

PARNASSUS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

THE FIRST FRUITS OF BRITANIOLA

By M. H. M. MacKINNON

IN 1628, Robert Hayman returned from Newfoundland to England and published at Bristol a volume of epigrams entitled *Quodlibets*. Hayman had been governor at Harbor Grace, Newfoundland, composed his verses while living there, and wrote chiefly concerning the life and people of that island. He related his poetic creations to the whole problem of establishing a cultural life in the new world. For these reasons, we may claim him as the first English-Canadian poet.

The full title-page of his book is as follows:*

Quodlibets, Lately Come Over From New Britaniola, old Newfoundland. Epigrams and other small parcels, both Morall and Divine. The first foure bookes being the authors owne: the rest translated out of that excellent Epigrammatist, Mr. John Owen, and other rare authors: With Two Epistles of that excellently wittie Doctor, Francis Rablais: Translated out of his French at large. All of them composed and done at Harbor-Grace in Britaniola, anciently called Newfoundland. By R. H. Sometime Governour of the Plantation there. London. Printed by Elizabeth All-de, for Roger Michell, dwelling in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Bulls-head. 1628.

Hayman dedicates his work thus:

To the Kings most excellent majestie, Charles, by Gods especial mercy, King of Great-Britaine, France, and Ireland & c. Emperour of South, and North Virginia, King of Britaniola, or Newfoundland, and the Iles adjacent, Father, Favourer, and Furtherer of all his loyall subjects right honorable and worthie Plantations.

He prays that his majesty will receive these papers with the same good will that friends of his received "some unripe eares of corne, brought by me from the cold country of Newfoundland." He then develops the comparison:

"These few bad unripe Rimes of mine (coming from thence) are in all humility presented with the like intendment to your Majestie, to testifie that the Aire there is not so dull, or malevolent, but that if better wits were transplanted thither, neither the summers heat would dilate them, nor the winters cold benumme them, but that they might in full vigour flourish to good purpose. For if I nowe growne dull and aged, could doe somewhat, what will not sharper, younger, freer inventions performe there? They would not walk as I here doe, with short turnes, leaning sometimes on others inventions, skipping weakly from bough to bough, but with large walkes, with long and strong flights."

*I have made use of the copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Hayman's view of a future in which Newfoundland would produce greater poets than himself, poets capable of "long and strong flights", men who would not be dilated by the heat or enumbed by the cold, is remarkable enough. But he proceeds from this to a prophecy of both economic and cultural development in the island, a prophecy which by extension we might take to apply to Canada.

I suppose it not fit at this time . . . to make knowne unto your Majestie, the inestimable riches of the seas circuling that Island: the hopeful improvements of the maine land thereof. The more then probable, unvaluable hidden treasures therein: the infinite abundance of combustible fire materials fit for such an employment. It is only the Aire at this time I desire to dignifie, and that which is within that Horizon: Yet is my prooffe rather in hope of others, then in any actuated performance of mine owne. If your Majestie will be pleased to give credit to your meanest subject, I may ingage my selfe on this asseveration, that not only in this unprofitable (though not unpleasant) art, better wits would thrive there: but all other sollid learning would walke uprightly without convulsions.

In concluding the dedication, he once more asserts that his poems were written in Newfoundland and that they are a token of what may be produced on that island. He hopes that his Majesty may find time to read his verses,

Meane and unworthy though they are, yet because some of them were borne and the rest did first speake English, in that Land whereof your gracious Majestie is the right, and lawfull Sovereigne, and King, by ancient descent and primary possession and being the first fruits of this kind, that ever visited this land, out of that Dominion of yours. (He begs the King to accept his book.) And that you may see an happy successe of all your Forraigne-Plantations especially that of Newfoundland, I remaine Your Majesties well-meaning and loyall subject, Robert Hayman.

Following the dedicatory preface come the encomiastic verses which were usual in volumes of this sort. The tributes are offered, by William Vaughan, George Wither, Richard Bicer, and John Vicars, tell us something of the character of Hayman and further establish the point that his poetry was associated with Newfoundland. Vaughan addresses his verse to my deare friend and fellow-planter, Master Robert Hayman, who with pen and person prepares more roome for Christians the Newfoundland-world."

"You spend your time, both with your Muse and hand,
To edifie our hopeful Newfoundland."

He proceeds to praise Hayman for building the economy and saving the souls of Newfoundland:

"To plant and fish, from sloth you those perswade,
From errors these, to a more heavenly trade . . .
Thus he who borrowed twice sweet Orpheus name
Poore Cambriols Lord, addes to your rising fame."

Richard Spicer, a kinsman of Hayman's, contributes a few lines of undistinguished verse addressed:

To The Facetious Epigrammatist . . . Mr. Robert Hayman

"Your modest lines begot in Harbor-Grace
Doe grace that Harbor in old Newfound-land."

