To amuse and instruct: reading materials and readership in nineteenth century Ontario, Canada

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TO AMUSE AND INSTRUCT;
READING MATERIALS AND READERSHIP IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY ONTARIO, CANADA

by

JOHN A. WISEMAN

A Master's Thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of Master
of Philosophy of the Loughborough University of Technology

April 1980

Supervisor: Mr. James G. Olle,
Department of Library and Information Studies.

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To my wife and son
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ution for assistance in tracking down and acquiring a variety of research materials. The Reference Department and the Interlibrary Loans Section in the university library were particularly helpful in this respect. I am also pleased to have the acquaintance of Professor George Parker, Royal Military College, Kingston, who is working in the related field of publishing. The numerous interchanges of ideas and information have been invaluable.

Last but not least, my wife and son deserve particular mention for bearing with fortitude the trials and tribulations of authorship. My wife, in particular, not only gave me encouragement and support but also typed and proof-read the various drafts and the final copy. I am deeply grateful.
ABSTRACT

Through the examination of contemporary records, particularly newspapers, magazines, book-trade catalogues, reports of various kinds, and a number of historical accounts of the early settlement of the province, this study demonstrates that, from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth, adults and children with a propensity for reading gained access to an increasingly broad range of secular and pious publications that were produced either indigenously, or, more frequently, emanated from the presses of Great Britain and the United States.

Bookstores, pedlars, subscription agents, itinerant preachers and missionaries, religious and benevolent societies, subscription libraries, school libraries that functioned as public libraries, and the libraries of the mechanics' institutes were the principal sources of reading matter. Several of these agencies were promoted by those who set themselves up as guardians of public morals and taste. "Dime" novels and story papers and the sensational fiction they contained were particularly vulnerable to attack, but even publications that were deemed absolutely harmless could be censured on grounds of superficiality. Consequently, sensitive authors, editors, and publishers endeavoured to avoid this type of criticism by combining amusement with instruction.
The period encompassed by this study was one in which Ontario grew from a wilderness into a fully-fledged province with all the trappings of a modern society, and although it was beset by problems typified by a copyright situation that tended to stifle a domestic publishing industry, the people of the province were anything but deprived of the best, and the worst, in English-language publishing.
INTRODUCTION

Present-day Ontario occupies an area of over four hundred thousand square miles. At the time of the American Revolution it was no more than a vast wilderness, an area that was then the western part of the colony of Quebec. It received its first major infusion of settlers as a direct result of the revolutionary war when, over a period of years, several thousand Americans who had remained faithful to the British Crown arrived from the United States; these were the United Empire Loyalists. In 1791 Quebec was divided into the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada. The upper or western part had a predominately English-speaking population, while in the lower, eastern region there existed primarily a French presence.

In the years leading up to the War of 1812 more Americans followed in the wake of the Loyalists. At the end of the war, in 1814, the population stood at about ninety-five thousand. The decades immediately following were characterized by massive emigration from the British Isles, many of the immigrants settling in what is now Ontario. The Irish were well represented in these groups.

In 1841 Upper and Lower Canada were united to form the Province of Canada, called respectively Canada West and Canada East. An extremely significant landmark
in Canadian history was reached in 1867 with the passing of the British North America Act which united the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, thus establishing the Dominion of Canada. \(^2\) It was at this time that Canada West became the province of Ontario.

For Ontario, the nineteenth century was one of progress and development marked by depressions, trade booms, and political upheavals, including a rebellion in 1837 that was the culmination of political dissent aroused by the behaviour of the reigning oligarchy commonly known as the "Family Compact."

Situated amid numerous lakes and rivers, Ontario's early settlements clustered along the shorelines. Water transport, sail and steam, compensated for dense forest and poor, even non-existent, roads. Although the waterways provided links with the outside world, the need to push inland, creating new settlements and exploiting the natural resources, made land communications imperative. Consequently, road building did forge ahead, however slowly, and the stage-coach was an early means of conveyance on the crude highways and trails of Ontario. The situation was somewhat alleviated in winter when the frozen terrain facilitated travel by sled until more durable road networks had been developed by mid-century. Nevertheless, it was the coming of the railways in the 1850s that revolutionized transportation and improved communications immeasurably. Stage-coach and steamboat had been linked in the past; now it was possible to forge what was, perhaps, the most important link in the transport chain as railways were less subject to the vagaries
of the climate and so could operate summer and winter. As the century progressed, the railways of the British North American provinces linked with those of the United States. This fostered a greater degree of intercourse in trade, commerce, and cultural matters. The telegraph, which appeared in the 1840s, and the gradual development of a sophisticated postal service were also important contributions to the economic and social progress of Ontario.

A visitor to Ontario today would be struck quite forcibly by the fact that, despite the presence of large conurbations that reflect a complex, modern society, Ontario still maintains a decidedly rural aspect with its broad expanses of open country and farmland. The towns and cities in nineteenth-century Ontario virtually sprang from the forests and were to some extent contained by them.

Although basically an agrarian society, many of the "cottage" industries created in the first half of the century grew into large scale businesses, linked to the industrialization process that began in the 1850s. And it was not long before poor housing conditions and health problems began to affect many who were living in the industrial cities that were emerging. These conditions were frequently accompanied by unemployment and poverty, afflictions that were also visited upon a number of unfortunate rural-dwellers who found it impossible to make a living from the land.

It has been observed already that early in its history Ontario established links of various kinds with
the United States, as did other parts of British North America. In addition, strong ties to the mother country were maintained; this "interplay" between the three countries has been aptly termed the "North Atlantic Triangle." Brebner, in developing his "triangle" thesis, draws attention to the magnitude of the interchanges between British North America and the United States which involved every aspect of trade and commerce strongly imbued with a spirit of competition. Many of these enterprises cannot be explained in purely North American terms. Through her constitutional ties, Great Britain exerted a strong influence over her North American possessions while maintaining a rather tenuous relationship with the United States; the attitude of the United States to her northern neighbour was, in turn, coloured by her relationship with Great Britain; thus the triangle was complete, with the mother country as the important third side.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Although the province was variously called Upper Canada and Canada West, for convenience sake, the name Ontario has been used throughout the main body of the work. A similar problem arose with the terms "Canada" and "Canadians" which, strictly speaking, cannot be used to describe the entire country during the period under review (see note 2). Appropriate terminology was, however, needed to describe phenomena that embraced other areas in addition to Ontario. A colleague with considerable experience in such matters, Professor R.J.D. Page, suggested that "British North America" and "British North Americans" would be quite acceptable, and I am grateful for this suggestion. One exception has been made to this rule in the final section of the chapter on periodical literature where the discussion is much more national in character than anywhere else in the study and is consistently couched in terms of "Canada" and "Canadians." In this case it would have been purposeless and procrustean to change the terminology.

