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Three Fredericton Poets

Writers of
The University of New Brunswick
and the New Dominion

Alumni Oration, Encania, May 19, 1933

BY

LORNE PIERCE, LL.D., Litt.D.

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To
Dr. and Mrs. Cecil C. Jones

Three Fredericton Poets

"For life is a pageant through which we move; each day has its own picture; there is the play of children; the knowledge of men and women and its fulfilment; the wisdom of later ages.... All press on majestically, trailing with them the gifts of the journey."

I should like to speak to you for a few minutes about a small group of men who graduated from these halls. Because of the genuineness of their emotional experiences, the depth and range of their thoughts, and the memorable way in which they clothed their dreams and desires, they made this University a cornerstone of the Canadian Palace of Art, and established firmly the only real and lasting dynasty we recognize in our Dominion, that royal company of poets and seers. Their mantle falls upon all of us to-day. From henceforth we are a part of that great tradition.

THE SIXTIES

To judge rightly of an author; we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another.

—SAMUEL JOHNSON, *Life of Dryden*

King's College, founded in this City in 1820, was succeeded in 1828 by The College of New Brunswick, and by the University of New Brunswick in 1860. A memorable year was 1860 in the history of Canada. In that year Leonard Tilley, Premier of New Brunswick, dreamed of a Maritime Federation. In 1860 Charles G. D. Roberts was born ten miles up the St. John, at Douglas, later moving with his family to Westcock Parsonage. The following year, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman and Wilfred Campbell were born, Duncan Campbell Scott and Pauline Johnson in 1862, and the Group of the Sixties was complete.

The Growth of Nationhood

It is difficult for you, no doubt, to imagine just what those births meant to Canada. Up to this time there had been no conscious tradition, no nationhood. Although this soil was built on heroic proportions, and had measured the shadows of heroic men, our ideals were still borrowed from elsewhere. Now you cannot have a birthright nation whose political fashions come from London, whose industrial fashions are derived from Wall Street, whose sartorial fashions are imported from Paris, and whose spiritual fashions are harvested from everywhere. It could not be a nation at all; it would be an air plant.

Colonial Writers

A native art and literature draw their strength from the native soil; their roots go down deep into the warm loam of this earth we call our homeland. For that reason the arts and letters of a country become its proudest assets, the most eloquent symbols of a separate existence and conscious destiny.

Until 1860 many thought we were in rather a bad way. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, speaking at Montreal, in 1867, said

that we did not own many great writers, judged by world standards, but that such men as we did have—Haliburton, Howe, Garneau, Heavyside and Sangster—"were calculated to our own meridian." That is true of every country and age. "Each age must write its own books ... The books of an older period will not fit this." (*The American Scholar*.) Both Emerson and McGee knew that a community has a style of its own, a definite grace and vitality which must exist before any individual style can emerge at all. Since the significant literature of a period blossoms from the conscious life of the time, it will have value, importance at any rate, for the people of that day. Much of contemporary literature must inevitably fade. "He can help us no more," said Goethe of a certain poet. The same is true of writers in every day and place. Yet they once did help, and deserve the gratitude of a later day. While much of our literature was derivative, it was rich in high courage, in the robust qualities of the pioneers. The French, Puritan and Loyalist traditions each contributed something to this frontier literature, tenacious patriotism, strong moral purpose and healthy mysticism. Out of these fierce loyalties sprang a birthright literature and art.

A Birthright Literature

And then the Group of the Sixties were born, with Roberts at their head, and everything changed. In the very year that the Quebec Conference was held François Xavier Garneau died, which reminds us of a parallel tradition in French Canada. Etienne Parent had blazoned across the top of his paper: "Notre Langue, Nos Institutions et Nos Lois!" That legend became the rallying cry of the national group in Quebec. It fired Garneau to write his epoch-making *Histoire*. Crémazie turned the history of his people into epic verse; Fréchette fashioned it into rhetorical song; De Gaspé supplemented it with tales of *les anciens Canadiens*; Gérin-Lajoie built it into romance, and it has influenced every writer and artist, teacher and statesman in Quebec to this day.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, that by labour and intense study ... I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die. For which cause ... I applied myself to that resolution ... to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end—that were a toilsome vanity,—but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion ... might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British islands as my world....

