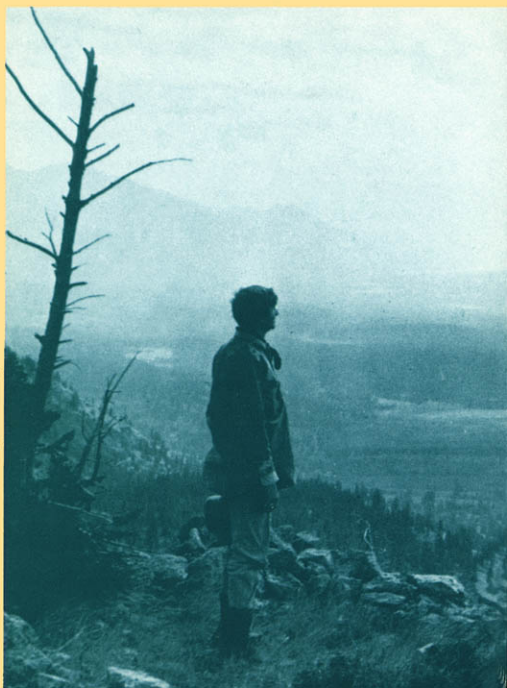


BLISS

CARMAN
A REAPPRAISAL

Edited and with an Introduction by Gerald Lynch



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Introduction

GERALD LYNCH

Bliss Carman (1861–1929) achieved something of an overnight success with the publication of his first volume of poems, *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1893), a success that seemed to have been secured by the widely popular volumes of vagabondia poems that he co-authored with Richard Hovey (1894–1900), the multi-volumed *Pipes of Pan* (1902–1905), and *Sappho* (1905). Yet Carman, to a greater extent perhaps than his fellow Canadian writers of the nineteenth century, has suffered from the misrepresentation and neglect that can be attributed to the slash-and-burn tactics practiced by many Canadian critics on their own literary heritage since the beginning of Canadian modernism in the 1920s. He lived to experience destitution and obscurity towards the end of the second decade of this century and a popular revival in his tours of the 1920s, though even this late acclaim was offset by concurrent critical defamation in the writings of the first wave of Canadian modernists (particularly those of A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott). Over the ensuing decades, his writings have been viewed—when considered at all—with the kind of bemused embarrassment that academics usually radiate when confronted with the evidence of their own undergraduate attempts at poetry. The British novelist Martin Amis has remarked of the problem of literary popularity: “When success happens to an English writer, he acquires a new typewriter. When success happens to an American writer, he acquires a new life.” When success happens to a Canadian writer in America, his old typewriter receives a lucrative oiling. He writes more and for greater rewards, but always to be accused of slickness and shallowness at home. Or so the example of Bliss Carman would lead us to conclude.

At least in the United States and England success is recognized, even celebrated, by the writer's audience, if with characteristic hyperbole in the former and understatement in the latter. In Canada, success remains a problem for critics and public alike. Assertions by detractors of the "world-famous-all-over-Canada" crowd to the contrary, success continues to be recognized at home only after recognition abroad, and even then it is viewed with the dispositional reservation that is at once such an attractive and troubling characteristic of Canadians. More to the point, popularity often ruins the writer's reputation posthumously. It takes a long time for the writing to be recuperated, the reputation to be fairly assessed, and the literary record to be righted. Consider the examples of Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Stephen Leacock: despite their continuing popular and critical acclaim abroad, they have had to be reappraised at home in an ongoing effort to resist the enduring collective urge to relegate them to the realms of popular and topical phenomena, or to assign them the status of literary lightweights. Thus the continuing need in Canadian publishing for a series that is intent upon reappraising the writings of our literary predecessors. The present volume and its contributors are devoted to beginning this process of recuperation for Bliss Carman.