2 Manitoba was admitted to the Confederation in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, Prince Edward Island in 1873, Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, and Newfoundland in 1949.


4 John Bartlet Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle: the Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (Toronto, Ryerson, 1945).

5 Ibid., p. xi.

6 Ibid.
The following works provided background reading for this section:


Careless, J.M.S., The Union of the Canadas; the Growth of Canadian Institutions, 1841-1867 (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

Canadian Almanac, and Miscellaneous Directory, for the Year 1897 ... (Toronto, Copp, Clark, 1896).

Cowan, Helen I., British Emigration to British North America; the First Hundred Years (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1961).

Craig, Gerald M., Upper Canada; the Formative Years, 1784-1841 (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1963).


Hall, Roger, and Dodds, Gordon, A Picture History of Ontario (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1978).

Landon, Fred, Western Ontario and the American Frontier (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1967).


Spelt, Jacob, Urban Development in South-Central Ontario (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1972).
CHAPTER I

Children in nineteenth-century Ontario were singularly fortunate in having access to the literatures of the United States, Great Britain, and Europe in addition to their own. During this period a provincial school system developed that provided the impetus for widespread literacy and enabled pupils to develop their reading skills in a more formal and structured setting.

Before the school system blossomed in the second half of the century, the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic could be acquired in several ways. In the early decades there were a number of schools scattered throughout the province that offered elementary education, but these varied in quality and extent.¹ Private endeavour was epitomised in the efforts of the Reverend Osler and his wife; they taught reading to members of their congregation and encouraged those who already possessed the fundamentals to foster their taste for the art.² Children sometimes learned to read at home,³ while others received instruction in the Sunday schools. As early as 1825, for example, the school connected with St. George's Church in Kingston, Ontario, included spelling and reading in its programme.⁴ Consequently, this aggregation of public and private enterprise resulted in at least a basic level of literacy among the inhabitants.⁵
The school system that was taking shape in the 1850s had reached a level of sophistication in the 1870s where teachers were no longer satisfied with simply teaching children to read: they now wished to ensure that the reading habit was sustained, particularly when the school years were over. The establishment of a weekly school newspaper, modelled on the British Child's Companion, was considered with the hope that it would have the added advantage of nullifying the bad effects of dime novels and similar "loose" literature, so plentiful. Because of the important influence of the home environment, parents were urged to supply abundant amounts of "mental pabulum," a recommendation capped by the romantic projection of a young boy, with the day's work done, reading at his mother's knee by the fireside.

John Millar, at one time Deputy Minister of Education for Ontario, regarded reading as an important means of forming character, maintaining that reading purely for pleasure was something to be discouraged. Reading clubs were advocated to develop and reinforce the reading habit. Books by indigenous writers were to be preferred to foster a nationalistic spirit among young people, while Millar hoped that reading circles would discourage them from their perpetual habit of reading "trashy" books.

It has been suggested that school reading texts propagated "certain outstanding qualities" among the pupils of Ontario and were capable of shaping "national thought and character." However contentious these suggestions may be, there is no doubt that school anthologies afforded pupils the opportunity to accept or reject certain authors and writings and acquire favourites. In this way successive
generations of young readers took the first step towards developing literary taste.

An early Catholic text, published at Montreal in 1817, actually became a bestseller, the first edition being exhausted within ten months. Although published in Quebec, the text is in English which suggests that it was used in Ontario. The text's principal aim was to impart virtue and "true religion" coupled with reading skills. The first part consists of words of one to seven syllables and easy reading lessons taken from scripture. The second part contains lessons on various aspects of Christianity, while the third is devoted to the principal festivals of the church, prayers for different occasions, rules for Christian living, and a summary of doctrine.14

Lindley Murray's famous readers were used in Ontario for many years. Again, the principle was to introduce religious instruction and, at the same time, teach the art of reading. Murray was careful to avoid any sentiments or expressions that might corrupt or give offence, a responsibility he believed to be "incumbent on every person who writes for the benefit of youth." An edition published in 1832 includes grammar, syntax, pronunciation, and directions for reading verse. It also contains narrative, didactic, and descriptive prose pieces in addition to short and simple poetical offerings selected from the best writers.15 Murray also produced an introduction to his reader which was designed for children who were slow readers and would also prepare pupils for his principal text. It includes graded readings of various types, adapted to make them intelligible and pleasing to young children, together with instructions for teaching pupils to read correctly.16
Certain texts contrived to combine general instruction with grammatical exercises and reading practice. Typical of this class is the Fourth Book of Lessons, For the Use of Schools, authorized by the Council of Public Instruction (Ontario) and published at Toronto in 1857. The numerous extracts that constitute the work encompass natural history, geography, religion, economics, poetry, and some miscellaneous prose items. This enabled pupils to improve their reading skills while absorbing a good deal of general knowledge about the British Empire, wages and capital, the habits of quadrupeds, and the history of the Israelites.

As the century progressed, the contents of school readers became more secularized. Several of this type were authorized by the Council of Public Instruction and copyrighted in the 1860s. The Second Book of Reading Lessons, for example, is mainly taken up with nursery rhymes, fables, and stories. It includes Old Mother Hubbard, Sing a Song of Sixpence, and the story of Dick Whittington. In the third text a number of well-known authors are featured, notably R.M. Ballantyne, Hans Christian Andersen, William Wordsworth, and Henry Longfellow. Some passages have been extracted from Chambers' Miscellany and Sharpe's Magazine. The Ontario writers Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie are to be found in the fourth book in company with illustrious poets and novelists of the calibre of Charles Dickens, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott. The fifth reading text in this group represents something of a departure as it was designed to inculcate "correct style and pure taste" through examples drawn from both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, the contents are not confined to literature but include excerpts from the fields of art,
industry, and science.

A high school reader of the 1880s, if read and studied carefully, could hardly have failed to impress the thoughtful and sensitive reader as it includes Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Byron, Thackeray, Gladstone, Dickens, Eliot, Tennyson, Rosetti, Swinburne, and many others. In fact, when the range of literature available through school reading texts is considered, from Old Mother Hubbard to Gladstone on the British Constitution, it is hard to escape the conclusion that eclectic reading on this scale must surely have captured the imagination of numerous young readers. 17

Beyond school anthologies lay a vast world of literature that had its attractions and its dangers. For those who concerned themselves with the moral welfare of the young, encouraging the desire to read was one thing; the means of gratifying that desire was an entirely different matter, one that required careful supervision so that "proper" tastes would be cultivated and contact with pernicious literature avoided. Young people living in Ontario in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were naturally more restricted in their choice of literature than, say, the children of the 1890s, but they were less than deprived.