—JOHN MILTON, *The Reason of Church Government*

In 1880, when Roberts' *Orion* appeared, an authentic English Canadian literature had at last arrived. Parliament and people acclaimed this Fredericton youth of twenty years with unrestrained joy. At last a singer had come who proved that one might sing the new songs of the Dominion with the grace and charm our elder poets in Britain possessed.

The Interpreters

From all this you will have guessed the importance of those first voices of the New Dominion, those birthright spokesmen and interpreters of this young child of nations. It is a good thing that, when the political roll of the nations is called, Canada should stand in her place and count one as a nation in its own right. But it is a greater thing that, when the

spiritual roll of the nations is called, she should also count one, judged by her contributions to beauty, truth and urbanity.

With the insistent pressure of great and aggressive civilizations upon us, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to be our own unique selves. It is to the writers of Canada that we owe our growing sense of worth, dignity and destiny. No part of Canada boasts so proud a record as these Maritimes, and no University has surpassed your own, my own, in these gifts of unspeakable though intangible worth, to Canada and to the world.

My time is all too short to tell of those who have passed through these halls, to adorn the intellectual life of the nation. But I must speak of three, whose names are written in letters of gold upon the pantheon of our national letters: Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and Francis Sherman.

Roberts was born in 1860, Carman in 1861, and Sherman in 1871. Canada was a frontier nation, both socially and spiritually. Its epic was federation, and its lyrics were highways and railroads. It may assist you in recalling the world of that time if I remind you, that Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, that Schopenhauer died in 1860, and that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was published in 1879. Forces were at work which ushered in a new age, intellectually and socially.

George R. Parkin

At Westcock Parsonage Roberts, his sister Elizabeth, and his brothers, Theodore, Goodridge and William, had drunk deep the wine of the old tradition, but there, above "the journeying tides of Fundy," they had also breathed the beauty and the spirit of the new Dominion. Moving to Fredericton they found themselves in the flood-tide of the spirit of the times. George Parkin in the Grammar School, and George Foster in the University, made the Golden Age of Greece and the Silver Age of Rome living realities. They could match the parallel lives of Plutarch with master men of their own race and time, knit the deeds of lost empires with the budding of new nations, and sing the songs of Homer, Virgil and Horace, Swinburne and Arnold as if time knew no forward or back. Little wonder, then, that young Roberts and Carman made verse translations of the Greeks and Latin poets, and early experimented with their own singing periods. And what a group they moved in, Barry Straton, their cousin, Ganong, Hazen, Bridges, Raymond, MacLaren, White and Carter. Has any Canadian university an equal?

The Young Editor and Professor

Roberts left the university at nineteen, married, and the following year published his first book, *Orion*. The young principal of Chatham Grammar School was called to be Goldwin Smith's editor, in Toronto, at the age of twenty-three. From *The Week* he went to King's as professor, and enjoyed the ten most fruitful years of his life. Roberts wrote Carman, who had proceeded to Edinburgh University, that both had a mission as interpreters of the young Dominion. They both felt that they were called to an apostolate, and such it proved. Joined in birth by the ties of kinship, fellow students and playmates through youth, pilgrims together into forests and far places as young men, champions and strengtheners of each other to the end,—they explained Canada to herself, interpreted her to others, and heralded to the world the birth of a new land of song.

Reflects the Spirit of the Maritimes

Roberts was a schoolboy of only seventeen when "Memnon" appeared in *Scribner's*. When many are just squaring away for life's work, he had turned out volumes of poetry, fiction, animal stories (of which he was the pioneer), histories and translations. Into these multiplying golden vessels he impatiently poured the rich wine of his life, or in his own words:

To Beauty and to Truth I heaped
My sacrificial fires.

