in Quebec City and the French presence in Canada, and *The Golden Dog*, his only novel, grew out of a visit to Quebec City. For some years he owned and edited *The Niagara Mail* and wrote occasional poetry; however, it could not be said of him that he was ever a full-time creative writer. A political appointment as a collector of customs in 1871 finally provided him with a steady income. But in the meantime he wrote in passionate bursts; his publications include *The U.E.: A Tale of Upper Canada* (1859) and *Canadian Idylls* (1894). *The Golden Dog* first appeared in 1877, and it is largely upon the novel’s merits and many publications that his literary reputation rests.

A richly decorated and overwritten historical romance, *The Golden Dog* is a labour to read today. It is a diffuse story that is stylistically rich and often excessive. It leisurely plays out three plots, luxuriating in evocative but prolix descriptions and numerous literary digressions. Though most of his friends and editors urged Kirby to make cuts in his manuscript, he complied only minimally and resisted stubbornly to the end. One can readily see their reasoning and may wish that he had been more attentive to their requests. His book was much too long, too slow moving, and too indulgent of his personal interests. Still, those friends and supporters also saw it as one of the finest historical romances written in Canada, and they told Kirby so.
Compare *The Golden Dog* to a much shorter and less conspicuously literary romance written in the same decade by a Canadian writer. James de Mille’s *The Lily and the Cross* (1874) focuses on Fortress Louisbourg when French naval power was at its zenith along the Atlantic coast. A practical professional writer who knew the value of brevity and humour in telling a good story, de Mille reached his readers in Canada and the United States through the Boston firm of Lee and Shepard. Unlike Kirby, de Mille made money in the process and sidestepped the need to construct large metaphors and to integrate swaths of early Canadian history, tempting as that challenge was at the time.

For his part Kirby envisioned *The Golden Dog* as a much bigger project, one that tried to situate the founding experiences of a bicultural Canada in a complex narrative of old Quebec. Finally finding a publisher in New York-based Lovell, Adam, Wesson and Co. in 1877, he was victimized by the firm’s failure to copyright the novel for him in the United States. The result was a rash of pirated “impressions” of the Lovell text that continued to appear long after that company folded. Two decades later, in 1897, Kirby thought he had a favourable agreement with L.C. Page & Co. of Boston (the same publisher who treated Lucy Maud Montgomery so shabbily) only to learn that what he was assured would appear as his authorized edition had been much shortened by Page. At least he received some compensation from the small royalty for the copies sold by the Boston firm. The story goes on and on. Well past Kirby’s death in 1906 unauthorized and further mutilated editions continued to appear, including the New Canadian Library edition of 1969. Edwards’s account of several French editions of *Le Chien d’or* shows Kirby was much more in control of the text he wanted to see.

The components of Edwards’s edition can scarcely be summarized in a brief review. Suffice it to say that she describes each edition in detail and lists the many impressions of each edition from 1877 forward (I am guessing there were close to seventy-five impressions in all), and she includes a judicial mix of reader and reviewer responses to the book as it was received in its time. She provides detailed endnotes dealing with Kirby’s references and allusions (literary, classical, historical, and linguistic), his use of historical sources, and his occasional exaggerations and errors in such usage. Her extensive “Editor’s Introduction” (with notes) runs to over 170 pages, while her explanatory notes are 129 pages long.
This is, then, a dense and rich edition. I imagine that the fastidious William Kirby would be delighted, were he able to see, finally, a volume that reflects such close attention to his beloved text. *The Golden Dog* is an important piece of indigenous scholarship contributing to the record of nineteenth-century writing in Canada. As well, it is the culmination of CEECT, a scholarly venture of the first order in the country’s cultural and literary history.

MICHAEL PETERMAN
*Trent University, Professor Emeritus*


Since its initial use in 1925 by the British satire magazine *Punch* to describe “people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like,” scholars have applied the term middlebrow to a broad variety of texts and tastes that are neither highbrow nor lowbrow. To better define the aspirations and achievements of middlebrow culture, and to explore its institutional, gendered, class-based, and racial dimensions, contemporary critical discourse engages with the historic production and reception of films, music, books, and journals that engage middlebrow sensibilities. As part of a larger collaboration between researchers Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, and the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory (CWRC), the *Magazines, Travel and Middlebrow Culture in Canada, 1925–1960* website takes as its focus six middlebrow Canadian periodicals: *Mayfair, La Revue Moderne, Canadian Home Journal, Chatelaine, La Revue Populaire,* and *Maclean’s.* Selected because they fall comfortably between experimental “little magazines” and mass-circulation pulps and tabloids, Hammill and Smith argue that these titles were at their peak from 1925 to 1960 and during that time helped to develop key facets of Canadian middlebrow culture.

The website is navigated via a sidebar that gathers, in a vertical column, a dozen links to the site’s content. The “About the Project”