Numerous chapbooks were produced in the United States from the post-revolutionary period onwards and many no doubt found their way into Ontario. Because generally they consisted of only a few pages in a small format, they made ideal travelling companions for the children of American settlers journeying to a new life in Ontario; and the pedlars from the United States who
traded with the settlements along the shores of Lake Ontario surely included a few of these popular publications in their packs.

The subject matter of chapbooks was extremely broad, embracing hymns, fables, games, riddles, fairy and folk tales, and, of course, nursery rhymes. Among the traditional stories that appeared in this form are Robin Hood, Dick Whittington, Jack the Giant Killer, and Jack and the Beanstalk. In homes where chapbooks were regarded with disfavour or suspicion, children could resort to the standard classics exemplified by Robinson Crusoe (1719), Pilgrim's Progress (1678), Gulliver's Travels (1726), and The History of Sandford and Merton (1783), or to the works of Mrs. Sarah Trimmer. In addition, there were the publications of John Newbery and English versions of Charles Perrault's famous tales of which the more well-known include Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Puss-in-Boots, and The Sleeping Beauty. By contrast, Christian literature, particularly the Bible, represented more suitable reading for religious families.

Greater opportunities for children to read were afforded by the development of the book trade. In the first decades of the century it was a fairly simple business. For example, a Toronto establishment that collected rags for the local paper mill and sold its products also retailed spelling books and similar school texts. John Cowan's printing establishment in Sandwich, Ontario, sold catechisms, primers, spelling books, alphabet cards, and readers.
By the 1860s the range of juvenile literature available in Ontario had broadened considerably. The firm of W.C. Chewett (Toronto) catered to children of all ages. Besides a large stock of toy-books, the stories of Charlotte Tucker (A.L.O.E.), W.H.G. Kingston, Mayne Reid, Captain Marryat, and Maria Edgeworth could be purchased at very reasonable prices. *Robinson Crusoe* was available at twenty-five cents and *Swiss Family Robinson* at seventy-five cents. More expensive was *Babes in the Wood*, printed in colour for one dollar and fifty cents.

Kingston's presence in the catalogue is of particular note as he was rated second to no less than the incomparable Dickens in a popularity survey conducted in the 1880s among boys who were avid readers of fiction. Third place was assigned to Sir Walter Scott, fourth to Jules Verne, and fifth to Captain Marryat.

Girls were similarly surveyed and, again, Dickens achieved first place, followed by Scott, Kingsley, Charlotte M. Yonge, and Shakespeare! W.H.G. Kingston, a favourite among boys, was rated twentieth by female readers. A critic of the survey was of the opinion that the results did not reflect truly the reading tastes of girls, as Dickens and Scott were placed high on the list simply because this was the proper and expected response. Furthermore, the works of these authors were more accessible and perhaps uppermost in the minds of the girls surveyed. A more telling point was made by Charles Welsh who conducted the survey. He believed that the authors said to be popular by publishers were those whose works were in fact chosen by parents who bought them as gifts for their children; any list of authors prepared by girls themselves without coercion of any kind would be very different.
The cloth-paged "indestructible" books published by Ward and Lock brought the magic of Tom Thumb, Beauty and the Beast, and The Three Bears into the homes of the very young. Little Bo-Peep and Other Stories is typical of this series with its illustrated, moralistic stories in rhyme telling of Sleepy Ned, Greedy Zachary, Mr. Conceit, Greedy Polly, and Grandma Scrape, all for sixpence plain or one shilling coloured. 25 For the really serious child, Chewett's catalogue for 1865-6 offered Anecdotes of the New Testament, and to improve the nascent intellect: Rollo Learning to Talk, Rollo Learning to Think, and Rollo Learning to Read, all by the prolific American writer Jacob Abbott (1803-1879).

The stories of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen were available from the firm of G. Mercer Adam in the 1860s, together with The Arabian Nights, and Robin Hood and His Merry Companions. G. Mercer Adam promoted his stock of children's books by offering a ten percent discount to clergymen, teachers, students, and mechanics' institutes, describing himself as "bookseller to the professions." A partnership was undertaken in 1867 with J.H. Stevenson to form Adam, Stevenson, and Company. A year or so later they undertook a buying trip in Britain and the United States. The catalogue that resulted contains three works which were destined to become timeless classics: Alice in Wonderland, The Water Babies, and Tom Brown's Schooldays. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novels, also listed in this 1869 catalogue, were still largely the domain of women, but as mothers' attitudes softened over the years, their teenage daughters were finally allowed to savour Lady Audley's Secret in preference to the novels of Charlotte M. Yonge. 26
American editions of juvenile fiction by the New Brunswick writer James De Mille were offered by Adam, Stevenson, and Company in paper editions ranging from seventy-five cents to one dollar and fifty cents. Thus the children of Ontario could read about the exciting adventures of the Brethren of the White Cross (B.O.W.C.), a series that comprised The "B.O.W.C." a Book for Boys (1869), The Boys of Grand Pre School (1870), Fire in the Woods (1872), Lost in the Fog (1870), Picked Up Adrift (1872), and The Treasure of the Seas (1873). Also available were titles in the Young Dodge Club series: Among the Brigands (1871), The Seven Hills (1873), and The Winged Lion; or, Stories of Venice (1877). Although ostensibly boys' books, girls read them too, for it was observed that girls could find in boys' books ingredients that were lacking in many of their own: "a stirring plot and lively movement."27

In February 1853 the editor of the Snow Drop, a children's magazine, drew attention to a "well-known Canadian authoress," Catharine Parr Traill, who was very popular at the time. A refined Englishwoman who settled in the backwoods of Ontario, Mrs. Traill was read on both sides of the Atlantic and wrote a number of stories for children. The Canadian Crusoes; a Tale of Rice Lake Plains (1850) and Lady Mary and Her Nurse; or, a Peep into the Canadian Forest (1856), which combine instruction with entertainment, are typical of her writings.28

The catalogue of the Toronto Public Library, published in 1889, represents a microcosm of acceptable reading for children in the 1880s. Besides the popular adventure stories of R.M. Ballantyne, G.A. Henty, and W.H.G. Kingston, boys could read the "success" stories of
Horatio Alger. Young people who enjoyed science fiction were able to borrow Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and numerous other works by this prolific writer. Fantasy and fairy tales were provided by Hans Christian Andersen and Mrs. Molesworth, while Charlotte Tucker (A.L.O.E.) catered to the more serious child. When they were not reading boys' books, girls could choose from a long list of titles by Louisa M. Alcott and from a smaller collection of novels by Charlotte M. Yonge.