He not only reflected, but in himself epitomized, the beauty, the traditions and the enterprises of these Maritimes.

Why should not a Maritime university explore these writers? Why not deliberately build them into the great tradition of English literature where they belong? These men drank their fill of beauty here in the Valley of the St. John, in the Tantramar meadowlands, upon the Ardise hills, and in Grand Pré. Then why not, since their lips were nourished and their eyes ravished by this fair land, why not make the beauty they knew lead to beauty everywhere?

Do the Maritimes speak in "Indian Summer," "The Clearing," "Fredericton, in May Time," "Canadian Streams," "The Silver Thaw"? Where, indeed, do they not speak? Take these lines, where as always he identifies himself with the beauty, the spirit, of these Provinces:

The mystic river whence you take your name,
River of hubbub, raucous Tantramar,
Untamable and changeable as flame,
It called me and compelled me from afar,
Shaping my soul with its impetuous stress.
When in its gaping channel deep withdrawn
Its waves ran crying of the wilderness
And winds and stars and dawn,
How I companioned them in speed sublime,
Led out a vagrant on the hills of Time!

—*Ave!*

Does not the robust moral purpose of the Maritimes reveal itself in "Kinship," "The Heal-All," "A Song of Growth," "Earth's Complines," or in this:

I am the strife that shapes
The stature of man,
The pang no hero escapes,
The blessing, the ban;
I am the hammer that moulds
The Iron of our Race,
The omen of God in our blood that a people beholds,
The foreknowledge veiled in our face.

—*Autochthon*

Does not the work men do, down here beside the sea, find a faithful expression in that sequence of noble sonnets, *Songs of the Common Day*, and in the lyric beauty of *The Book of the Native*? Take this from "An Epitaph for a Husbandman":

His fields he had to leave,
His orchards cool and dim;
The clods he used to cleave
Now cover him.

But the green, growing things
Lean kindly to his sleep—
White roots and wandering strings
Closer they creep.

Because he loved them long
And with them bore his part,
Tenderly now they throng
About his heart.

—*The Book of the Native*

Or this:

Here clove the keels of centuries ago
Where now unvisited the flats lie bare.
Here seethed the sweep of journeying waters, where
No more the tumbling floods of Fundy flow,
And only in the samphire pipes creep slow
The salty currents of the sap. The air
Hums desolately with wings that seaward fare,
Over the lonely reaches beating low.
The wastes of hard and meagre weeds are thronged
With murmurs of a past that time has wronged;
And ghosts of many an ancient memory
Dwell by the brackish pools and ditches blind,
In these low-lying pastures of the wind,
These marshes pale and meadows by the sea.

—*The Sea Flats*

Does not the very soul of Canada, its tradition, pride and purpose, its beauty and its vastness, speak in such poems as: "O Child of Nations," "The Native," "Awake, My Country!" and kindred ballads, odes and lyrics? Proud should we be that a son of this university made all this vocal in his undying song.

The range of Roberts' poetry went far beyond the patriotic note. No poet among us has so successfully achieved the cosmic vision as his sonnets "Beyond the Tops of Time," "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night" and others clearly prove. None has, in his quest for experience, foraged so far, or plucked the roses of beauty and remembrance in so many gardens. This river winding to the sea bore him into the company of the enduring singers of our race.

But we must leave him here, with lines he loves. They are entitled "The Summons," and I rather think he would wish that I should pass them on to you as his l'envoi, perhaps that, too, of the class of 1879 to the class of 1933:

Deeps of the wind-torn West,
Flaming and desolate,
Up springs my soul from its rest
With your banners at the gate.

'Neath this o'ermastering sky
How could the heart lie still
Or the sluggish will
Content in the old chains lie,
When over the lonely hill
Your torn wild scarlets cry.