It would be naive, though, to assume that Carman's problematic status in Canadian literary history is simply a result of the deleterious effect of wide popularity on a writer's claim to serious attention. The problem is also one of literary valuation and, more precisely, of the ignorance and/or deceptiveness of the evaluators; or, if that is too strong, the problem devolves from the sort of willed blindness to the continuum of Canadian poetry that has led at least twice in this century (in a kind of inversion of Mark Twain's joke) to belated announcements of the birth of Canadian literature. Carman's initial popularity only made it easier for the anxious, the ideologically correct, and the theoretically fashionable to dismiss him either unsympathetically or unread, whether that dismissal arose from the envy of a contemporary, from the Bloomian need to clear space, or from the biases in a theoretical system that purports (paradoxically) to demystify bias. Carman has suffered from all three. In the early part of the century his popularity drove William Wilfred Campbell to accuse him of high poetic plagiarism. This first shot in the War of the Poets led to the ignorant treatment of the Confederation poets by modernists such as Smith and Scott, and in recent decades to the near total eclipse of Carman and his contemporaries by the growing body of post-structuralist commentary. (It is curious that Anglo-American post-structuralists have commented so perceptively upon the writings of the English Romantic period, whereas their Canadian counterparts ignore the closest Canadian equivalent, the Confederation poets, and write instead about their contemporaries, or about themselves writing.) Such

a critical history of neglect and bemused dismissal has made it necessary for many of the contributors to this volume to do some pushing aside, some tearing down and redressing, some dusting off and shining up of the subject. For instance, a number of contributors recall Carman's considerable literary influence: we are reminded a few times of Ezra Pound's willingness to salvage only Carman from a relished imagined drowning of all "American" poets, of Wallace Stevens' chanting of lines from Carman like a poetic mantra, of Carman's influence on Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and others.

Generally, the present volume is designed to progress from biographical concerns, through bibliographical, to theoretical, and finally to more practical criticism. An overview of Carman's literary life is provided by Mary B. McGillivray, though other contributors such as James Doyle and Laurel Boone also draw attention to different aspects of his biography. In "The Popular and Critical Reputation and Reception of Bliss Carman," McGillivray surveys her subject while drawing upon an impressive range of sources. She charts the vicissitudes of Carman's career and reputation, providing compelling reasons for the changes in critical and popular responses to the poet and the poetry, and focuses finally on what a number of contributors describe as the enduring "haunting" quality of Carman's poetry. James Doyle outlines Carman's relationship with the American literary milieu at the turn of the century, especially with regard to the literary magazine scene and particularly the influential Boston periodical the *Chap-Book*. Laurel Boone cautiously establishes a lineage of modern dance that begins with François Delsarte and includes the hitherto unrecognized contribution of Carman's and Mary Perry King's schools of personal harmonizing.

Three poet-critics share their views of Carman's influence as Canadian poet-predecessor. Al Purdy will doubtlessly surprise some readers with the revelation that it was the oft-maligned Carman who inspired him to become a poet, thereby confirming D. G. Jones' view that Purdy may well be the true inheritor of the Carman mantle. We all knew of Purdy's freight-riding Depression days, but little did we suspect that he clipped along clutching a copy of Carman's collected poems. Elizabeth Brewster offers a charmingly personal view of Carman's importance to her as poet and fellow Maritimer, providing along the way much interesting critical analysis, as in her close reading of "Ephemeron." Jones gives us a paradoxical Carman who occupies a literary niche between the classically stoic writer and the post-modernist ironic, a poet whose lasting image remains an evanescent one, a trace, best figured in the moth and the wind.

