

Shifting Perspectives: Early British Columbia Textbooks from 1872 to 1925

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Authorized textbooks have played an important role in determining British Columbia's school curriculum. A relatively small number of textbooks have been used to shape children's views of their society. These textbooks have reflected the popularly approved religious, moral, political, economic, social and cultural ideas of the dominant societal group; therefore an analysis of them gives us insight into the mores and attitudes of Canadian anglophone leadership during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This paper traces how the world view, i.e., the set of assumptions held about the basic make-up of the world and of society, gradually shifted in B.C.'s textbooks between 1872 and 1925 — a period that set the stage for Canada's entry into modern society. As McKillop has pointed out, this was a period during which the universal moral authority of Christianity gradually gave way to more liberal, secular and critical views of society — but ones that were still rooted in a strong sense of cultural moralism.¹ This development was clearly evident in Canadian textbooks. Using all the readers, many of the history and geography books, and a selection of the science, health and mathematics texts prescribed during the half century following the passing of B.C.'s first Public School Act, this paper analyzes the extent of change in the views of religion and morality, of Canada as a nation, of science, culture and progress, and of the child and his society. The 1925 cut-off date was the year the landmark progressive Putman-Weir report on education was released — a time when the impact of modern industrialization was making itself felt, when Canadian consciousness was being promoted by political and cultural leaders, and when social gospel thinking was resulting in such things as the founding of the United Church of Canada and the institution of old-age pensions.

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¹ A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

Egerton Ryerson already in the 1840s had prescribed standard textbooks in Ontario, hoping to create a common set of values among those who would use them. John Jessop, B.C.'s first superintendent of education, copied Ryerson's pattern of province-wide prescription in his efforts to promote social harmony and homogeneous citizenship. Within three weeks of his appointment in 1872, he approved a list of prescribed textbooks.² Almost all were books on the Ontario list, with the first prescribed readers being the *Canadian Series of Reading Books*,³ popularly known as *The Red Series* — books that were Canadian revisions of the Irish National Readers that Ryerson in 1846 had introduced as an antidote to the various American readers in use in Ontario at that time.⁴ However, Jessop was more successful than Ryerson in imposing uniform textbooks, both because most schools in British Columbia were new and because there were few books of any kind in the frontier settlements outside of Victoria. Moreover, Jessop regularly visited all the schools himself, publishing charts showing which textbooks were used by each school. Already in his fourth annual report he could show that all schools used the prescribed books in all subject areas.⁵ The pattern was set: even today British Columbia uses prescription of textbooks as a major curriculum constraint on its schools.

The practice of using specifically Ontario texts did not, of course, continue. As Richardson in his 1921 survey of Canadian schools reported only two of Ontario's books were then adopted in British Columbia.⁶ There

² F. Henry Johnson, *John Jessop: Gold Seeker and Educator* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1971), p. 82.

³ *Canadian Series of School Books*, originally published in 1867 by several publishers. The volumes used for this paper were *First Book of Reading Lessons, Part I; First Book, Part II; Second Book* (Toronto: Warwick, 1867, 1880); *Third Book* (Toronto: Canada Publ. Co. 1867, 1880); *Fourth Book* (Toronto: James Campbell, 1867); and *Fifth Book* (Toronto: Gage, 1867, 1869, 1881). Unless otherwise indicated, all textbooks referred to in this paper were prescribed or authorized in British Columbia. The dates I have used throughout the paper are the dates indicated in the copies of the books examined. If I show two dates, they are the earliest and latest dates shown in the book. Often, revisions will have been made between the earlier and later dates. Many of the nineteenth-century readers were printed by different publishers at slightly different times — and sometimes under different titles. Nor are the dates always reliable: I found two instances where a speech or event was recorded that occurred *after* the indicated date of publication or printing.

⁴ E. T. White, *Public School Text-Books in Ontario* (London: Chapman, 1922), p. 9.

⁵ This is indicated in a chart in the *Fourth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia* (Victoria, 1875), p. 37.

⁶ William Leeds Richardson, *The Administration of the Schools in the Cities of the Dominion of Canada* (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1922), p. 189.

remained, nonetheless, a great deal of similarity in content and approach among texts used at any one time in English Canada. Many of the observations and conclusions of this paper also, therefore, apply to textbooks used in other provinces, and thus extend Sheean's critique of the reading books authorized in Alberta from 1908 to 1947.⁷

Thanks to Canada's tightly knit anglophone cultural leadership and its centralized school systems, a relatively small group of educators and intellectuals directly influenced the writing and choice of textbooks. Ryerson had been principal of Victoria College and had close ties with the intellectual community of his day. Philosophy professor George Paxton Young had not only been school inspector but for some time was chairman of Ontario's Central Committee of Examiners, which gave advice about textbook adoption.⁸ Writer and professor Goldwin Smith was involved in revising Colliers' histories to remove religiously offensive passages.⁹ McGill's principal Sir John William Dawson wrote a number of science textbooks that were widely used in Canadian schools at the end of the nineteenth century. With some time lag, many of the textbooks prepared or selected by men such as these found a place in the British Columbia school system.

*Religion: Thy Will Alone Let All Enthroned*¹⁰

British Columbia's first prescribed textbooks all assumed a literal interpretation of the Bible and a belief in orthodox Christian doctrines. Colliers' *Outlines of General History*, for example, held that the world was created in 4004 B.C. and that Adam's fall into sin, the deluge, and the story of the Tower of Babel were all literal world history events.¹¹ *Lennie's Grammar* used many Scriptural texts and maxims such as

⁷ Nancy Sheean, "Character Training and the Cultural Heritage: An Historical Comparison of Canadian Elementary Readers," in G. S. Tomkins (Ed.), *The Curriculum in Canada in Historical Perspective*, Sixth Yearbook of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (Edmonton and Vancouver: C.S.S.E., 1979), pp. 77-84. It was Sheean's article that stimulated this analysis of B.C.'s textbooks.

⁸ White, *Public School Text-Books in Ontario*, p. 111.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰ The phrases for the headings are taken from two typical patriotic hymns that appeared in readers and literature anthologies in the 1920s and 1930s. The first one is "Lord of the Lands" by Albert Durrant Watson, printed as the last selection in *The Ryerson Book of Prose and Verse*, Book I (1927), and the second is "Star of the North" by Marjorie Pickthall, published in the revised edition of the same volume, *The Canada Book of Prose and Verse*, Book I (1932).

¹¹ William F. Colliers, *Outlines of General History* (Toronto: Campbell, 1869).