Up, Soul, and out
Into the deeps alone,
To the long peal and the shout

Of those trumpets blown and blown!

BLISS CARMAN

And long it was not after when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy....

—JOHN MILTON, *Apology for Smectymnus*

I should like to pause and read some of the letters which passed between Carman and his teacher Parkin. They loved each other like father and son. No teacher lives more completely in a pupil than Parkin does in Carman. In a very real sense Parkin shaped his mind, fashioned his music, and to his dying day imparted to the shy, lonely faun the unfailing love and understanding he must have or perish. Chesterfield admonished his son; Parkin shared all the wealth of his mind and heart with Carman on terms of equality.

I also wish there were time to read from the letters of Carman's boyhood and youth. Those to and from his mother are among the most lovely ever written. Then there are others, to and from Roberts, for instance. They began when Roberts was nine and Carman eight years old. Bliss had sent Charlie a hatchet for Christmas, and, in the earliest writing of the Dean of Canadian Letters extant, Roberts tells Carman that it was the very thing he wanted, for he had two hammers and two saws and two gimlets, and just needed a hatchet!

Class Records

I have in my possession Carman's class records during his collegiate and university days. The year he graduated from the Grammar School, Parkin classed his reading as "Very Poor"; Mathematics, "Fair"; Classics, ninety-five per cent.; and English Composition seventy-nine per cent. In his first year at the University I find that the future poet was examined on the preparation of hydrogen gas. He was also asked in an examination to draw a map of Ireland, showing the west coast from Bantry Bay to Donegal Bay. An incipient poet may have played with the tradition of the Blessed Isles, the Land of the Heart's Desire, somewhere in the Atlantic as his pencil traced the ragged coast line. In an English Literature test he had, among other things, to classify the nouns, pronouns and verbs, and correct or justify: "The rhinoceros is a kind of unicorn," and "A greater instance of a man's being a blockhead I do not know." There was plenty of spice in the papers of those days! In 1880 Professor Wilkinson questioned the Juniors: "How are we to acquire copiousness in our words?" Also: "Propose a plan of study of English Literature of the last 500 years." Examinations then required oecumenical knowledge, pens as swift as arrows, and wits that were "the sworn companions of the wind!"

Early Poetic Flights

I have also Carman's early attempts at verse. They began about this time, translations of Horace, Virgil and Homer, as well as exercises in the ballade and triolet in which most of the young poets of the time experimented. There was little promise of future success. He appeared to be at sea as to his career. Even at Edinburgh, where he roomed with Pickard, the Gilchrist Scholar, Murray MacLaren being registered in Medicine at the same time, he took lectures in Literature and Mathematics, but wrote no examinations. Only at Harvard, where he came under the influence of Professor Child, the Ballad authority, and of Professor Royce, who assisted him in co-ordinating his scattered ideas into a working system,

did he find himself.

Choice of a Career

The early numbers of *The University of New Brunswick Monthly* reveal frequent mention of Carman's name, and contain a number of tentative poems and some critical articles. The social and athletic life of the university, in which Roberts starred, apparently left him cold. He preferred a few cronies, long walks and his Malecite canoe. *The Harvard Monthly* carried a number of his poems, at fairly regular intervals, revealing a progressive skill in his craft. The great event, however, was his new friend, Richard Hovey, the Black Richard of the *Songs from Vagabondia*, a joint work that was more than a mere episode in American Literature. His first book, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*, in 1893, gave Carman an unquestioned place among the English lyric poets. The title poem was written at Windsor, whither Carman had gone to spend the summer with Roberts. His first book and his last blossomed from his native soil. At the age of thirty-three Carman did a daring thing; he committed himself entirely to poetry as an avocation, and never looked back. When Carman gave up teaching for law, and law for civil engineering, and ultimately everything for poetry, his father whimsically remarked in the last letter he was ever to write: "Bliss has decided to use his brain less and his literature more."