The provision of extra copies of some titles highlights those writers who enjoyed a degree of popularity. The juvenile section of the catalogue lists five copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, six copies of *Robinson Crusoe* and Mrs. Frances Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, three copies of *Tom Sawyer*, and four copies of Captain Marryat's *The Settlers in Canada*. The popularity of this last work is not surprising as its Ontario setting would have given it strong local appeal. The enormous popularity of Mayne Reid clearly transcended any stigma resulting from his dime-novel writing, for his stories are well represented, often in multiple copies. In fact, novels such as *The Scalp Hunters*, *The Rifle Rangers*, and *The White Squaw*, which are featured in the catalogue, were originally published as dime novels.29

The proximity of the United States and the trading facilities (both legitimate and illegitimate) that made *Tom Sawyer* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* readily available to the children of Ontario also permitted an uninterrupted flow of cheap novelettes and story papers from the Republic. Forms of so-called "yellow covered literature," typified by the cheap, sensational novels of "Professor" J.H. Ingraham, were in existence many years before the
first Beadle dime novel appeared in 1860. The "literary" newspapers of the 1830s that combined stories and news gradually increased the number of serials they offered and developed into fully-fledged story papers. The serials were frequently reprinted as five- and ten-cent "libraries," pamphlet-sized books that were displayed on the store counter next to issues of the story papers.

The earlier serials were largely pirated from English and French sources, but it became apparent that continually borrowing from the same sources would eventually exhaust the supply and precipitate the destruction of the story papers, so publishers were forced to search for original materials which led them to develop their own coteries of writers. In addition to contemporary serials, the papers sometimes reprinted classics and also included standard works in the "libraries." A mutilated version of Robinson Crusoe, for example, was offered at five cents in the Wide-Awake Library series which included Bowie Knife Ben and Death Notch the Destroyer! The papers frequently supplemented their serials with short essays on a wide range of topics, household hints, editorials, and replies to correspondents.

Assessing the story papers, W.H. Bishop drew attention to the highly moral tone of the better publications which was necessary to ensure that family appeal was in no way prejudiced. As a consequence, virtue was always rewarded, vice punished, and a chivalrous attitude to women encouraged at all times. Bishop was troubled by the question of whether story-paper reading was preferable to no reading at all. He concluded reluctantly that story papers served some purpose as popular educators, bringing rudimentary enlightenment on a variety of topics to people who would otherwise be untouched by other kinds of literature.
According to an extremely popular story-paper writer, Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth, the papers enjoyed a broad readership, for she named professors, ministers, senators, schoolboys, schoolgirls, and "a vast multitude between" as her audience, young adults constituting the largest single group. By contrast, Bishop thought the papers were largely intended for the "lower classes," though admitting that copies were to be found in the "boudoirs" of the upper levels of society.

The era of the Beadle dime and nickel novel began in 1860 and drew readers from all segments of the reading public except "schoolma'ams, pedants, and the illiterate." Many of the sensational stories published in the Beadle series first saw the light of day as serials in the story papers. In fact, many of the story-paper writers were recruited to write for the dime-novel publishers. The novels circulated in their hundreds of thousands and were to be found on railway bookstalls as well as in newsdealers' shops. They were even recommended as curative reading for convalescent boys who had tired of reading Scott's novels.

A basic complaint against sensational novels and story papers was directed at literary quality, which invariably left something to be desired, as most critics had little trouble accepting a moral tone that was supported by brave, chivalrous heroes and pure and virtuous heroines. There were, unfortunately, exceptions to this enlightened view. In Ontario, Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent for Education, expressed concern in his annual report for 1848 at the number of "corrupting works of fiction" American presses were producing. Their extremely low price and availability
made them very attractive to young readers. He recommended instead the provision of school libraries to replace this allegedly pernicious literature. In 1860, the year of the first Beadle dime novel, a boys' book club was revealed somewhere in Ontario, formed in a school for the purpose of buying "bad books." The participants had collected the princely sum of about one hundred dollars when they were discovered. The books were destroyed and a "good" library substituted.

An open and sustained campaign against cheap novels and story papers was conducted by an American named Anthony Comstock who began his crusade in the 1870s and carried it into the twentieth century. It was his view that sensational literature was one of many traps set by Satan to ensnare the young. He was quite unequivocal in his condemnation of publications that in his view bred vulgarity and profanity, degraded women, destroyed the home, and generally led their readers into lives of debauchery and sin. Comstock was associated with the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Although the chief targets were the publishers of stories like Wild Bill, the Pistol Prince, Dakota Dan, the Reckless Ranger, and Hurricane Nell, the Queen of the Saddle and Lasso, they also gave some attention to medical books (the illustrations could fall into the hands of children) and to "cheap and garbled" translations of classical works. Despite the influence and support Comstock enjoyed, his eccentric behaviour did not go unchallenged. He was finally censured for his misuse of power and his inconsistent and subjective approach to what he defined as obscenity.

Critics were always eager to cite confessions from young criminals proving that reading "blood and
thunder" stories had led them into lives of crime. A boy murderer named Jesse Pomeroy, for example, described how he had first developed a taste for novels about "scalping and other such performances." Nor were girls immune from the bad effects of reading "yellow-covered literature," for one authority claimed that this type of reading was a contributing factor in masturbation among young girls, a habit euphemistically termed "self-pollution."

One solution to the problem of sensational fiction was to ensure that an abundant supply of good, wholesome literature was available throughout Ontario. Beginning in the 1850s, Egerton Ryerson developed a system of school libraries that also functioned as public libraries, supplying them with approved books from his Educational Depository created for the purpose. This blatant form of monopoly eventually created problems for Ryerson with the bookselling fraternity.