"Were they wise, they would read the Scriptures daily."¹² It was made clear that faith and religion should be central in a person's life: children were enjoined to lean upon the Lord every hour.¹³ All people lived by God's kindness, and hymns to the Creator taught children gratefully to celebrate the praises of God, the fountain of mind and of intellect.¹⁴

Man's fall into sin, these books argued, caused our current state of decay, and it was only by doing God's will that children could avoid the ignominious death of the wicked. Christ's salvation delivered them not only from sin and death but also from ignorance and from the calamities of life.¹⁵ At the same time, the books were careful to remain non-sectarian, as the first Public School Act demanded, and perhaps it was the Presbyterian emphasis of the grammar that was authorized in Ontario in 1872 that contributed to Jessop pointedly choosing *Lennie's Grammar* instead.¹⁶

In the 1880s and 1890s, Christian beliefs were still assumed to be necessary to live a productive life. An 1894 composition book stated that faith in God led to cheerfulness and that almost the only certain truth was the existence of God.¹⁷ While geography books of the time contained only a few explicit references to religion, some insisted that belief in the Bible as God's Word resulted both in fear of God and in loyalty to the Crown.¹⁸ Happy, therefore, was the family where Mother told a Bible story every night.¹⁹ While selected Scripture passages, too, were presented

¹² William Lennie, *The Principles of Grammar* (Toronto: Miller, 1869), p. 62. This edition was a reprint of a book published since early in the nineteenth century.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part II*, p. 9, and *Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 379.

¹⁵ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fourth Book of Reading Lessons*, pp. 349-50.

¹⁶ The Ontario grammar contained examples from the Westminster Catechism such as "Man's chief end is to glorify God." See *An Analytical and Practical Grammar of the English Language* (Toronto: Miller, 1868, 1869), p. 207. Though part of the Canadian National Series of School Books, this text was actually a Canadian printing of an American text that had already been used for many years in Ontario without authorization.

¹⁷ W. J. Alexander and M. F. Libby, *Composition from Models* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1894), pp. 324-25. This book was used as a reference only in British Columbia.

¹⁸ See, for example, *Lovell's Introductory Geography* (Montreal: Lovell, 1896), p. 32. While this edition was not authorized in British Columbia, William Ellis Topping described related examples from J. George Hodgins' *Lovell's Easy Lessons in Geography* (Montreal: Lovell, 1876). For a more detailed description of early geography textbooks, see W. E. Topping, "The Historical Development of the Teaching of Geography in British Columbia," MA thesis (University of British Columbia, 1963).

¹⁹ *The Canadian Readers, The Second Primer* (Toronto: Gage, 1881), p. 64.

in the readers of the 1880s, references to religion nonetheless became on the whole less frequent: the Canadian Reader's *Second Primer* contained just two.²⁰ Moreover, the emphasis of such references shifted from honouring God to more direct moral concerns: "The true calling of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way."²¹ In the same way, the Methodist revival no longer was held to have returned the people to serving God, but to have brought about moral reforms and efforts to lessen the misery and ignorance of the poor and oppressed.²² There was a gradual but distinct move towards social gospel thinking.

As the new century began to unfold, there were even fewer religious allusions. The 1901 *Second Primer* contained only a picture of the infant Samuel, without any explanation.²³ Religion and the church were still considered useful, but for such reasons as preventing lawlessness among the native people and helping them become part of civilized society.²⁴ A secular wake-up song replaced the traditional morning prayer or hymn in a 1916 reader, though it still contained an occasional hint of the existence of a God: "I only know I cannot drift / Beyond His love and care."²⁵ The transition to a secular view of society was almost complete, however. The new temple had become "home, home! sweet, sweet home!" Christmas and Thanksgiving had become family festivals with no religious significance.²⁶ By the early 1920s, despite the continued

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 64. Other readers in this series were *Books III, IV, V* and *VI*. For examples of Bible passages, see, for example, *Book III*, pp. 101 ff.

²¹ *The Canadian Readers, Book III* (Toronto: Gage, 1881), p. 131.

²² W. J. Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1902), p. 143. The same quote is found in the 1886 and 1892 editions. This 1902 British Columbia edition contains a fifteen-page appendix on B.C.'s history by R. E. Gosnell.

²³ *New Canadian Readers, A Second Primer, Twentieth Century Edition* (Toronto: Gage, 1901), frontispiece. Other volumes of this prescribed series included *A First Primer* and *Books I, II, III, and IV*.

²⁴ D. M. Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People* (Toronto: Morang, 1904, 1905), p. 387; Maria Lawson, *History of Canada* (Toronto: Gage, 1906, 1908), p. 58; and Maria Lawson and Rosalind Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia* (Toronto: Gage, 1906), pp. 64-67. The latter two books were likely the first ones written by British Columbians. Journalist Maria Lawson was the eldest daughter of *Daily Colonist* editor Henry Lawson; Rosalind Young was Mrs. Henry Esson Young. See *Daily Colonist*, 7 Dec. 1968, p. 11.

²⁵ *The British Columbia Readers, Third Reader* (Toronto: Gage, 1916), pp. 9, 146. Other volumes of the latter series included the *Beginner's, First, Second* and *Fourth Readers*.

²⁶ *New Canadian Readers, A Second Primer*, p. 69; and *The British Columbia Readers, First Reader*, p. 54.

inclusion of several psalms and Bible stories in the prescribed readers, the basic beliefs and doctrines of Christianity were not considered all that important or relevant. The church was now deemed important for the enrichment of national life and the development of the ideals of right living. Its work was not to convert people to Christianity but to improve the moral and social conditions of society and in this way to be a great civilizing force.²⁷

Thus the content of textbooks gradually changed from an acceptance of the fundamentals of traditional Christian beliefs in 1872 to the approval of religious institutions as useful social service agencies in 1925. It is significant that the influential Queen's philosophy professor John Watson over this same period of time (1872-1922) taught that the church was an organization for making men better,²⁸ a view that had been fully accepted by textbook writers of the mid-1920s.

Morality: Honour, Truth, and Self-Command

In the late nineteenth century, textbooks indicated a close relationship between religion and morality. Because God made children breathe the breath of life, they must always do His will. This meant speaking the truth, not being wild or rude, and listening to the conscience God had implanted in them. Such obedience would result in God's taking them as lambs to His fold.²⁹ Bible stories were told for their moral dimension. The point of the story of Joseph was not God's care for His people but Joseph's nobility in forgiving his brothers.³⁰ The story of Moses emphasized the importance of knowing the Ten Commandments.³¹ A morning prayer in one reader summed up not only the moral-religious relationship but also the characteristics of the moral imperative for children: "Father, help thy little child / Make me truthful, good, and mild, / Kind, obedient, modest, meek, / Mindful of the words I speak."³²

²⁷ For typical inclusion of passages from the Bible, see, for instance, *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Toronto: Nelson and Gage, 1922). Other volumes in this series consulted for this paper were *Books II, III and IV*. For the way in which the Christian church was viewed, see I. Gammell, *History of Canada* (Toronto: Gage, 1921, 1922), p. 285 and James McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship* (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1925, 1931), p. 68.