His Thought

It is impossible to sum up the thought and style of Carman in a moment. He was a lyric poet, and depended upon music, mysterious effects, pageantry of colour and ecstasy for his effects. Whatever thought he had cannot be called a system. It began with the orthodox beliefs of his home and Church, as did that of Roberts. He accepted God and immortality without question. He loved the Church, and never missed Easter Holy Communion no matter what the weather. For many years he had been sidesman in the little church in New Canaan, Connecticut. When asked what book had exerted the greatest influence upon his style, he replied *The Book of Common Prayer*. As for the rest, he drew upon Parkin's classical legacy, Arnold's critical standards, Emerson's transcendentalism, Delsarte's unitrinian theories (which he imbibed from Mrs. Richard Hovey and Mary Perry King), then later Yoga, and still later Theosophy to which we owe "Shamballa." In all this you will discover that the systems he sampled possessed great similarity in essentials, and that, while there is a bewildering array of unrelated symbolism—mythical, Christian, oriental and medieval—still, in most of it, there recurs the idea of balance, rhythm, poise, ecstasy and personality, with a certain cosmic touch to give it all a semblance of system.

Method

From this you may have guessed that Carman was not a profound student or a systematic one. He was more; he was a seer. And he was a singer by the grace of God. His method he called "listening in," a phrase borrowed from Emerson. He found, too, in Emerson's "Method of Nature" a method well suited to himself, namely, that without haste he should await the divine moment, and prepare himself as a fitting channel for the Over Soul, the Lord of his Heart's Elation. His mind was unfettered, and his soul was a sort of ante-chamber to the universe of spiritual experience. It refused to be cramped, even at the risk of becoming vague and diffuse. He once declared to me that he abhorred the sonnet, because he could not turn round in it! He wanted plenty of room in all matters. But given a lovely landscape or seascape, and the lyric leaped to his lips. Given a sea story, something with ships and sailors and a haunting mystery, and the ballad came as ballads should. What he saw and heard and felt poured forth in unrestrained cadences, broad brush strokes, luminous fancies, divine echoes, magic and bewitchment. While Carman has not left us memorable pictures of men, as Duncan Campbell Scott has, or of the work that men do, like Roberts, his poetry is full of humanity.

A Canadian

Carman roamed far, but always at heart he was a Canadian. He and his sister Murray never failed to remember Loyalist Day. His roots were here. All his life long Carman was sustained by memories and friendships in the Maritimes. His letters to his sister, to Roberts, Parkin and others, prove that he was a Canadian and a Britisher to the core. Features of the landscape along the Silvermine, in Connecticut, or among the cloves of the Catskills appear in his poems, but the form and spirit of his great work was Canadian. He began with "Low Tide on Grand Pré," and his last published poem, which appeared in the Prince of Wales *Legion Book*, returned to his first love in the wistful beauty of "Forever and Forever." Canada, from sea to sea, was at the very centre of his being.

I was sired among the surges;
I was cubbed beside the foam;
All my heart is in its verges,
And the sea wind is my home.

I should like to quote from "Low Tide," "Vestigia," "Arnold, Master of the Scud," "The Ships of Saint John," "Over the Roofs the Honey-Coloured Moon," and others, but you know them all by heart. Always, in those lyrics and ballads, you hear the far call of this lovely valley,

And all the pleasant rivers that seek the Fundy foam,
They call me and call me to follow them home.

Theodore Goodridge Robert, another of your outstanding men of letters, caught this well in his memorial poem to Carman. I quote in part:

His is no vast repose, no seat of gold,
In some high heaven for the Saints of God:
He walks the ferny paths he knew of old,
And marks the dewdrop on the mossy sod;
He turns his head at rustle of a wing;
He knows the spruce-tops where the white-throats sing.
No golden trumpet plays him to his place,
But glad friends greet him in the beechen shade;
And from a wayside window smiles a face
To which so many of his songs were made
In his old days of singing, with brief breath,
This mortal life along from birth to death.