The catalogue of the Depository contains a good cross-section of works that were considered "safe" reading by the Chief Superintendent and his colleagues. Among the biographical works, the names of George Washington, Ben Franklin, and Daniel Boone are noticeable. Books that showed young people how to be successful in life are also prominent. The Boy's Manual, for example, was devised to demonstrate the scholarship, accomplishments, and principles of conduct necessary to promote respectability and success in life. Yet another volume was intended to offer friendly advice to young working women regarding their duties and to alert them to the dangers inherent in factory life. This was published by the Religious Tract Society. On the lighter side, The Young People's Book offered glimpses of ancient and modern
Sunday-school libraries played their part in the attempt to lure readers away from sensational literature. An early benefactor was the philanthropist Jesse Ketchum who was anxious to provide children with book collections. A primary step was the creation, in cooperation with a Toronto minister, of the York (Toronto) Sunday School Union in 1823. Ketchum was Vice-President of the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society, formed in 1832, and no doubt influenced the society's eventual decision in 1838 to engage in the work of supplying libraries. A number of collections were obtained from the Religious Tract Society in London, England, and were distributed at half-price among Methodist and Baptist Sunday schools in the region. More collections were acquired in the years that followed, the majority going to Protestant Sunday schools all over the province and the rest to communities to form public libraries. Sunday-school libraries were believed to be very beneficial in encouraging the reading habit, often among entire families. By 1857 there were reportedly two hundred and eighty-one Sunday schools with a combined total of slightly more than sixty-seven thousand volumes in the libraries. "Sabbath" schools and their libraries were discussed at the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, held in 1872 at Hamilton, Ontario. Between 1871
and 1872, the committee charged with the responsibility for Sunday-school books attempted to prepare lists of suitable additions for the libraries whose total holdings rose from more than seventy-six thousand volumes in 1871 to nearly eighty-six thousand in 1872. Various tract and Bible societies and a number of commercial enterprises were approached for their catalogues, notably the firm of James Campbell and Son who offered to supply Sunday-school literature at half price. He later offered over eight hundred volumes on approval, but the report does not mention any subsequent contract. 61

There can be no doubt that he made a good impression, for Sunday-school literature was one of Campbell's specialities. Typical is his Catalogue of Sabbath School Libraries and Books, published in 1873, which Campbell recommended to superintendents and teachers. British literature forms an important part of the catalogue which features the publications of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Religious Tract Society, and numerous stories by A.L.O.E. The Old and the New Home: a Canadian Tale, by J.E., and Jessie Gray; or, the Discipline of Life: a Canadian Tale, by L.G., 62 are stories with Ontario settings from a small collection Campbell entitled the Canadian Prize Library. The pious "libraries" were leavened with several series that undoubtedly had much greater appeal to children. The Red Shoes and The Ice Maiden are just two examples from a collection of thirteen stories by the incomparable Hans Christian Andersen. Bible stories, homilies, moral and religious "anecdotes," temperance tracts, church history, and studies of eminent figures in the Christian church typify the more serious works offered to the youth of Ontario. 63
Ever aware of the importance of the press, the Methodists made great strides in developing Sunday-school periodicals. An early example is the Sunday School Guardian which began in 1846 as an illustrated monthly. The Sunday-School Banner and the Sunday-School Advocate made their contributions to the remarkable success of Sunday-school periodicals which increased in number and size, building up their circulations to include almost all the English-speaking parts of the country. Their total circulation at September 1, 1890, was in excess of three hundred and twenty-four thousand.

The Religious Tract Society was fortunate in its recruitment of the popular W.H.G. Kingston who, with G.A. Henty, Jules Verne, and later Conan Doyle, made the Boy's Own Paper a resounding success. A year later, in 1880, Girl's Own Paper was launched, followed in 1887 by Little Dots which was produced for the very young. A much earlier venture was the Child's Companion, or Sunday Scholar's Reward which commenced publishing in 1824 and was issued monthly at one penny. It proved to be very profitable and survived into the twentieth century. The Presbyterians and the S.P.C.K. also attempted juvenile periodicals.

There were few secular magazines published indigenously for British North American children. The Snow Drop; or, Juvenile Magazine began publishing at Montreal, Quebec, in April 1847 with the firm of Scobie and Balfour, Toronto, acting as agents for the Ontario market. The editor, in his address to the public, announced his intention to amuse and instruct young people in an eclectic magazine modelled on Peter Parley's Magazine, created by the American writer for children, Samuel Goodrich. Snow Drop was published monthly and cost one dollar for an annual subscription. The Literary
Garland (Montreal) reviewed volume four in February, 1850, describing it as a "most excellent periodical." Readers who could find six new subscribers among their "friends and schoolmates" were promised a free subscription. 68

The Maple Leaf; a Juvenile Monthly Magazine was also published in Montreal, but was undoubtedly read in Ontario. It began in 1852 and lasted until about 1854. Its very first offering by the Ontario writer Catharine Parr Traill was entitled "The Governor's Daughter; or, Rambles in the Canadian Forest." The magazine consisted of poetry offerings, hymn music, anecdotes, jokes, recipes, Canadian history, general knowledge, and stories, notably a serialization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. 69

The Boy's Own Magazine, published in England from 1855 to 1874 and available in Ontario, is typical of imported juvenile magazines. It is a miscellany of essays, tales, and games, calculated to satisfy a variety of tastes. 70 Other magazine importations for boys and girls would certainly have included the internationally famous St. Nicholas, founded in 1873 by Mary Mapes Dodge of Hans Brinker fame, which survived well into the twentieth century, and the legendary Youth's Companion which began publishing in 1827 at Boston and was so successful that it continued until 1929. Among its coterie of writers were such famous names as Tennyson, Gladstone, H.G. Wells, Mark Twain, and Jack London. 71

Thus the children of nineteenth-century Ontario were well-served by an abundance of books and periodicals that were both eclectic in nature and international in flavour.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4 Kingston Chronicle, March 11, 1825.


6 J. George Hodgins, Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, from the Passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791 to the Close of the Reverend Dr. Ryerson's Administration of the Education Department in 1876 (Toronto, Cameron, 1894-1910), 28 vols., XXII, pp. 149-150. Hereinafter cited as DHE.

7 DHE, XXI, p. 301.


9 Ibid., p. 15.

10 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

11 Ibid., p. 88.

12 Ibid., p. 83.


14 The Catholic School Book Containing Easy and Familiar Lessons for the Instruction of Youth of Both Sexes in the English Language, and the Paths of True Religion and Virtue (Montreal, Mower, 1817).
15 Murray's English Reader; or, Pieces in Prose and Poetry, Selected from the Best Writers, Designed to Assist Young Persons to Read with Propriety, and Effect; to Improve Their Language and Sentiments; and to Inculcate Some of the Most Important Principles of Piety and Virtue, Preceded by an Introduction to Walker's System of the Inflections, Illustrated by Suitable Examples (Saint John, New Brunswick, Macmillan, 1832), edited by the Rev. John Davis.