²⁸ McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, p. 216.

²⁹ *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part I*, pp. 9-11; *Part II*, p. 9; *Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 349.

³⁰ *Canadian Series of School Books, Second Book of Reading Lessons*, pp. 39-43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³² *New Canadian Readers, Book I*, p. 127.

These stories exhibited the Golden Rule and were unambiguous about what was right and wrong.³³ Children were encouraged to work hard and use their time well, and to be humble, prudent and courageous. Passions such as indolence, disobedience, miserliness and envy would have immediate catastrophic results. Cleanliness truly was next to godliness and lack of it went hand-in-hand with other evils. One ne'er-do-well thus turned out to be not only black as a crow but also a dunce at school as well as a thief.³⁴ True repentance was required to overcome such evils.

Students were taught moral lessons through frequent aphorisms used to end stories, to fill empty spaces in readers, and as examples in grammar books: You are happy, because you are good; Indolence undermines the foundation of every virtue; When asked to do right, never say, "I don't want to."³⁵ Thus students were taught a vision of life that lauded the work ethic, the moral law, and love for other people. It was assumed that parents and others in authority always knew best, and that therefore children should give blind obedience to their elders.

True greatness was the moral greatness displayed by heroes like Wolfe and Nelson — a greatness based on love of virtue and truth, on devotion to duty, freedom and religion, and on defiance of peril.³⁶ All school subjects were to do their part in encouraging such moral greatness. History, for example,

teaches us to admire and esteem the brave, the honest, and the self-denying; and to despise and condemn the cowardly, the base, and the selfish. We are led to see that virtue preserves and strengthens a nation, while vice inevitably causes decay and weakness. . . . History, then, is a great teacher of morals.³⁷

Gradually, however, the number of explicit moral injunctions lessened. By the 1920s authors hoped that children would draw their own moral conclusions from the selections. It was now through the stories themselves that children were taught that procrastination led to various evils, that pride went before a fall, and that the disadvantaged must be loved.³⁸

³³ See, for example, the *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part I*, esp. p. 33.

³⁴ *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part II*, p. 14.

³⁵ William Lennie's *The Principles of Grammar, The Canadian Series of School Books*, and the *New Canadian Readers* contain these and numerous other examples.

³⁶ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 239.

³⁷ G. Mercer Adam and W. J. Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1886), p. iii.

³⁸ *The Canadian Readers, Book II* (Toronto: Nelson and Gage, 1924), pp. 9, 16, 31.

By this time, moreover, the bond between religion and morality had been cut. Morality was no longer seen as being a consequence of serving God or as a way of avoiding the wrath of God. Rather, the virtues of courage, unselfishness, loyalty, patience and justice were characteristics of good citizenship.³⁹ It now was not God but the Union Jack that told pupils to be brave, pure and true.⁴⁰ It now was as much the government as the church that upheld and protected the morals of the community. And the cause of moral decadence and misdeeds no longer lay with children themselves and their sinfulness, but with their environment, particularly lack of good home training and bad companionship. To have the wayward become good and useful citizens did not, in consequence, require repentance as it did in the 1870s and 1880s, but simply an alteration in the circumstances that produced their wrong-doing.⁴¹

Morality in the textbooks had thus been severed from its religious roots. Piety was now seldom mentioned. However, virtue was still held to be a keystone of good citizenship. But by whom and how that virtue was to be defined had become uncertain. The stage had been set for the ethical relativism of the late twentieth century.

*Children and Their World: The Loyal Heart, the Constant Mind,
The Courage to be True*

Throughout the period from 1872 to 1922, an ideal of personhood was held before children that changed little except with respect to the importance of personal piety. Children were to develop their God-given abilities by showing backbone and working diligently.⁴² Individualism was stressed, with events often being grouped about men of strong personality who overcame hardship and adversity through sheer determination.⁴³ Students were to develop character by sticking to what they were doing and following the moral law.

Idleness and ignorance produced many vices for children, and the glorious privilege to labour was man's most noble dower. In 1867 the main reason given for studying Latin and Greek was to make the life of a young student what it ought to be, a life of considerable labour.⁴⁴ In

³⁹ James McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ *The British Columbia Readers, Beginner's Reader*, last page.

⁴¹ James McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 44.

⁴² For example, see C. H. Stowell, *The Essentials of Health* (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1909), p. 263; and *The British Columbia Readers, Third Reader*, p. 259.

⁴³ D. M. Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. v.

⁴⁴ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, pp. 356, 369.

1925 not only idleness but also lawlessness and privation could still, it was thought, be remedied by the schools since it was ignorance caused by a lack of education which led to laziness, poverty and crime.⁴⁵ Particularly during the nineteenth century, success was always shown to be the result of hard work. Children were, however, also taught to accept their lot in life. If Providence sent them a cross, they were to take it up willingly and accept it with contentment. While, texts thus insisted, it was possible to achieve personal well-being through determination, children were also, in some circumstances, to endure poverty without its affecting their happiness.⁴⁶

The importance of a happy family life was emphasized throughout these decades, but for changing reasons. In 1872 mothers were important because they taught children godliness and obedience.⁴⁷ Children were considered miniature adults, and were expected to contribute to the work of the family: "I must be learning / To hem and to sew, / And to dress my dear brother."⁴⁸ Animals and birds were used to present ideal family life: "Mother keeps you warm, / Father brings you food, / Safe within your nest, / Happy little brood."⁴⁹ Around the turn of the century, the idealized version of middle-class family life was presented as one with two or three children of different genders, where Mother stayed at home and regularly played with the children and taught them charity for the poor, where Father helped with school work, and where pets formed an integral part of the family.⁵⁰ By 1925 emphasis was placed much more heavily on the way in which good family life was the prerequisite for children becoming useful citizens. Togetherness in discussions, songs, games, picnics and entertainment would lead to such marks of good citizenship as truthfulness and honesty, thoughtfulness and unselfishness, and obedience and self-control.⁵¹

In the meantime the relationship between parents and their children had gradually changed; by 1915 children were sometimes portrayed in

⁴⁵ James McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part I*, pp. 19, 51; *The Ontario Readers, Fourth Reader* (Toronto: Gage, 1884), p. 154; *The British Columbia Readers, Third Reader*, p. 130; *The Canadian Readers, Book II* (Nelson and Gage, 1924), pp. 35-37.

⁴⁷ *Canadian Series of School Books, Second Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ *Canadian Series of School Books, First Book of Reading Lessons, Part I*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ *New Canadian Readers, Primer I*, p. 32.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the *First Reader* of the *British Columbia Readers* in which stories with pets predominate.

⁵¹ James McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 53.

situations where they in a good-natured way showed up their parents — in contrast with the unquestioned deferential distance between parents and children of the Victorian age:

Mother: "Where did you get that fish?"