John R. Sorfleet contends that assessments of Carman's development by earlier critics are based on a false chronology of the poetry. He provides a new and more accurate record of Carman's development

in phases based on an accurate chronology of composition, thereby offering scholars the opportunity to begin making more reliable analyses of the relation between developments in Carman's thought and work. In "Carman as Critic" Terry Whalen argues that Carman was essentially anti-modernist as both literary critic and philosopher of poetry. Drawing upon an impressive array of sources, Whalen finds the formulators of Carman's "intelligent modesty" in writers such as W. B. Yeats and George Santayana. Like Jones, Whalen considers Carman a transitional figure, but unlike Jones, he is unwilling to perpetuate, however sympathetically, the view of Carman as "fool-saint." D.M.R. Bentley looks at Carman's work in the context of the late nineteenth-century "mind-cure" movement, which was a therapeutic program designed to counter industrialized modernity's disabling effects on individual and collective sensibility. One route to mind cure involved withdrawal from the jangling city, rejuvenation in the countryside, and return to the world of men; another route was through reading, and Bentley, through metrical analysis of a *Sappho* poem, demonstrates how the poetry was composed to effect Carman's melioristic ends.

Subsequent papers turn to more particular facets of Carman's work. Tracy Ware presents an analysis of some specifically dedicated elegies in *By the Aurelian Wall*, establishing the influence of Romanticism generally and some of the major Romantic poets (Shelley, Blake, Keats) on Carman and Confederation poetry. Ware concludes with a fascinating look at the volume's concluding elegy—an elegy for the self. Drawing upon the evidence of numerous poems, ballads mostly, Louis K. MacKendrick investigates a heretofore ignored dimension of Carman's work, showing the strategic uses to which Carman put, and the fun he had with, the Gothic. A. R. Kizuk examines Carman's lyrics in terms of psychoanalytical-Lacanian theory, focusing on the impetus of desire in the poetry, its object in the absent Mother, and the importance of threshold imagery for drawing attention to the opposition between indoors and outdoors in Carman's poetic attitude. And in making her case for Carman's influence on modern dance, Laurel Boone establishes the importance of his pageants and masques, as well as his essays.

In their summary comments on the volume, R. L. McDougall, D.M.R. Bentley, and Douglas Lochhead consider the general tenor of the essays, focusing attention on such questions as "Whatever happened to Bliss Carman?" and "Why has it taken so long for this book-length reappraisal of Carman?" and on the need for a complete bibliography. In the hope of filling that need, John R. Sorfleet has generously provided a bibliography that should satisfy most teachers, students, and critics of Carman's work.

At the very least *Bliss Carman: A Reappraisal* should help foster an awareness among critics of the work being done in Carman scholar-

ship and of potentially rewarding areas for future research. But the essays collected here should also give encouragement to those of us who hope for a lasting resurgence of interest in Carman's voluminous and varied writings and in writers of the nineteenth century generally. As the biases of modernism and post-structuralism are recognized as biases, and as the growing influence in England and the United States of material criticism and the new historicism begins to be felt in Canadian criticism, there is reason to hope that critics will be less hesitant to re-value Carman's work in the contexts of his time and place and intentions. Judging from the uniformly high quality of the papers brought together here, there is also sound reason to hope that Bliss Carman will find his true place in Canadian literary history.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its support of this project. Thanks are due to Lorraine McMullen, general editor of the Reappraisals series, and to Frank Tierney for advice and encouragement. Thanks also go to Janet Shorten and Jenny Wilson at the University of Ottawa Press, and to my colleagues in the Department of English at the University of Ottawa who read the papers and were generous with their time and advice: Glenn Clever, Robert Collins, Camille La Bossière, Seymour Mayne, John Moss, David Rampton, David Staines, and Peter Stich. Thank you, too, to Marie McKinnon and Julie Sévigny-Roy for administrative and secretarial assistance. Finally, thank you to Mary Jo and our children, Bryan, Meghan, and Maura, for much patient understanding.

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The Popular and Critical Reputation and Reception of Bliss Carman

MARY B. MCGILLIVRAY

Bliss Carman is a poet about whom the prevailing clichés have tended to be that he was some kind of effete Bunthorne,¹ posturing at readings, hair floating in the breeze, not taken seriously by anyone who mattered. In much of the criticism and analysis of the last couple of generations, this perception of Carman as lightweight has hindered sensitive, intelligent or even-handed reception of his poetry. It has been broadly assumed, in fact, that Carman is hardly worth the trouble of reading. But I have always been drawn to Carman's poetry, and I suspect that his contemporary reviewers and audience, the "positive" version of the "negative" we have now, might have been on to something that has been ignored or forgotten. Response to Carman, especially during his lifetime, is ground well worth exploring. It should prove useful to see if what used to draw readers to Carman is still discernible, and perhaps briefly to explore the relationship between the contemporary reception of Carman and my own response to him.