The tribute offered by Vicars is a dull acrostic on Hayman's name, which concludes with this flourish:

"If Newfoundland yeeld such commodities
I'd thither trade, for so rare Marchandize."

Finally, the poem by George Wither makes even more strongly the point that Hayman's verses were written in the new world, which promises inspiration to poets equal to that of the classical haunts of the muse.

Why doe so many fondly dote upon
Parnassus, Tempe and that Heilcon
Renowned by the Greeks? Why praise they so
The Muses haunting Tiber, Thame, and Po;
As if no other Hill, or Grove, or spring
Should yeeld such raptures, as these forth did bring?
Behold, e'en from these uncouth shores, among
Unpeopled woods, and hills, these strains were sung:
And most of theirs they seem to parallel,
Who boast to drink of Aganippe's well.
Despaire not therefore, you that love the Muses,
If any Tyrant, you, or yours abuses;
For these will follow you, and make you mirth,
Ev'n at the furthest Angles of the earth,
And those contentments which at home yee leese,
They shall restore you among Beasts and Trees.

These eulogistic poems by friends of Hayman, and the author's preface clearly establish that Hayman was not merely an English poet who resided in Newfoundland as governor and published verses on his return. Hayman lived and wrote in Newfoundland, identified his poetry with that island, and foresaw the growth of literature in the new world. In him we have a unique link between the school of Elizabethan epigram-

matists and Canadian poetry of this century. His vision of "sharper, younger, freer inventions" is becoming fact.

The Elizabethan epigram, while not comparable in excellence to the madrigal, the air, or the sonnet, is of considerable importance. In the epigrams of Sir John Davies, Thomas Bastard, Edward Guilpin, John Weever, and Sir John Harington, all of whom were writing in the 1590's, we find a wealth of information about the social life and personalities of the time. The epigrams were always typical and nearly always satirical; they were a form of literature much closer to the life of the people than the artificial complaints of the sonnetteers. The satirical strain is lightened by considerable humour and some wit, and some of the best epigrams are fabliaux in brief. While they lack something in sensitivity of language, and have a limited range, the epigrams are homely and proverbial in expression, are usually well-constructed, and lead up to a point. As one writer put it: "The whole epigram doth nothing but make way for the last two lines, which are brought in like a piece of cheese to digest all that went before." (*The Whipping of the Satyre*, 1601).

It is to this tradition of topical epigrams that Hayman belongs; and as the poets named had borrowed extensively from Martial and other Roman poets, so Hayman borrowed from them. He writes verses in praise of King James, moral lessons, attacks on Puritans and Catholics, comments on fashions, addresses to his friends in Exeter and Bristol and at Oxford and Lincoln's Inn. These epigrams are usually imitated from Harington or Davies, and show Hayman as nothing more than a plodding versifier. The following are fair samples:

To a Periwiggian, who hopes to gain by some friends death

"Thou maist well hope to be some dead mans heire,
For thou already wear'st some dead-mans haire."

(Book I, 35)

To Sir Pierce Pennylesse

Though little coyne thy purse-lesse pocket lyne
Yet with great company thou art ta'en up,
For often with Duke Humphrey thou dost dyne,
And often with Sir Thomas Gresham sup."

(Book I, 117)

For this latter poem, he supplies a marginal gloss:

"He walks out his dinner in Pauls and his supper in the exchange."

These epigrams which constitute most of Book I, are the usual compositions of the time, and Hayman was no more original than the rest.

Towards the end of Book I, and throughout Book II and III, however, we find Hayman writing in Newfoundland. In place of the complex society of London we have the loneliness of duty in the colonies, far from books and plays and the glitter of the court. And yet, he is not, like Herrick, complaining about isolation.

A Skeltonicall continued ryme, in praise of my New-found-land

Although in cloaths, company, buildings faire,
With England, New-found-land cannot compare:
Did some know what contentment I found there
Allwayes enough, most tymes somewhat to spare
With little pains, lesse toyle, and lesser care,
Exempt from taxings, ill newes, lawing, feare,
If cleane and warme, no matter what you weare,
Healthly and wealthy, if men carefull are,
With much-much more, then I will now declare,
(I say) if some wise men knew what this were,
(I doe beleeve) they'd live no other where."

(Book I, 117)

Many of the poems are in this vein, praising the new country and the English and Welsh people who are settling there. He writes, for instance, several poems to "Captain John Mason who did wisely and worthily governe there divers yeeres". One of these is:

The Foure Elements in Newfoundland

The Aire in Newfoundland is wholesome, good;
The Fire, as sweet as any made of wood:
The Waters very rich, both salt and fresh,
The Earth more rich, you know it is no lesse,
Where all are good, Fire, Water, Earth, and Aire,
What man made of these foure would not live there.