Tom: "Ha! Ha! You said I couldn't catch a fish, mother. But you see I did."⁵²

In 1895 philosopher John Watson wrote that the moral life was the gradual realization of the ideal life. The ideal of humanity, he continued, was therefore not a *mere* ideal: it was an ideal continually in process of realization. Hence, Watson held, the individual could find himself and could become moral only by contributing his share to its realization.⁵³ Textbook writers around the turn of the century were influenced by such idealism, and therefore it became important to show children the ideal world for which all should strive and to which all could contribute. Everything was good, pleasant and beautiful in the situations the readers presented. Little disrupted the perfect harmony: cows were friendly, blossoms were pretty, brooks were happy, children were healthy and spotlessly dressed, and the environment was serene and idyllic. Milkmaids liked their sanitized work and farmers always reaped plentiful crops. Children brought fine red flowers to their mammas. The dog protected even the little kittens! Slight flaws were soon set straight: "What is the matter with Dick's foot? He has a thorn in it. . . . He will soon get the thorn out. Then he will drive home the six cows."⁵⁴ Children were to do their part in establishing this ideal by avoiding laziness, loving their parents and friends, and being obedient so that order could reign in home and school.⁵⁵ The only grating note was the warning on the inside covers of some of the supplementary readers that they were not to be taken away from the schoolhouse and kept in the bookcase. During this time, David Wilson, in charge of textbook distribution in British Columbia, had difficulty both with such books disappearing and with school boards not providing proper locked bookcases.⁵⁶ The ideal, though presented, had not yet been reached.

⁵² *The British Columbia Readers, First Reader*, p. 92.

⁵³ McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, p. 199.

⁵⁴ *British Columbia Phonic Primer* (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1902), p. 34.

⁵⁵ John Brittain, *Elementary Agriculture and Nature Study* (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1909), p. 181.

⁵⁶ For such labels, see, for instance, Eulalie Osgood Grover's *The Art-Literature Readers: A Primer* (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1904). Wilson described his frustrations in the *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Public Schools of British Columbia* (1917), p. 86.

Closely related to this idealism were two other themes. First, while around the 1880s life in large cities was featured as part of society's scientific and material progress,⁵⁷ in the beginning of this century country life was romanticized both in story and in art. Country life was beautiful and invigorating: things were better in the country and it would be a blessing if every man were to do some farm work.⁵⁸ Also, the children's environment was given more attention. Pure water and sunlight and open air overcame pale cheeks and languid manners, and bathing was invigorating and prevented disease. If a child lived in the city, s/he should at least go to the country for holidays and there sleep in the open air.⁵⁹ Even though by the 1920s pictures had become more realistic, the peace and tranquillity of country life were stressed, and life, in the readers at least, was devoid of cities, industries and cars.⁶⁰

A second theme that confronted children around the turn of the century concerned the importance of alcohol and tobacco temperance. Readers labelled alcohol a formidable vice that was a great source of crime and want.⁶¹ Richardson's *Public School Temperance* emphasized that it was clear that water was the one fluid provided for men by Providence and Nature, and its use instead of alcohol was to cause children to become wise, industrious and happy. Alcohol and tobacco resulted in dull minds and stupidity as well as in stunted growth.⁶² It was claimed that scientific evidence showed that total abstainers at age 20 had a life expectancy three times that of moderate drinkers, that children of intemperate parents inherited disordered bodies and minds, and that Americans were more alert than Germans and Englishmen because of their more moderate drinking habits.⁶³

⁵⁷ See, for example, *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Gage, 1882).

⁵⁸ J. Halpenny and L. Ireland, *How to Be Healthy* (Toronto: Gage, 1911), p. 44.

⁵⁹ *Gage's Health Series for Intermediate Classes, Part II* (Toronto: Gage, 1896), pp. 88-90; Stowell, *The Essentials of Health*, pp. iii, 174, 177. Also see Halpenny and Ireland, *How to Be Healthy*.

⁶⁰ *The Canadian Readers, Book II* (Nelson and Gage, 1924), pp. 120-27. *Book V* (Nelson and Gage, 1922), pp. 184 ff.

⁶¹ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 5.

⁶² B. W. Richardson, *Public School Temperance* (Toronto: Grip, 1887), pp. 18, 97; *Gage's Health Series for Primary Classes, Part I* (Toronto: Gage, 1896), pp. 19, 91; Halpenny and Ireland, *How to Be Healthy*, p. 130. Teachers' certification examinations also included questions on temperance. See, for instance, the *Eighth Annual Report of the Public Schools of B.C.* (Victoria, 1889), p. xciii.

⁶³ *Gage's Health Series for Intermediate Classes, Part II*, pp. 158-61; Stowell, *The Essentials of Health*, p. 38.

Children, to sum up, could construct an ideal world for themselves. As long as they worked hard, obeyed the moral law, contributed to family life, were diligent in their studies and shunned the evils of alcohol and tobacco their lives were to be happy even if they were not wealthy. During the nineteenth century family life was formal, especially the relationship between Father and his children. Later, a small friendly family that lived in the country, or, at least, was able to sojourn there from time to time, and whose members cared for each other and for animals and plants, was held before children as the ideal. What remained constant was that children were to have loyal hearts, constant minds and the courage to be true.

*The Evolution of Science: Proving Once More
the Dreams of Men Divine*

Science in 1872 was intended to lead to an understanding of the infinite wisdom and goodness of Providence: every part of Creation was in harmony with a plan of absolute benevolence.⁶⁴ The theme that physical objects, plants and animals were witnesses of the one plan of Creative Wisdom recurred again and again.⁶⁵ William Dawson emphasized in an 1883 reader that true scientific explanations would be in harmony with the Biblical creation account.⁶⁶

However, science textbooks tended to be less explicit than readers: scientists were being caught up in the spirit of critical inquiry. Both Macadam's 1872 chemistry text and Dawson's 1886 *Handbook of Zoology* were devoid of religious references until the very last section when, almost as an afterthought, it was mentioned that man owed everything to God, and that he was the only moral, religious and responsible being who could comprehend the plans of the Creator.⁶⁷ Gradually a sense of God's handiwork was replaced with awareness of the wonders of nature. J. W. Robertson's 1909 preface to an agriculture and nature study book had distinct pantheistic overtones: "We are all part of Nature. Our lives — the transient and the eternal, the human and the divine in us — are sustained by natural processes under natural laws."⁶⁸ Robertson still

⁶⁴ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93; *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 221.

⁶⁶ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 195.

⁶⁷ S. Macadam, *The Chemistry of Common Things* (London: Nelson, 1872), p. 178; Sir J. William Dawson, *Handbook of Zoology* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1886), p. 273.