16 Introduction to the English Reader; or, a Selection of Pieces, in Prose and Poetry; Calculated to Improve the Younger Classes of Learners in Reading, and to Imbue Their Minds with the Love of Virtue. To Which Are Added, Rules and Observations for Assisting Children to Read with Propriety (Toronto, Eastwood, 1839).

17 Examples of the readers mentioned in this section are to be found in the collections of the National Library of Canada, Ottawa, and in the Centennial Museum, Peterborough, Ontario.

18 William Canniff, History of the Settlement of Upper Canada (Ontario) with Special Reference to the Bay of Quinté (Toronto, Dudley and Burns, 1869), p. 215.


20 Advertisement for the agency of Mr. John Robinson in the Canadian Freeman, December 4, 1828.

21 Advertisement in the Canadian Emigrant, and Western District Advertiser, December 1, 1831. This newspaper is particularly interesting as it was designed in part to attract new settlers to the district; Prospectus, reprinted in the issue for January 19, 1832.

22 The information given in this section derives from a collection of nineteenth-century trade catalogues in the Metropolitan Toronto Library, Toronto, Ontario.


25 The copy examined was originally owned by a child named Lucy Ann Stiles who lived in a village near Peterborough, Ontario, in the 1860s.


27 Ibid., p. 524.

28 For a checklist of works by Catharine Parr Traill see R.E. Watters, A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628 - 1960 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged, 1972).


30 Ibid., I, p. 3.


33 Noel, pp. 6 - 7.

34 Bishop, p. 392.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., p. 393.

37 Noel, p. 289.

38 Ibid., p. 291.

39 Bishop, p. 389.

40 Ibid., p. 392.

41 Johannsen, I, p. 9.

42 Ibid., p. 3.

43 Noel, p. 121.

Ibid., p. 308.
DHE, VIII, p. 100.
DHE, XVI, p. 84;
Ibid., p. 25.
Ibid., pp. 166 - 167.
Millar, p. 15.
These school, or public, libraries are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.
See, for example, George L. Parker, "Egerton Ryerson and the Ontario Book Trade in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Signum*, II (January, 1975), pp. 21 - 38.
E.J. Hathaway, Jesse Ketchum and His Times (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1929), pp. 328 - 331.

63 Catalogue in the collections of the Metropolitan Toronto Library.


68 Copy examined in Boys and Girls House, Toronto Public Library. Review in "Our Table," *Literary Garland*, n.s. VIII (February, 1850), p. 96.

69 Copies of this magazine are located in the Metropolitan Toronto Library.

70 W.C. Chewett's catalogue for 1865 in the Metropolitan Toronto Library.

CHAPTER II

After the American Revolution and before books, newspapers, and magazines were common, the cultural and recreational needs of the settlers were satisfied in part by the age-old tradition of story telling. Long winter evenings were sometimes spent relating tales of ghosts and "spooks", perhaps in the company of visiting neighbours gathered around the fireside.

Many of these early inhabitants were quite poor and lived in scattered settlements which hampered their efforts to provide adequate educational facilities for their children. Furthermore, a lack of reading matter tended to stultify their desire to read. Aware of these shortcomings, the people made efforts to rectify them, and although it was a slow process, by the 1820s quantities of books were available to individuals and families either through purchase or "social" libraries that loaned books for a small subscription.

Looking back from the 1850s, Susanna Moodie observed that the previous twenty years had been a period of noticeable improvement in the intellectual and moral states of the people. A member of the province's literati, Mrs. Moodie believed that it was nothing less than an act of patriotism to educate children. Furthermore, she and her husband, co-editors of a cheap magazine aimed at a fairly broad readership, placed a high priority on
developing a taste for "polite literature" among the mass of working people. 5

Susanna Moodie had her own theory regarding the manner in which information was assimilated, and in this respect she drew a sharp distinction between the town dweller and the country dweller. People who lived in towns were required to cope with masses of factual information that cropped up virtually every day, and little time was given to "abstract reasoning." Rural residents, on the other hand, being more isolated, tended to be more reflective; they acquired their information over longer intervals of time and digested it more slowly. The rural setting, moreover, placed the farmer in an ideal position to become a "reading man" with books as his constant companions; for his was the perfect calling in which to develop a "virtuous and intelligent reflective character." 6

Although it was still cheaper to drink than to read in the 1830s, 7 there were those who remembered the period fondly as a time when, in the comfort of the homestead, they read their favourite books by firelight. 8 The 1860s was a period when primitive conditions still obtained in many areas of the province, but avid readers were not deterred by poor lighting and crude furniture; they were transported by the "charmed page" to the world of the imagination where the spirit was raised above the "paltry distinctions of a petty world." 9 Like alcohol, reading assisted in making life in the forest more bearable.

The spread of the reading habit prompted advice on what, and how, to read. A Mrs. Rye advocated "mental dieting" which, she thought, was just as important as a diet for the body. She stressed that care should be taken
not to "overfeed" and that efforts should be made to avoid "indigestion." Railway novels that contained murder and intrigue did as much damage to the brain as "the too frequent glass." Mrs. Rye was emphatic that the result of over-indulging in newspaper reading, particularly papers that emphasized fashions and social events, would be similar to a surfeit of suet pudding. Mrs. Rye's distaste for ephemeral literature was shared by John Millar who decried the notion that children should be allowed to read "trash" in the hope that it would eventually lead them to a more acceptable type of literature. He was also of the opinion that the responsibility for guiding children in the selection and use of books rested with the schools.

Susanna Moodie was prepared to defend imaginative fiction of the more respectable kind. She was aware that many people regarded novels and novel writers with "devout horror" and hastened to agree that it was harmful for young people to read nothing but fiction, particularly if it was of the "inferior sort." Nevertheless, she did point out that the mind, like the body, needed respite from strenuous effort, otherwise the brain could be damaged and some of the "most important organs" in the body thrown into disarray.

Having established that some novel reading was beneficial, it was then a matter of deciding which novelists were acceptable. As Smollett, Fielding, and Richardson were regarded as too coarse for refined, nineteenth-century readers, Mrs. Moodie clearly favoured "our great modern novelists."

Women, whether novel writers or readers, were often subjected to attacks by those who opposed the dissemination and reading of fiction. The Family Herald drew attention to the time wasted by young women in "chasing the fictions of the novel or the follies of the romance."
Women novelists were castigated for writing sensational novels which brought disgrace upon their sex. In the 1870s novel reading was described as a social problem that rivalled "fast dances" and "low-necked dresses." Those who argued against novels on religious and moral grounds stated quite categorically that novel reading was wicked! Those who were concerned for the intellect described the practice of novel reading as "intellectual dram drinking" and classed novels with opium and betel nut. Their common characteristic was to produce a "dizzy, dreamy, drowsy state of mind." This phenomenon supported the view of physicians who claimed novel reading caused disorders of the nervous system.