To the lasting credit of your Government and this University the ashes of Bliss Carman were brought home. Yonder he lies, and generations will make pilgrimages to his shrine, reading thereon his valedictory:

*Have little care that Life is brief,
And less that Art is long,
Success is in the silences,
Though fame is in the song.*

FRANCIS SHERMAN

But a book is written, not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to preserve it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may; clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him—this the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory." That is his "writing"; it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a "Book."

—JOHN RUSKIN, *Sesame and Lilies*

How the chain of interdependence grows! Roberts' full-fledged precocity in *Orion* inspired confidence in Carman. When Francis Sherman published his modest booklet *In Memorabilia Mortis*, he inscribed a copy—"To Bliss Carman from his old pupil F. S." Life grows out of life; it keeps growing when fed by sympathetic understanding.

Kipling wrote Francis Sherman: "It must be a gorgeous thing to be one of the band of new singers. You don't know how much Canada lies in your hands—and Canada doesn't either." William Archer, Matthew Arnold, Oscar Wilde, William Dean Howells and others had written Roberts, Carman, Scott and Lampman in the same vein. And yet recognition on the whole was tardy.

Careless of Fame

Francis Sherman even yet is almost unknown, save to a scant dozen perhaps. Reserved and utterly careless of fame, he pursued his banking duties as a means of livelihood. When not balancing ledgers and making reports he cultivated the garden of his soul. Fastidious as a Greek, his poems were wrought with a tireless passion for perfection. Carman had gone to Poe and Longfellow, Swinburne and Arnold for his first models; Roberts turned to Keats, Shelley and Tennyson. Francis Sherman found in William Morris and Rossetti his patterns, and equalled his masters in both medieval romance and spiritual exaltedness.

Enhanced the Poetical Tradition

Sherman enhanced the poetical tradition of this University and of the Dominion. He drew a circle round his art and stepped inside.

He was satisfied with nothing short of perfection in technical skill, and in the sonnet form took his place beside Lampman and Roberts as a master.

Sherman not only demanded impeccable form and finish of himself, he likewise aimed at ripeness. Range he desired, new experiences both broad and deep, but above all they must mellow in the oak, and become rich and ripe. Such is the ideal of the literary craftsman that Francis Sherman, as well as Roberts and Carman, gave to Canada, and one our young writers cannot too often remember.

The classic finish of his work was warmed with glamorous colour, just as the perfection of form in the marbles of Praxiteles was enhanced by the splendour of the colouring that Nicias gave them. All the tints of the wheeling seasons in the valley he loved flash from his small but perfect canvases.

His work is also rich in nature and humanity. Francis Sherman never forgot, in all his passionate pursuit of subtle rhythms and the perfect phrase, the old, sweet burdens of humanity. Clear he ever was; at times his lines are almost naked in their simplicity—and all for one purpose—that man himself might shine through. Charm and swift insight he possessed, after the manner of Landor and De Quincy, but he aimed rather to "cause a heart to beat beneath the ribs of death."

Much of his work is tinged with tragic suggestion, with drama and pathos. On occasion he rolled out his lines with Elizabethan flavour and gusto. Through it all, however, you catch the note of importunity, a song of ascents, the chant of a pilgrim yearning toward the soul's moated grange.

His Work

To one who has made the acquaintance of Francis Sherman, the temptation is very great to quote him at length.

A Prelude is rather long, and should not be dismembered. Its beauty is all of a piece, and almost overwhelming. Here is an extract.

Sea-offerings, and fruits of field and vine
Have humble folk been proud to bring to me;
And woven cloths of wonderful design

Have lain untouched in far lands over-sea,
Till the rich traffickers beheld my sails.
Long caravans have toiled on wearily—

Harassed yet watchful of their costly bales—
Across wide sandy places, glad to bear
Strange oils and perfumes strained in Indian vales,

Great gleaming rubies torn from some queen's hair,
Yellow, long-hoarded coin and golded dust,
Deeming that I would find their offerings fair...