⁶⁸ Brittain, *Elementary Agriculture and Nature Study*, p. iii.

manifested a tendency to see agriculture and nature study in religious terms: "We are all trustees of life and its opportunities for the children. The main thing in the trust is to have the next generation of trustees ready for their duty and privilege. 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"⁶⁹ As late as 1916, indeed, science textbooks were still careful to avoid evolution controversies. Darwin's influence was nonetheless evident in such things as the chapter headings of a *Beginners' Botany* textbook: *The Struggle to Live* and *The Survival of the Fit*.⁷⁰ Science, despite some obvious reservations, was being transformed from the handmaiden of religion to a field of investigation in which Darwin's basic approach was implicitly accepted.

What kind of science was taught? In the 1870s, both readers and science books contained a great deal of factual, descriptive material about physical and biological objects and phenomena. Usually the emphasis was on everyday applications of science. Students were taught not to hurt or mutilate animals and plants.⁷¹ And, while science was shown to have led to astounding progress, there were already some ecological concerns: "Country places generally," noted one text, ". . . even in the New World, no doubt get a share of the bad gases evolved from our populous towns."⁷² Yet it was stressed that every department of human knowledge had benefited from the influence of the scientific spirit and its methods of inquiry.⁷³ In twentieth-century books there were more investigations and questions for the students to answer: "Try," a text enjoined its young readers, "to find a seed that will float on the water. How might that seed be carried from one place to another?"⁷⁴ The way the material was presented thus gradually manifested the spirit of critical inquiry.

*The Concept of Progress: Star of the North,
Where Justice Rules from Shore to Shore*

The advance of science was looked upon by nineteenth-century textbooks as one of the measures of progress. One 1867 reader lauded the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. v.

⁷⁰ L. H. Bailey, *Beginners' Botany* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1915, 1916), pp. 4, 7. Used only as a reference in British Columbia.

⁷¹ *British Columbia Phonic Primer*, p. 17; Bailey, *Beginner's Botany*, p. 57.

⁷² Macadam, *The Chemistry of Common Things*, p. 171.

⁷³ Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 194.

⁷⁴ *New Canadian Geography, British Columbia Edition*, p. 28. The title page of the only available copy was missing; however, the book was on the authorized list in British Columbia in and around 1908.

inestimable benefits of the applications of the steam engine. The trans-Atlantic telegraph cable was held to have created a golden, God-given bond between nations. Further examples of the march of science included ships, telephones, phonographs, photographs and electricity.⁷⁵

Progress was being made on other fronts, too. In Canada, a hardy and vigorous population was making wilderness into bountiful farmland and progressive industrial towns; the education system was leading to literary and social advance; and governments were passing wise and sane legislation.⁷⁶ Truly, with her magnificent resources and vital people, with her pure and healthy domestic life, and with her excellent forms of government and education, Canada gave ample evidence that the promise of a great nation was being realized.⁷⁷ British Columbia was, moreover, in many respects the most progressive of all Canadian provinces.⁷⁸ Optimism was boundless, progress inevitable. Utopia seemed just around the corner. Western civilization would reach its apex in twentieth-century Canada.

This concept of progress rested on two main pillars of support: first, a confidence in the continued economic development of Canada; and, second, the belief that Canada was the true inheritor of the British ideals of justice and liberty. Economically the early twentieth century knew few limits: British Columbia had unbounded potential in mineral, lumber and agricultural wealth and could take pride in its fine harbours and steamships; great advances had been made in the grain industries and the up-to-date cities of the prairies; and the building of the railroad symbolized the rapid progress being made.⁷⁹ Such progress was rooted in the power and wisdom of great companies like the Hudson's Bay Com-

⁷⁵ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 206; *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 34; Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 194.

⁷⁶ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 381; *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 273; Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, pp. 3, 314, 319; Lawson and Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia*, p. 7; I. Gammell, *Elementary History of Canada*, with British Columbia Supplement (Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1907, 1912), chapters 33 and 40; Gammell, *History of Canada*, p. 285; McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁷ Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 280.

⁷⁸ Gammell, *History of Canada*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ See especially Lawson and Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia*; Lawson, *History of Canada*, chapter 44; and the British Columbia supplement of *New Canadian Geography*.

pany as well as in individual honesty, intelligence, foresight and strength.⁸⁰ Mathematics books showed Canadians actively engaged in all manner of commercial and industrial enterprise.⁸¹ Despite occasional disputes between labour and management (caused in part, these books encouraged their readers to think, by the Chinese who, though industrious, worked for cheaper wages⁸²), and a recognition that society's members were not always rewarded according to their merit, Canada was held to be rapidly taking its place as one of the great producing countries of the world.⁸³ This faith in continuous material progress, apparent soon after 1872, did not abate even with World War I.

The other great pillar of progress was British justice and liberty. Its basis was the spirit of British law. It was England that championed truth, righteousness and freedom. She still led all peoples in the struggle against vice and tyranny and from her all lands derived hope and encouragement.⁸⁴ Canada, textbooks proclaimed, was the full beneficiary of this remarkable heritage. Little progress had, of course, been made by New France because of the French love of absolutism, monopoly and feudalism. Where, however, the sons of France had failed, the sons of Britain were to succeed, thanks to their happy familiarity with conditions of toleration, freedom and equality.⁸⁵

Canada's potential would, the texts insisted, come to fruition only if its vast wealth and its capacity to grow morally were developed in association with high ethical standards on the one hand and a zeal for work on the other.⁸⁶ A progressive future depended on a firm devotion to morality and religion. Prosperity and happiness were contingent on Canadian energy, ambition, self-reliance, skill and enterprise.⁸⁷ In this way, within the framework provided by Canada's economic potential and British principles of justice and liberty, Canada would be able to combine the very best of the Old and New Worlds. Her continuing development would ensure that the twentieth century would belong to Canada: *that* was the message for all students.

⁸⁰ Lawson, *History of Canada*, p. 231; Brittain, *Elementary Agriculture and Nature Study*, p. 274; McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 80.

⁸¹ A typical mathematics textbook was W. J. Milne's *Progressive Arithmetic, Third Book* (Toronto: Morang, 1906, 1915).

⁸² Lawson and Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia*, p. 73.

⁸³ McCaig, *Studies in Citizenship*, p. 80; *New Canadian Geography*, p. 76.

⁸⁴ Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 195.

⁸⁵ Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. 202.

⁸⁶ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 273.

⁸⁷ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 388.

Our Canada: Part of Our Wide-Extending Empire

"Canada is one of the brightest gems in the British crown," the grammar book in use in Ontario in 1872 declared.⁸⁸ British Columbia's John Jessop seemed, however, more impressed with the crown than with the gem. Certainly he prescribed a British Empire history book that limited its discussion of Canada to little more than half a page. While B.C.'s first readers gave individual histories of the Maritime provinces, Quebec, Vancouver Island and British Columbia,⁸⁹ it was not until the mid-1880s that British Columbia students were presented with a systematic treatment of Canadian history or geography. It was as if the last spike at Craigellachie in 1885 not only fulfilled the promise that made British Columbia enter Confederation but also made educational leaders decide that British Columbia was finally and truly part of the Dominion.