One of the first things worth mentioning is that Carman's audience consisted of more than luncheon clubs. For example, Ezra Pound had this to say in 1910: "Bliss Carman is about the only living American poet who would not improve by drowning."² In 1923, Odell Shepard, writer and professor of English, said: "Carman's [poetry] brought beauty back for me into God's world."³

The range of response to Carman, both during his lifetime and after it, is as extensive as his poetry is varied. In all our literary history, no one rivals his unique ability to inspire a powerful and enduring emotional response among readers both literary and otherwise. Carman's poetic career was followed with real interest by the publishing world,

including reviewers and critics, the general public, who made some of his books the most popular after the turn of the century, and fellow poets.

Carman himself was chary of such response. In a letter to W. W. Campbell in 1890, he tells his disgruntled fellow poet not to mind being overlooked by the critics:

—ah! my dear fellow. What does it matter? You have written your work; it is beautiful. That is enough. It would be better if *nothing* were ever said of us until we were dead. You who have all the fire and calm beauty of the lakes in your very heart, what is it to you whether this reviewer or that can see the beauty of it too? I say your *true self* is sufficient judge, sufficient audience, sufficient world of fame.⁴

Carman meant this and, to a large extent, I believe he lived it, at least if we can judge by the dedicated way in which he pursued his own vision of worthwhile poetry. Nonetheless, he kept several scrapbooks in which he retained many reviews and critical assessments of his work. And the trajectory of his fame, as well as the composition of his audience, traces a fascinating pattern.

The present volume is welcome evidence of the recent revival of interest in Carman, but it has been a long time coming. Carman's hope that nothing be said about him until after his death was not realized; he attracted far more critical and public attention during his life than he could have imagined possible in 1890 when he was consoling Campbell for being excluded from an anthology. And by the late 1920s he was creating a stir that would surprise even today's audience. What Carman would have seen as an ironic twist, however, is that after his death less and less was said about him. Until he was rescued by Sorfleet's efforts of the late 1970s and Gundy's of the early 1980s, Carman was regarded by many critics as beneath notice. After a flurry of activity just after his death in 1929, one that included James Cappon's useful—if uneven—*Bliss Carman and the Literary Currents and Influences of his Time* (1930), critical assessment of Carman's work was sporadic and frequently negative. It was fashionable for about forty years to use Carman as a kind of straw man. No doubt many of the contributors to this volume have had to defend their interest in Carman against the indifference, even the incredulity, of their fellow scholars. Nonetheless, in the decades of his disrepute he has had a loyal following of educated and sensitive readers, some academics like Desmond Pacey and Malcolm Ross, and other poetry lovers who continue to feel what Carman's contemporary audiences felt. In this paper, I want to present or re-acquaint the reader with the ebb and flow of the tide of Carman's reputation and reception,

and ultimately to suggest what it is about Carman's poetry that has *allowed* it to survive.

It is difficult now to imagine or credit the magnitude of Carman's reputation early in the century. His first book of poems, *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1893), was warmly received by reviewers in such respectable journals as London's *Athenaeum*, which noticed Carman's gift for the mystical and evocative, and which, Carman felt (in spite of other less glowing observations), was "ruinous" in its praise.⁵ In the first two years, this volume went into three editions. Carman had arrived. In one of his scrapbooks, he made a special note of a review that he clearly thought expressed something of what he was trying to convey to his readership: "Every poem gives us a picture," says the reviewer, "and not the mere picture which would strike the superficial observer, but the vision of one who sees the forms, but also penetrates into the meaning of things."⁶ The elusive draw of Carman was recognized early.