The question of novel reading was still being debated in the early years of the twentieth century. The Reverend J. Paterson Smyth, Rector of St. George's Church, Montreal, drew attention to the inescapable fact that novels often had a greater influence on people's perceptions of life and human behaviour than did the Bible or the pulpit. A popular novel might be read by at least one hundred thousand people, an audience that could never be reached by even the most powerful preacher. Smyth reminded those who feared the evil influences of fiction that the parables found in the Bible were, in fact, fictional; and he gave his assurance that there was no harm in a "stirring high-class novel." The impact of such cogent reasoning upon Reverend Smyth's readers can only be surmised, but the arguments surrounding cheap, sensational fiction continued unabated.

Selections of books offered for sale in the early decades of the century were usually quite catholic
and sometimes just simply eccentric. John Macaulay, of Kingston, advertised the *Historical Memoirs of Napoleon* (Philadelphia, 1820), translated from the French by Barry O'Meara; *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk* (Blackwood, 1819), by John Gibson Lockhart, copies of the *Spectator*, and an assortment of lexicons, grammars, dictionaries, and school books.\(^2^1\) The novels of Sir Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper were early favourites, offered for sale at the office of the Brockville Gazette with a selection of works that included church catechisms and spelling books.\(^2^2\)

The Kingston bookseller and stationer, James Macfarlane, stocked an impressive range of books in the 1830s. His inventory included hymn books, family Bibles, assorted historical works, and all the standard poets and novelists: Byron, Keats, Shelley, Burns, Cowper, Milton, Defoe, Smollett, Fielding, Scott, and Fenimore Cooper. Besides ready-reckoners, interest tables, dictionaries, and cookery books, numerous textbooks on mathematics, geometry, chemistry, botany, navigation, and surveying were on hand for students, enterprising businessmen, and those engaged in the professions.\(^2^3\)

William Lyon Mackenzie was undoubtedly the most remarkable bookseller of the 1830s.\(^2^4\) His stock of books encompassed the entire field of human knowledge and mirrored the prevalent reading tastes of the day. Among the several hundred volumes that constituted his stock the novels of the popular Bulwer-Lytton were very much in evidence. Also prominent were the works of Captain Marryat, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett whose *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker* came in two editions: Harper's and Carey & Lea's, attesting to the popularity of these
novels. The pious works of Hannah More contrasted sharply with the Gothic romances of Mrs. Radcliffe; both writers competed with Scott, Disraeli, Maria Edgeworth, Washington Irving, and Defoe for the attention of the book-buying public. Numerous volumes of history, philosophy, theology, biography, classical texts, and biblical studies catered to the scholar and the dilettante. More pragmatic readers were able to choose from a broad selection of treatises on mechanics, surveying, architecture, farming, astronomy, and even bookkeeping. The professions, particularly medicine and law, were also well served.

The presence of a local bookseller was a boon to readers faced with the alternative of buying their books directly from England or the United States. But it was the American "literary depots" with agents in centres like Toronto that were in the best position to supply part-issue novels quickly and regularly to readers in Ontario. Cheney and Metcalfe were the Toronto agents for Dewey's Literary Depot, situated in Rochester, New York. Weekly deliveries were made possible by an express messenger service. In addition to Martin Chuzzlewit and A Christmas Carol, available in parts at six cents each, readers who preferred something a little salacious could purchase G.W.M. Reynolds' semi-pornographic novel the Mysteries of London at twelve cents per part.

A copy of Reynolds' Mary Price; or, the Memoirs of a Servant-Maid, found in the shop of a Toronto bookseller, provoked a sharp response from the editor of the Anglo-American Magazine. He found it something of a mystery that respectable booksellers would stock the "garbage of this literary scavenger." The Anglo-American firmly believed that the sole purpose of this "unmitigated scamp"
was to cater to "depraved sensual appetites," set the poor against the rich, and vilify religion. The editorial concluded by censuring the law for permitting the dissemination of Reynolds' brand of "moral poison." Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada was recommended as an antidote for Mary Price. Isabella Lucy Bird, visiting Ontario in 1854, deplored the fact that the "lower classes" read cheap, American novels which, in her opinion, were "of a very objectionable tendency." On the other hand, she was obviously gratified that, by contrast, the "educated" class read the "best English works."

While Reynolds' Mysteries of London was being launched upon its notorious career, the Literary Garland (Montreal) was applauding the appearance of the first volumes of Murray's Home and Colonial Library. Typical were George Borrow's The Bible in Spain and Bishop Heber's Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825. This strict and forbidding diet was, in time, made more palatable by the addition of Herman Melville's Typee (1846) and his Omoo (1847), but in the face of stiff competition from cheap, American reprints of more popular works there was little prospect of the series achieving any large measure of popularity.

Charles Rice, whose bookstore was situated in the eastern part of the province, gave readers the opportunity to collect works by the major British and American poets and several novelists, or to choose from his latest consignment of non-fictional publications drawn from the principal fields of human endeavour and interest. He received monthly shipments from the United States and a shipment each spring and fall from Britain. Advertising in the Perth Courier,
the bookseller suggested that a judicious purchase from his large stock would relieve the tedium of the long winter evenings. A twenty percent discount was offered on all cash purchases.  

The Toronto firm of Adam, Stevenson and Company displayed enterprise and nerve by selling the popular novels of the notorious Ouida. Reviewing *In a Winter City*, *Belford's Monthly Magazine* thought Ouida's writing had moved towards a "less openly offensive immorality," but was disappointed that she had not tried to reach a level of morality that would put her "genius" beyond reproach. As late as the 1890s her work could still be described as "morbid and unwholesome." 

The trade catalogue that advertised the works of Ouida is typical of a number published in the sixties and seventies that offered, at very low prices, works by the leading authors of the day. The firm of G. Mercer Adam enticed the more serious reader with editions of Shakespeare's works at thirty cents a volume. Scott's Waverley novels were a bargain at fifteen cents each. Adam, Stevenson and Company offered George Eliot's novels at prices ranging from seventy-five cents to one dollar. *Oliver Twist* could be purchased for forty-five cents in the paper edition and seventy-five cents in cloth. *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House* were a little more expensive; the paper editions were ninety cents, while the cloth editions topped the dollar mark by twenty cents. Novels by the Brontë sisters were available at seventy-five cents each.