That Dominion, the textbooks emphasized, was rooted in British traditions. While Canada's origin in New France was acknowledged, one of the main early heroes was General Wolfe: the well-known painting of his heroic death after the capture of Quebec was given full-page treatment in many books. While Montcalm was recognized as a brave soldier, the French retreat from Quebec was called disgraceful.⁹⁰ From that day on, the books indicated, it was clear that the hand of Providence entrusted to the British the destiny of the New World and that it was through the British that true progress materialized.⁹¹

Loyalty to and love of Britain and its empire were vigorously encouraged in the textbooks from Confederation to the 1920s. Canada's link with England would keep Canada safe from tyranny, Sir John A. Macdonald was quoted as saying.⁹² When students were asked to memorize Sir Walter Scott's *Love of Country*, it was clear that it was not Canada but England that was hailed.⁹³ It was the honour of England that demanded the defence of Canada: "The meteor flag of England / Shall yet terrific burn."⁹⁴ As late as 1922 the Empire continued to have emo-

⁸⁸ *An Analytical and Practical Grammar*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ See the *Fourth* and *Fifth Books of Reading Lessons* of the *Canadian Series of School Books*. See Note 107 for the British Empire history book chosen by Jessop.

⁹⁰ Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. 196.

⁹¹ *The Ontario Reader, Fourth Reader*, p. 237; *The Canadian Readers, Book III* (Gage, 1881), pp. 164-65. The *Ontario Readers* were somewhat more grating in this respect than B.C.'s *Canadian Readers*.

⁹² *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Gage, 1882), p. 362.

⁹³ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 46.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

tional appeal: "Children of the Empire, you are brothers all; / Children of the Empire, answer to the call; / Let your voices mingle, lift your heads and sing, / God save dear old Britain, and God save Britain's king!"⁹⁵

Patriotism was held in high esteem, but it consisted of loyalty to the British constitution and laws since they best secured liberty and prosperity and linked children with the proud and noble traditions of Canada's national history.⁹⁶ Only within this context were children charged to love their country, believe in her, honour her, work for her, and live and die for her. Queen's principal George Grant, writing in a text widely used in B.C., summed up this dualistic approach to patriotism when he said that loyalty to the Dominion involved seeking a common imperial citizenship with common responsibilities and a common inheritance.⁹⁷

Only gradually did a separate Canadian identity become recognized as important. Gammell's 1907 *Elementary History of Canada* saw as yet no sign of separation from the motherland; Canada could still be presented in terms of subordinating to Britain; she might be mistress of her own house, but she was still very much her mother's daughter.⁹⁸ By 1921, however, this sentiment had disappeared. "In her relations with the foreign countries," one text noted, "Canada has become less and less dependent upon the motherland. . . . As an independent member she signed the Treaty of Peace and was enrolled in the League of Nations."⁹⁹ The apron strings to the motherland were slowly being loosened. After World War I, in fact, the *Dominion Hymn* ("God bless our wide dominion") and *Canada! Maple Land!* started to appear alongside *God Save the King*, while the Union Jack had to share its glory with the Canadian red ensign.¹⁰⁰

Although war was thought cruel,¹⁰¹ it was considered necessary at times in order to uphold British ideals. The many selections about British

⁹⁵ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Nelson and Gage, 1922), p. 47.

⁹⁶ *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Gage, 1883), p. 244.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 46, 168; *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Nelson and Gage, 1922, p. 48).

⁹⁸ Gammell, *Elementary History of Canada*, p. 318.

⁹⁹ Gammell, *History of Canada*, p. 6. This book replaced W. L. Grant's *History of Canada*, which was banned from the province's schools in January 1920 because it had been accused of being anti-British, pro-French Canadian, and pro-Catholic. See Charles W. Humphries' narrative, "The Banning of a Book in British Columbia," *BC Studies* (Winter 1968-69): 1-12.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, *The British Columbia Readers, Third Reader*, and *The Canadian Readers, Book IV* (Nelson and Gage, 1922).

¹⁰¹ Lawson, *History of Canada*, p. 85.

war heroes made clear that there was little doubt that God was always on the side of the British. The typical British officer was clean-cut, frank, fearless and kindly, and he showed love of honour, contempt of danger and pride of race.¹⁰² Moreover, the British showed their inherent magnanimity and love of freedom and justice in granting a great deal of self-government to conquered people soon after their defeat, as they had done in Quebec and South Africa.¹⁰³ World War I resulted in renewed idolization of war and its heroes, and teachers were instructed to let the class play soldiers, carrying the flag.¹⁰⁴ For the first time, Canadian war heroes were also described, although in the context of British valour and imperial manhood.¹⁰⁵

In characterizing Canada, texts often found it necessary to come to grips with two special problems. One was the United States; the other the country's indigenous population. Matters, in both cases, were resolved in the same way: Americans and Indians alike found themselves dismissed as possessing little in the way of redeeming features.

Only grudgingly did textbooks during this period admit the existence of the United States. Robertson dealt with the inglorious American War of Independence in a few lines, carefully pointing out that British misfortune in North America was balanced by victories at sea over the fleets of France and Spain.¹⁰⁶ Reference to the injustice of slavery was accompanied by reminders that the Canadian provinces had abolished it in 1793 and 1803.¹⁰⁷ Discussion of the War of 1812 gave opportunity not only to make the point that the Americans had been beaten, but also to say that they had attacked an unoffending people, justly ruining their commerce and losing their national honour. Canada, by contrast, was shown to have been greatly strengthened by the glorious part that Canadians had taken in this unprovoked war.¹⁰⁸ The Civil War was looked at

¹⁰² *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Nelson and Gage, 1922) p. 73.

¹⁰³ W. Stewart Wallace, *A New History of Great Britain and Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1925, 1926), p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ *The British Columbia Readers, Beginner's Reader*, last page.

¹⁰⁵ *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Nelson and Gage, 1922), p. 73.

¹⁰⁶ Mercer and Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, George Brown's speech in *Book V* of *The Canadian Readers* (Gage, 1882), or J. George Hodgins' *History of Canada and of Other British Provinces in North America* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1865). The latter was a popular book but not prescribed in British Columbia, with Jessop opting for William F. Colliers' *History of the British Empire* (Toronto: Campbell, 1868) instead.