When in 1894 he and Richard Hovey published the first volume of their *Songs from Vagabondia*, the book was received with wild enthusiasm, both critical and popular. It was reviewed in literary magazines and in daily newspapers across the continent and overseas. The *New York Times* reviewer gushed:

Hail to the poets! Good poets, real poets, with a swig of wine and a lilt of rhyme. . . . Who would have thought that good fellowship and the free air of heaven could fan such fancies as these into a right merry woodland blaze in dry times when satyrs . . . lie hid under the dead willows till great Pan should come again.⁷

The *Chicago News* for September 29, 1894, said:

[T]o have a volume of the richest poesy drop from satin wings into the lap of every-day formality is like the opening measures of a spring song, and a boyish desire to crow "finders keepers" stirs prosaic tempers at the sight and melody of *Songs from Vagabondia*.⁸

The more staid *Athenaeum* allowed that writing poetically distinct, cheerful verse was "far harder" than to succeed at writing "in slow metres to mournful airs" and said: "Both these young writers . . . have that charm, rare in writers of verse, of drawing the reader into the fellowship of their own zest and contentment."⁹

But even this early there were loud negative voices, as has been quite typical of Carman's reception. In Canada, Carman's good notices were offset by controversy. William Wilfred Campbell, himself newly arrived on the literary scene, issued a kind of challenge to Carman. In

the pages of the Toronto *Sunday World*, June 16, 1895, Campbell anonymously accused Carman of literary plagiarism. He went more public with the issue the following week in a signed article charging that collusion and self-promotion existed among Carman, Roberts and Lampman.¹⁰ Writers and critics across the country entered the fray throughout the summer, until, between the reviewer in the *Globe*, who called Carman a "poet's poet,"¹¹ and writer Peter McArthur, who pointed out that many similar accusations could be made of Campbell,¹² Carman's reputation was restored—or, at least, left alone. Campbell was not impressed with or touched by Carman's elusive lyric charm, and since Carman's death, most critics have been almost as dismissive as Campbell of the vagabond mode. But there was no doubt in the minds of the reading public. They loved it. Within fourteen months of its publication, *Songs from Vagabondia* went into its third edition. Both Carman and Hovey were widely recognized from that point on.

At this stage of Carman's career, he enjoyed a high profile indeed.¹³ Perhaps because of Pacey's dismissal in the 1950s of the vagabond mode as "a pose"—and of the poetry of that style as "alien to [Carman's] own temperament"¹⁴—the enormous impact made by the Vagabond poems has been forgotten. But there can be no doubt of the breadth and depth of this appeal for some—the "Vagabond Song" from this book has been anthologized almost as frequently as "Low Tide on Grand Pré."

Carman's public at this time did not, as we may sometimes assume, consist only of jaded critics who responded to positive thinking. One of Carman's admirers was the young Robert Frost, who thought so highly of Carman's work that when, in 1894, his poem "My Butterfly" was accepted by the *Independent* and praised by Carman, he bound it into a four-poem booklet and presented it to Elinor White as part of his campaign to marry her.¹⁵ And Frost did not entirely lose touch with Carman's work as his reputation waxed and waned; Mary Perry King mentions in a letter to Carman of January 14, 1924 (thirty years later), that Robert Frost had dropped by looking for him.¹⁶

By the early part of this century, Carman had published numerous volumes of verse, some in the vagabond mode, but many in various moods from the elegiac to the symbolic to what may loosely be called the "philosophical." Although of course the reviews and assessments of his work were not uniformly wonderful—the *Athenaeum*, for example, which had so enjoyed the rollicking tunes of *vagabondage*, was sick of Carman's positive and joyful spirit by 1904, and called his optimism a "facile thing"¹⁷—on the whole, Carman's work always found an appreciative audience. Each volume—and by 1905 there were seventeen—was widely reviewed in both the public and literary press in England and in the United States.