(Book II, 79)

He writes enthusiastically about the island "To All Those Wommen who have any desire to live in Newfound-land, specially to the modest and discreet Gentlewoman Mistris Mason, wife of Captain Mason." He tells them:

"I wish you, when you goe, faire wind, faire weather:
For if you with the passage can dispence,
When you are there, I know you'll ne'r come thence."

(II, 80)

To another friend, who often objects to the coldness of the winter in Newfoundland, he writes,

“Winter is there short, wholesome, constant, cleare,
Not thick, unwholesome, shuffling as 'tis here.”

(II, 81)

This optimistic view of Newfoundland led Hayman to address several epigrams to the leaders of the colonization scheme. He writes “To the right worshipfull John Slaney, Treasurer to the Newfoundland Company, and to all the rest of that Honorable Corporation,” commending their enterprise and urging that they should not foresake it. He calls it

“The hopefullest, easiest, healthi'st, just plantation
That ere was undertaken by our Nation.”

And to “Sir George Calvert, late Principall Secretary to King James, Baron of Baltamore, and Lord of Avalon in Newfoundland,” he writes

“O let your Honour cheerfully goe on
End well your well begunne Plantation.”

(II, 84)

To his friend Vaughan, and to Vaughan's wife, he addresses several poems, for Vaughan like Hayman is a poet, and is living in Newfoundland. “To Master William Vaughan, chiefe Undertaker for the Plantation in Cambrioll, the Southernmost part of Newfoundland, who with pen, purse, and person hath, and will prove the worthiness of that enterprise.”

“It joy'd my heart, when I did understand
That your self would your Colonie command;
It greev'd me much, when as I heard it told,
Sickness had layd on you an unkind hold.
Beleeve me, Sir, your Colchos Cambrioll
Is a sweet, pleasant, wholesome, gainefull soyle.
You shall find there what you doe want; sweet health:
And what you doe not want as sweet, sweet wealth.”

(II, 86)

To Mistress Anne Vaughan he writes an epigram on the theme that “Some Diseases were never in Newfoundland”:

Those that live here, how young, or old, soever,
Were never vext with Cough, nor Aguish Feaver,
Nor ever was the Plague, nor small pox heere;
The Aire is so salubrious, constant, cleere;
Yet scurvy Death stalks heere with theevisch pace,
Knocks one down here, two in another place.”

(II, 88)

In a later group of poems he addresses Lord Calvert once more, praising him for having visited Newfoundland:

"This shall be said whil'st that the world doth stand
Your *Honor*, 'twas first *honoured* this Land."

(II, 98)

But in the poem next following he condemns the "right worshipfull Planters of Bristol-hope in the New Kingdom of Britaniola" who do not come out to see the new colony in which they have invested.

"Here you would quickly see more than my selfe:
Then would you style it, Bristols-hope of wealth."

(II, 99)

Hayman continues to praise Newfoundland and to urge his fellow-countrymen to consider its future possibilities. In an epistle to "The Right Worshipfull William Robinson of Tinwell in Rutlandshire Esquire, come over to see Newfoundland with my Lord of Baltamore 1627" he argues that the rocky and undrained appearance of the island is merely the sign of rawness:

"When England was us'd for a Fishing place
By Coasters only, 'twas in the same case,
And so unlovely it had continued still:
Had not our Ancestors us'd paines, and skill."

(II, 100)

He becomes annoyed at the delays and hesitations of "the first planters of Newfoundland", but praises individuals who have shown enthusiasm for the colony. Typical of these verses is one "To My Reverend kind friend, Master Erasmus Sturton, Preacher of the Word of God, and Parson of Ferry Land, in the Province of Avalon in Newfoundland."

"No man should be more welcome to this place,
Then such as you, Angels of Peace, and Grace;
As you were sent here by the Lords command
Be you the blest Apostle of this land."

(II, 102)

In a poem to his friend "Peter Miller of Bristoll" he discusses the food which is to be had in the new world.

"You askt me once, what here was our chiefe dish?
In Winter, Fowle, in Summer choyce of Fish . . .
Yet we have Partriges, and store of Deare,
And that (I thinke) with you is pretty cheere.

Yet let me tell you, Sir, what I love best
Its a Poore-John thats cleane, and neatly drest."

(II, 103)

In a marginal note he explains that the Poor-John is "the principall Fish brought out of this Countree."

Since the food is abundant and the climate salubrious, Hayman feels that colonists should come in large numbers. He begs that the Plantation should not be used as a place to send "idle, lewd, young men", but should attract the best sort. He writes an appeal "To the Two Famous, Wise and Learned Sisters, the Two universities of England, Oxford and Cambridge," urging them thus:

"Send forth your sonnes unto our new Plantation:
Yet send such as are Holy, wise, and able,
That may build Christs Church, as these doe their Babel."