Now, therefore am I joyful who have heard
Earth's message plain to-day, and so I cry
Aloud to you, O Comrades, her last word,

That ye may be as wise and glad as I,
And the long grasses, and the broad green leaves
That beat against the far-unclouded sky:

*Who worships me alway, who alway cleaves
Close unto me till his last call rings clear
Across the pathless wood—his soul receives
My peace continually and shall not fear.*

In Memorabilia Mortis is a series of sonnets one should know. How sure and certain is their art; how wise and ripe their thought.

I marked the slow withdrawal of the year.
Out on the hills the scarlet maples shone—
The glad, first herald of triumphant dawn...
And all day long the low wind spoke of rain,
Far off, beyond the hills; and moaned, like one
Wounded, among the pines: as though the Earth,
Knowing some giant grief had come to birth,
Had wearied of the Summer and the Sun.

Then, too, there are the sonnets in *The Deserted City*, and I recall one fashioned in perfect art. It is called "The House of Colour":

Mine gold is here; yea, heavy yellow gold,
Gathered ere Earth's first days and nights were fled;
And all the walls are hung with scarfs of red,
Broidered, in fallen cities, fold on fold;
The stained window's saints are aureoled;
And all the textures of the East are spread
On the paved floor, whereon I lay my head,
And sleep, and count the coloured things of old.
Once, when the hills and I were all aflame
With envy of the pageant in the West
(Except the sombre pine-trees—whence there came,
Continually, the sign of their unrest),
A lonely crow sailed past me, black as shame,
Hugging some ancient sorrow to his breast.

But enough! I have tried to leave with you my fugitive thoughts on a few of the writers of The University of New Brunswick and the new Dominion. I have endeavoured to show the great tradition into which you have been brought, and to kindle your pride in this rich inheritance.

Time has prevented the mention of Raymond, Ganong, Martin and others, who have enriched the historical literature of the nation. Theodore Goodridge Roberts, novelist and poet, has enhanced the high tradition of this University in his multiplying books. Perhaps some future Alumni Orator will commence where I am compelled now to leave off, and so right the wrong I unwillingly commit against all these men. Enough has been said, however, to show that a new choir of national song was formed within these halls. "All men live by truth," said Emerson, "and stand in need of expression."

Former graduates of this University made the new Dominion vocal. Their work is so rooted in life, so exalted in spirit, and so nobly fashioned in art, that, to use the word of Jules Lemaître, it "exists." It was vital then, it is still quick with life, and will long continue to "prosper in the hearts of men."

Not all of you, perhaps, will become illustrious in the field of art, letters or music, or leave immortal things to your credit in philosophy or the sciences. Yet every one of you may live the good life of truth and beauty, becoming artists in your own way. By a sensitive awareness to the rich and costly offerings of the seers and saints and singers of the world, by a sympathetic understanding of those works in which they "sang their passion to immortal sleep," you may cast up a highway of eager expectancy along which these Master Builders may come to their waiting kingdoms. And so let us to the task! My own parting word, and the l'envoi of your *alma mater*, are best expressed in the ringing words of Francis Sherman, who passed this way long years before you. It is entitled "A Life," and appeared in *Matins*, his first book:

Let us rise up and live! Behold, each thing
Is ready for the moulding of our hand.
Long have they all awaited our command,
None other will they ever own for king.
Until we come no bird dare try to sing,
Nor any sea its power may understand;
No buds are on the trees; in every land
Year asketh year some tidings of our Spring.
Yea, it is time—high time we were awake!
Simple indeed shall life be unto us.
What part is ours?—To take what all things give;

To feel the whole world growing for our sake;
To have sure knowledge of the marvellous;
To laugh and love—*Let us rise up and live!*

[End of *Three Fredericton Poets*, by Lorne Pierce]