¹⁰⁸ Lawson, *History of Canada*, p. 170. Also see Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People* and Gammell, *Elementary History of Canada*.

by one book solely in terms of its effect on Britain: "In 1861," it reported, "a civil war broke out in the United States of America, which led to great suffering among the operatives in the cotton factories of Lancashire."¹⁰⁹ While, in sum, the relationship of Canada to the Empire was described in terms of imperial unity and general progress, Canada's involvement with America focused only on disputes and problems. The Americans were little more than a troublesome and self-centred offshoot from the British Empire. Truly great Americans like George Washington were citizens of the world, and no country could appropriate them. Breaking with England could only have harmed the cause of true liberty, justice and progress in the United States.¹¹⁰

The view that students were given of Canada's native people was, generally speaking, a negative one. The native people were at best noble savages, with an emphasis on the savage. This was true throughout the period under discussion: Gammell's 1921 revision of Robertson's 1892 *Public School History of England and Canada* left his descriptions of native people and their activities untouched. Indians, by and large, were portrayed as cruel and revengeful, spending their time gambling, smoking and feasting. Even though the treachery of the French (not the English!) vis-à-vis Iroquois chiefs was admitted, the Iroquois were singled out as satiated with hate, revenge and bitterness in committing many lawless acts of aggression in their fierce and stealthy warfare.¹¹¹

The native peoples of British Columbia were generally described as being friendly, though one reader claimed that the irresponsible behaviour of some of them during the gold rush naturally provoked reprisals.¹¹² Their culture was, however, portrayed in unsympathetic terms: totem poles were singled out as rude, imperfect monuments, while the culture as a whole was bound to collapse before the advance of civilization.¹¹³ Their

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 188.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Wallace, *A New History of Great Britain and Canada*, p. 73. A Nova Scotia reader, *The Advanced Reader No. VII* of the *Nova Scotia School Series* (Halifax: Mackinlay, 1865) especially emphasized that no country could claim persons like Washington (p. 61).

¹¹¹ Typical selections were found in Hodgins, *History of Canada and of Other British Provinces in North America*, pp. 67-69; Adam and Robertson, *Public School History of England and Canada*, p. 143; and Gammell's *Elementary History of Canada*, p. 29.

¹¹² *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 175.

¹¹³ Lawson, *History of Canada*, p. 227.

religion, too, was inferior for it, unlike Christianity, moved them only through fear or selfishness.¹¹⁴

There were a few more balanced accounts. One text concluded that native people were always ready to help each other, that they lived peaceably with each other, and that they were hospitable and sociable. It also indicated that the settlers were not always just in their treatment of native people and that this may have been a contributing factor to the horrors of Indian warfare.¹¹⁵ One of the first readers in British Columbia was, indeed, more moderate than some later ones, for it conceded that how one saw a culture very much depended on his own vantage point: "Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we call the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs."¹¹⁶ Generally, though, the argument asserted the superiority of white civilization. Indians might be indolent, but a benevolent white person could show them the value of their labour.¹¹⁷ The only wise and brave and humane and noble Indians were those who became Christians or associated themselves with white civilization, such as Joseph Brant and Tecumseh. Except for drawings of men of this sort, pictures made native people look backward at best, brutal and savage at worst.¹¹⁸ What more, textbooks thus combined in arguing, could anyone desire than to become a British subject, and to be part of the glorious Empire that stood for truth, courage, liberty and freedom?

Culture and Literacy: Sons Must Follow Where Their Sires Have Led

Until World War I, readers beyond the initial primers contained a rich treasury of British literature, including works of Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Coleridge, Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Wordsworth.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. 17; Gammell, *Elementary History of Canada*, p. 29.

¹¹⁵ Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, pp. 14-17.

¹¹⁶ *Canadian Series of School Books, Third Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 172.

¹¹⁷ *Canadian Series of School Books, Fifth Book of Reading Lessons*, p. 356.

¹¹⁸ Hodgins, *History of Canada and of Other British Provinces in North America*, pp. 135-36; Lawson, *History of Canada*, p. 166. Interestingly, except for the years immediately after the two Riel-led outbursts, there was little if any inflammatory description of Riel and the Métis. Gammell came closest by saying that Riel fomented agitation, but even he added that there was no doubt that the government and its officials were careless and indifferent about the matter. Duncan and Lawson both described the legitimate land title grievances of the Métis, and tried to balance those grievances with the government's need to restore its authority.

¹¹⁹ The 1916 *Third Reader of The British Columbia Readers* put in its preface: "As must always be the case in books of this kind, the selections are, for the most part, drawn from the great storehouse of English literature, the works of the writers of Britain." (p. iv).

Both readers and history books lauded the nineteenth century as one of the richest in English literature, and the higher-level readers made use of works by Dickens, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Robert Louis Stevenson and, especially, the Poet Laureate of the last half of the nineteenth century, Alfred Lord Tennyson. While gradually more American selections were introduced, it continued to be emphasized that there was no more priceless legacy than the heritage of English language and literature.¹²⁰ By the 1920s, however, the number of British selections outnumbered American ones only slightly, and Canadian selections comprised merely one-fifth of one commonly used anthology.¹²¹ Earlier books pointed out, quite correctly, that there was little Canadian literature available, and during the nineteenth century most Canadian selections involved historical or geographical descriptions of regions of Canada, or transcripts of speeches. Anything British was not, of course, considered foreign. In fact, there were suspicions that anything Canadian could not quite live up to the standards set in Britain.

While the readers in the higher grades gradually incorporated more American and Canadian selections, those at lower levels began to include more fairytales and fables, as well as stories with a plot that appealed to children such as the Pied Piper of Hamelin and selections from Heidi. The beginning primers started to show a trend towards greater emphasis on decoding skills and less on meaningful content. In the nineteenth century even the first stories presented had had some meaning — even if it consisted of narrow moral maxims without much literary value. Now the content became more repetitive and superficial: “One kitten plays. Two kittens play. Three kittens play. Three little kittens play, play, play.”¹²² This particular primer, in fact, boasted that it contained nearly 6,000 word-repetitions, with a base vocabulary of only 258 words.¹²³

Some of the books published early in the century did attempt to generate interest in art and aesthetics. The *Art-Literature Readers*, provided free to every rural school in British Columbia, showed many two-tone reproductions of paintings. While the choice reflected the idealism of the age (e.g., paintings of Paul Peel, Dupré and Millet), it was the first time most pupils were familiarized with the characteristics of various schools of art. The children were encouraged to interpret the art: there were

¹²⁰ Wallace, *A New History of Great Britain and Canada*, p. 257.

¹²¹ *The Canadian Readers, Book V* (Nelson and Gage, 1922).