(II, 105)

Finally he addresses a poem "To the Queen" in which he re-states the theme that has been constant through the poems, that England must develop this new world for future ages to enjoy.

"When wise Columbus offered his New-land,
To wise men, they him held, vaine, foolish, fond,
Yet a wise Woman, of an happy wit,
With good successe advantur'd upon it;
Then the wise men their wisdomes did repent,
And their heires since their follies do lament.
My New-Land (Madam) is already knowne,
The way, the ayre, the earth, all therein growne,
It only wants a Woman of your spirit,
To mak't a land fit for your Heires t'inherit.
Sweet, dreaded Queen, your helpe here will doe well:
Be here a Famous Second Isabell."

(III, 84)

Apart from the numerous poems on the theme of Newfoundland, Hayman wrote some tolerable verses on conventional literary subjects. In Book III, for instance, there are some pleasant lyrics to young ladies, something in the style of Herrick. "To My Perpetual Valentine" is typical of these.

There are also topical and flattering verses, some to the King, others in honour of England's heroes. The finest of the latter in praise of "The Great and Famous . . . Sir Francis Drake," concludes thus:

"Effecting all, he did all undertake,
Valient, just, wise, milde, honest, godly Drake."

(IV, 7)

Another group of verses reveals Hayman's attitude to various writers of his time. One poem is to "his loving friend, Master Robert Burton." Another is addressed to "The Reverend and Divinely Witty, John Dun, Doctor in Divinity, Deane of Saint Pauls, London."

"As my John Owen Seneca did praise,
So might I for you a like piller raise,
His Epigrams did nothing want but verse;
You can yours (if you list) that way rehearse:
His were neat, fine, divine, morality;
But yours, pure, faithfull, true Divinity."

(IV, 9)

His epistle to Ben Jonson shows suitable modesty and good critical judgment.

"To Master Benjamin Jonson, Witty Epigrammatist, and most excellent poet."

"My Epigrams come after yours in time
So doe they in concept, in form, in Ryme
My wits in fault, the fault is none of mine:
For if my will could have inspired my wit,
There never had beene Better Verses writ;
As good as yours, could I have ruled it."

(IV, 18)

There is a brief tribute to George Wither, whom he calls "the acute satyrist," and an interesting address to "My Worthy Friend, Mr. Michael Drayton, whose unweered old Muse still produceth new dainties."

"When I was young I did delight your lines
I have admyr'd them since my judging times.
Your younger muse plai'd many a dainty fit,
And your old muse doth hold out strongly yet.
Though my old muse durst passe through frost and snow,
In warres your old Muse dares her colours shew."

(IV, 22)

At the end of Book IV, Hayman writes "To the Reader . . . If these faile in worth, blame me, but consider from whence they came, from a place of no helps." Clearly he felt the lack of books in the new world, yet on all other counts he defended it strongly.

Following these four books of *Quodlibets* of Hayman's, are four books of Epigrams by John Owen, ably translated from

the Latin by Hayman, whose attitude towards Owen is that of discipleship.

"The best conceits Owens conceits have found
Short shape, sweet, witty, unforc'd, neate, profound."

Finally there are a few pages of miscellaneous Latin epigrams translated by Hayman and two epistles translated from Rabelais.

This completes the account of Hayman as an epigrammatist. As for Hayman the man, there is little to say. The late G. C. Moore Smith, writing in *Notes and Queries*, (10th Series, X, 23-4) states that Hayman was probably born in 1578-9, son of Nicholas Hayman, of Totnes, Devon, who was MP for Dartmouth, Clifton, and Hardness in the Parliament of 1592-3. He matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford, in October 1590, and after university was admitted to Lincoln's Inn. In 1604 he married Grace Spicer of Exeter, who presumably had no children and died before Hayman went to Newfoundland. Moore Smith raises the question as to whether Harbor Grace was named for Hayman's wife.

In the British museum (Egerton MS 2541) is a paper by Hayman, written before 23 August 1628, pleading with Buckingham for royal support for the colonists.

A contemporary reference to Hayman is found in a play *Cupids Whirligig* (1607) which the author, Edward Sharpham, dedicates to "his much honoured, beloved, respected, and judiciable friend Maister Robert Hayman."

In sum, Hayman is a literary curiosity rather than an important poet. His command of language and rhythm is limited, and he falls far below, say, Harington as Harington comes below Ben Jonson.

Yet he is worthy of comment. For here we have an Elizabethan poet who lived and wrote about what is now Canada. Moreover, he had considerable foresight and urged on the leaders of the plantation a vigorous policy of colonization. He had great love for the new world and saw its potential wealth. In his expansiveness and dream of empire he was a true Elizabethan; in his espousal of the cause of developing the new world he deserves to be considered a Canadian pioneer.