While the most prolific phase of Carman's poetic career was largely over—or at least in a rather long lull—by about 1910, he had become increasingly the public figure of the poet. When President Theodore Roosevelt returned from a safari trip in 1909 (the same year in which the opportunely named *The Rough Rider and Other Poems* appeared), Carman was invited to compose and read a poem at a welcome-back dinner in Teddy's honour in New York.¹⁸ In 1915, when his poetic production was at a virtual standstill and he was scratching out a living by publishing various prose works on nature, art and personality, Carman secured a position at the Elizabethan Club at Yale through Roosevelt's influence. In exchange for the occasional talk on poetry, this position would guarantee him an annuity of \$500.00 for life.¹⁹

Carman had long since been noticed by another readership—one anticipated much earlier by the *Toronto Globe*, when it had called him "a poet's poet such as Keats was,"²⁰ a readership joined early on by Robert Frost. At about the same time as he was being fêted along with Teddy Roosevelt, Carman was also the object of the quiet admiration of Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens. The remark by Pound in 1910 about Carman's being worthy of living was not just a quip: Pound had begun to read Carman sometime around 1903. When he first approached a publisher in London, it was Elkin Mathews, the same house which for some time published Carman's verse in England. Pound was an admirer of Carman's and Hovey's *Songs from Vagabondia*,²¹ as is evident, for example, in his "A Rouse" from *A Lume Spento* (1908). This poem opens with the lines, "Save ye, Merry gentlemen! Vagabonds and Rovers / Hell take the hin'most / We're for the clovers!" The *Sappho* poems, too, first widely published in late 1904, seem to have struck a chord which resonated in Pound's early work. "Threnos" ("Lo the fair dead!") in *A Lume Spento* and Δώρια in *Ripostes* (1912) are just two poems which demonstrate this influence.²²

Carman's poetry was also instrumental in the shaping of some of Wallace Stevens' work. In his letters of January 1909 to his fiancée Elsie Moll, Stevens tells how he hummed one of Carman's spring songs all day long as he composed his own verse. He also mentions browsing through volumes of Carman's poetry in the library, lingering especially on the cheerful nature lyrics and on the *Sappho* poems. He mentions specifically the magic of Lyric LXXXII, "Over the roofs the honey-coloured moon"²³

I find it interesting that these *Sappho* poems, which got little notice and less praise when they were published in 1904, persisted in the minds and hearts of men who were to be among the next generation's most important poets.²⁴ Even when he wasn't being reviewed or lionized, Carman was still being read.

His readers, however, were not prepared to follow him when he left poetry completely behind. By about 1906, the surge of poetic creativity upon which Carman had been drawing seemed to ebb. He wrote to his friend and fellow vagabond Tom Meteyard in late December of that year: "There is no poetry now, but quite a lot of prose, eventually to make a volume, *The Making of Personality*."²⁵ In spite of the notion that has persisted right up to the present of Carman as some kind of laughable figure from whom an indiscriminating public would accept almost anything, Carman's publishers, critics and readers were not prepared to pay the kind of attention to his joint projects with Mary Perry King (of which *Personality* was one) that he would have wished. In mid-career—or at least in mid-life—Carman's public profile began to have an unexpected effect. In order to get *The Making of Personality* published in 1908, Carman had to agree to leave Mary Perry King's name as co-author entirely aside and to re-write the volume almost completely.²⁶ I suspect that this had something to do with the mild scandal that surrounded the relationship between Carman and Mary Perry King. (It also had something to do with her appalling prose style.²⁷) Carman was pleased enough with the sales of *Personality* in 1908, but although it did go into a second edition in 1913, it was not nearly as widely acclaimed or reviewed as his poetry had been; later editions were brought out only in the 1920s when his reading tours precipitated renewed interest in his work overall.²⁸