¹²² Grover, *The Art-Literature Readers: A Primer*, p. 7.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

questions about the paintings as well as biographical sketches of some of the artists. While this series gave the most comprehensive treatment of art, other books described such things as the beauty of Westminster Abbey and the way in which Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata came to be written.¹²⁴ In addition, some books tried to engender a general appreciation of aesthetics: "Even," suggested one of them, "a happy home or school is made more attractive, and dearer to the hearts of its members, if the grounds about it are tastefully adorned with trees, shrubs, flowers, and grassy lawns."¹²⁵

And We Will Guard Our Own

Textbooks between 1872 and 1925 were compiled and chosen by a relatively small group of educational leaders. Such leaders ensured that the books presented how they believed children should act and what they should think. Canada's future was to unfold within a well-defined framework based on a British, Christian heritage. Of course, with a vast and only sparsely settled expanse, with the constant threat of American annexation, with an often hostile native population, with a plurality of nationalities and religions, with poor communication and transportation, and with an almost non-existent sense of national identity, it would have been surprising if textbooks, and, consequently, schools, had not held before the students a common Canadian vision of life and society that the leaders wanted to inculcate.

That vision, as we have seen, was rooted in a strong moral imperative. At first, this was closely intertwined with the beliefs of traditional Christianity, but gradually it loosened itself, though not completely, from its religious roots. From a literal interpretation of the Bible and a strong sense of sin and need of redemption in Jesus Christ, religion came to be viewed in terms of promoting morality and a sense of social justice. God was seen less as a stern taskmaster with an all-seeing eye and more as a gracious Lord of Love. The Golden Rule nonetheless continued to be held before the children. Virtue was rewarded; evil was punished. By 1925 the moral dimension might be less explicit with children being involved in drawing their own conclusions. Living a moral life nonetheless remained a powerful ideal.

The model of Canada that was to shape young citizens also changed. Canada was shown to have unlimited resources, and, as such, to have

¹²⁴ See, for example, *The New Canadian Readers, Book IV*.

¹²⁵ Brittain, *Elementary Agriculture and Nature Study*, p. 181.

the potential for unrivalled economic prosperity. Canadian Confederation was solidly grounded in the tradition of British parliamentary government, and in the British ideals of justice and liberty. It combined the best of both the Old and the New Worlds: for instance, it had internal self-government and a kind of democratic equality but at the same time stood one with the whole British Empire. Children were thus confronted with a picture of a government that was benevolent and gave its citizens more freedom and justice than any other nation except Britain, and with a society that had a bright future if its people would continue to be upright and diligent.

In time the country was portrayed as having become more independent, drawing away from the Empire and managing its own destiny. It was also, however, seen as having remained very much committed to British principle of tradition, and so, in the political as in the moral sphere, continuities were much in evidence. The texts thus continued to do what they had always done: they attempted simultaneously to enforce clear-cut standards of individual responsibility and a sense of how life in the larger community was to be understood.

While, then, the concept of nationhood has always been a difficult one for Canada to define and develop, the textbooks tried to do so, first exclusively in terms of the British heritage and later, in terms of combining what was considered the best of the old and the new:

And we will guard our own,
Our Canada,
From snow to sea,
One hope, one home, one shining destiny.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Last four lines of Marjorie Pickthall, "Star of the North." See Note 10.

TEXTBOOK REFERENCES

Except where indicated, all books listed were prescribed for schools in British Columbia.

1. *Readers and Composition*

The following five series of prescribed readers were used:

Canadian Series of School Books ("The Red Series"), first published in 1867 in Toronto by various publishers such as Warwick, James Campbell, and Gage.

The Canadian Readers. Toronto: Gage and Company, 1881.

New Canadian Readers, 20th Century Edition. Toronto: Gage, 1900.

The British Columbia Readers. Toronto: Gage, 1915.

The Canadian Readers. Toronto: Nelson and Gage, 1922.

Also examined were the following:

British Columbia Phonic Primer. Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1902.

Grover, Eulalie Osgood. *The Art-Literature Readers: A Primer.* Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1904. This volume was one of a series made available as supplementary readers to all rural schools in B.C.

Lennie, William. *The Principles of Grammar.* Toronto: Miller, 1869.

Alexander, W. J. and Mowat, A. *Elementary Composition with Grammar.* Toronto: Gage, 1912, 1922.

2. *History and Geography*

Hodgins, J. George. *History of Canada and of Other British Provinces in North America.* Montreal: John Lovell, 1865. Used as a reference only in British Columbia.

Colliers, William F. *The History of the British Empire.* Toronto: Campbell, 1868.

Colliers, William F. *Outlines of General History.* Toronto: Campbell, 1869.

Adam, G. Mercer and Robertson, W. J. *Public School History of England and Canada.* Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1886.

Gage's New Primer of Map Geography. Toronto: Gage, 1883, 1892.

Robertson, W. J. *Public School History of England and Canada.* Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1902. This revision of Adam and Robertson's 1886 textbook contains a supplement on B.C.'s history.

Duncan, D. M. *The Story of the Canadian People.* Toronto: Morang, 1904, 1905.

Gammell, I. *Elementary History of Canada (with British Columbia Supplement).* Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1907, 1912.

Lawson, Maria. *History of Canada.* Toronto: Gage, 1906, 1908.

Lawson, Maria and Young, Rosalind. *A History and Geography of British Columbia.* Toronto: Gage, 1906.

New Canadian Geography, British Columbia Edition (my copy's title page was missing; however, the book was on the authorized list in British Columbia in and around 1908). The original 1899 Gage edition gives no author but states that the book is based on the geographies of Alex. E. Frye.

Gammell, I. *History of Canada.* Toronto: Gage, 1921, 1922.

Wallace, W. Stewart. *A New History of Great Britain and Canada.* Toronto: Macmillan, 1925, 1926.

McCaig, James. *Studies in Citizenship.* Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1925, 1931.

3. *Science and Agriculture*

Macadam, S. *The Chemistry of Common Things.* London: Nelson, 1872.

Dawson, Sir J. William. *Handbook of Zoology.* Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1886.

Brittain, John. *Elementary Agriculture and Nature Study.* Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1909.

Bailey, L. H. *Beginners' Botany*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1915, 1916. Used only as a reference in B.C.

4. *Health, Hygiene, and Temperance*

Richardson, B. W. *Public School Temperance*. Toronto: Grip, 1887.

Gage's *Health Series for Primary Classes, Part I*. Toronto: Gage, 1896.

Gage's *Health Series for Intermediate Classes, Part II*. Toronto: Gage, 1896.

Stowell, C. H. *The Essentials of Health*. Toronto: Educational Book Co., 1909.

Halpenny, J. and Ireland, L. *How to Be Healthy*. Toronto: Gage, 1911.

5. *Mathematics*

Kirkland, T. and Scott, W. *Elementary Arithmetic on the Unitary System*. Toronto: Gage, 1880.

Smith, B. and MacMurchy, A. *Advanced Arithmetic for Canadian Schools*. Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1871, 1882.

Milne, W. J. *Progressive Arithmetic, Third Book*. Toronto: Morang, 1906, 1915.

The Dominion High School Arithmetic. Toronto: Gage, 1914, 1921.

Smith, J. A. and Roberts, R. H. *British Columbia Public School Arithmetic, Book II*. Toronto: Gage, 1920, 1922.