As I have already noted, Carman's poetic creativity during the early part of this century waned, as did the acclaim for his work by critical journals. In 1905, the *Pipes of Pan* series, for example, got mixed reviews in the United States and quite poor ones in Britain.²⁹ By 1911, when it came time to publish the masques or the "Lyrical Pageants," of which Carman was proud and which were a kind of dramatization of the Carman-King unitrinianism that had been delineated in *Personality*, Carman had the unfamiliar experience of being rejected outright by some ten periodicals and more than half a dozen publishing houses.³⁰ When he tried to take the first of the pageants, *Daughters of Dawn*, on a kind of lecture and performance tour to California with Mary Perry King, he was told by his friend Irving Way that he had better not because of the gossip their appearance would fuel.³¹ In the end, another friend, Mitchell Kennerley, undertook to publish both pageants at his own expense in 1912 and 1913. They were not re-issued, and they did not sell. Carman published one book of poems, *April Airs*, after the war (1916), which received rather lukewarm reviews. In 1919, Pelham Edgar reminded the public that Carman was still around, only to regret that Carman had "beaten out his philosophy [so] very thin."³²

Although Mary Perry King's effect on Carman's life was not entirely positive, inasmuch as she kept him perhaps too focused on uni-

trinianism for the good of his poetry and too restricted in his movements for the good of his independent development, in the end it was she who engineered the re-emergence of Carman from the ashes of his apparently vanished fame in 1920. After World War I, Carman's finances—not for the first time³³—were in a sorry state, and when in October 1919 he was stricken with tuberculosis, he could not afford to pay for the treatment and convalescence he needed. It was Mary Perry King who pulled strings, writing to poets and journalists in the United States and Canada to stir up interest in raising funds for the stricken poet. She personally staged benefits in New York. The public rallied. An American journalist, Dr. Frank Crane, who was in the editorial department of a huge news bureau in New York, wrote a heart-rending article entitled “Sick and in Prison” which ran in nearly all the bureau's papers across the United States and Canada. He informed his readers that Carman—whom, for discretion's sake, he did not name outright—was “struggling with the Great White Plague [tuberculosis]” and that he “. . . has no money, for poetry is not the road to wealth. All his life he has gone his way, singing his songs and cheering us all up.” Crane appealed to the public not to let pass the “privilege” of giving “our material goods in return for the benedictions of beauty,” and he reminded the lovers of poetry of the debt they owed Carman for “those elusive elements of the beautiful that haunt all of our minds.”³⁴

The response to Crane's and Mary Perry King's efforts demonstrated that Carman had not been forgotten—thousands of dollars poured in, from scholars, politicians and office workers all over the continent. In Toronto Peter McArthur, a writer and columnist, organized a benefit dinner at which Siegfried Sassoon spoke; Carman even heard from Vincent Massey who, as President of the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, sent him a bank draft.³⁵

Mary Perry King's efforts were timely; in fact, Carman's illness was timely. When his plight put him back in the public eye, a number of writers and other Carman loyalists in Canada seized the opportunity to invite him to return “home.” Peter McArthur organized a reading tour for 1921. Later, he wrote to Pierce that, in arranging this, he “had the advantage of the publicity due to his recent severe illness. [Carman] appealed to the public as one returned from the dead.”³⁶ At all events, Canada was more than ready to embrace the returned poet, and for the next four years Carman was transformed into the kind of *matinée-idol* figure which most of us know. In fact, his image as “the Bard” crowned with maple leaves by the Canadian Authors' Association is the one that too many students of Canadian literature still retain.

It is difficult for us to imagine the splash Carman made on the reading tours of early 1921 and 1921–22. He was able to command audiences whose numbers were staggering. In Guelph in early February

REAPPRAISALS: Canadian Writers

This series is the outcome of symposia on Canadian writers presented by the Department of English, University of Ottawa. The object is to make permanently available the criticism and evaluation of writers as presented by scholars and literary figures at the symposia. Where considered significant by the editor, additional critical articles and bibliographical material are included.

Lorraine McMullen
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