English editions of works by British North American writers were sold in Ontario. The adventures of Sam Slick, Thomas Chandler Haliburton's famous character,
could be read in the Hurst and Blackett edition. These editions competed with local printings of native authors who had been originally published in England. A cloth edition of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, for example, originally published by Richard Bentley in 1852, was now available from Maclear and Company, Toronto, at one dollar and seventy-five cents.

Aware of the keen competition, Adam, Stevenson and Company imported extremely cheap editions of standard works from Harper Brothers of New York. Novels by established nineteenth-century writers were available for as little as twenty-five cents. Perhaps the best bargain for readers with slender purses was Routledge's series of six-penny novels that sold for fifteen cents in Ontario. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* were among the titles in this collection.

Publishers and booksellers recognized the need for some humorous reading, and Adam, Stevenson and Company advertised the American Library which consisted of the "most popular American works of Humour and Fiction." The series largely comprised compositions by Mark Twain and Bret Harte at thirty cents each. Less subtle humour was supplied by comic almanacs, typified by Cruikshank's *Comic Almanac for Britain and the British American Provinces, 1865* (Montreal & Toronto, James Campbell, 1865), which provided readers with "useful information" interlarded with jokes, puns, and humorous anecdotes. The proprietors claimed extravagantly that every bookseller and newsagent in British North America sold this popular publication.

Penny readings catered to those who liked their intellectual stimulation leavened with entertainment. In 1872 a commentator in the *Canadian Illustrated News* noted
that these entertainments had been popular in Britain for more than thirty years and had gained a similar popularity during the previous five or six years in British North America. Ottawa had become the leading supporter of these functions. 39

A detailed description of a typical penny reading in England is to be found in Thomas Wright's Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes, published in 1867. 40 The programme included readings from Shakespeare and Dickens, recitations, songs, and instrumental solos 41 performed by unpaid amateurs. 42 Wright was of the opinion that penny readings had proved to be one of the best means of providing the mass of people with "rational amusement." 43 He was particularly gratified that they had led numerous workingmen away from cheap, sensational serial stories towards more purposeful reading. 44

Walter Grant, an enterprising, Toronto merchant of the eighties, offered his customers a free book for each three pounds of tea purchased. The collection included Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Scott; essays, poetry, historical works, and children's books. 45

If this bonus scheme attracted customers who manifested the same discernment in their reading as they did in their tea drinking, in all likelihood it failed to tempt readers who preferred the novels of romance, passion, and intrigue purveyed by J. Ross Robertson. His extremely cheap "bright books by the best authors" were mostly the products of story-paper writers like Bertha M. Clay, May Agnes Fleming, and Mary J. Holmes, although Mark Twain's The Innocents Abroad and A Tramp Abroad are included in Robertson's advertised list. A Terrible Secret, A Mad Marriage, A Woman's Temptation, Love Works Wonders, and Mildred are
titles that suggest a large female readership among Robertson's patrons.  

Mildred, by Mary J. Holmes, was reviewed in Belford's Monthly Magazine where the novel was described as "the happy production of a clever writer." Edith Lyle, on the other hand, by the same author, received a sharply contrasting review in the Canadian Monthly and National Review where it was dismissed as a "very trashy, third-rate American novel." The reviewer found it hard to imagine why "such dreary twaddle" had ever been reprinted for British North American readers. It was fortunate for the writers of sensational fiction that their popularity was little affected by such adverse criticism.

As a phenomenon, "railway literature" was evident in England from the 1850s onwards, the period when railway systems were developing in British North America. Here, too, reading matter suitable for perusing on trains became an indispensable part of the experience of travelling by rail.

Produced in bright covers of red, blue, and yellow, novels predominated in railway literature. Travelers desiring something to read were supplied by "train-boys" who passed through the train selling books, stationery, and refreshments. Very soon, certain kinds of literature became associated with rail travel. Collections of short stories were thought to be particularly suitable as their brevity was not likely to contribute to fatigue occasioned by a journey in a noisy, swaying train. It was only a matter of time, however, before the deleterious effects upon the eyes of reading in trains became a matter for concern. The sheer inability to maintain consistently the correct distance between the eyes and the printed page was thought likely to injure the vision permanently.
G. Mercer Adam, a prominent figure in the book trade, perceived in the eighties what he termed a "literary interregnum." Native literature was dying from a lack of support and encouragement, a neglect that he claimed could be traced directly to an obsession with business and a public whose principal reading matter consisted of newspapers. If this was not enough evidence of an intellectual drought, importations of books from Britain and the United States had noticeably declined. What was perceived to be the dissolution of the better-class book trade seemed to confirm this lessening of literary interest.  

But if the book trade was in the doldrums, the reading public had no reason to complain, for it continued to be well supplied with an abundance of reading matter. The inhabitants of Toronto, for example, were particularly fortunate in possessing a fine public library that stocked all the literature deemed to be significant and enduring. Imaginative literature ran the whole gamut from Chaucer to Wilke Collins. Scholarship, subjects of general interest, and works of utility were also well represented in the library. A number of embossed books were provided for blind readers.  

The nineties were described as "the days of many cyclopaedias, historical summaries, scientific digests, reviews of reviews, French in a few lessons, and interest tables," but it was the novel that had become "a necessity of the times," a need ably satisfied by James Bain and Son whose firm imported cheap reprints of novels by reputable British and American writers. As a result, Bain was credited with raising reading standards through his "choice editions," available as an alternative to the "trash" sold in department stores. The series included Arthur Conan Doyle, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Thomas Hardy, George Meredith,
and George Du Maurier. Although native writers had to cope with fierce competition from novelists like Hardy and Du Maurier, a few did manage to build up respectable readerships. A prime example is Gilbert Parker, who became very popular. Described as "Canada's greatest novelist," his historical romances were compared favourably with the best of that genre in the English language.

Despite the mass and variety of reading matter available in the closing years of the century, the belief was expressed that the majority of people confined their purchases to cheaply produced novels of the sensational sort and very expensive subscription books. But more lamentable was the realisation that the larger part of the reading public still preferred foreign publications to indigenous productions.
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1. William Canniff, History of the Settlement of Upper Canada (Ontario), with Special Reference to the Bay of Quinte (Toronto, Dudley & Burns, 1869), p. 364.

2. Robert Fleming Gourlay, Statistical Account of Upper Canada, Compiled with a View to a Grand System of Emigration (London, Marshall & Simpkin, 1822), 2 vols., I, pp. 245 - 246. Gourlay's claim that books were available "in considerable numbers" should be treated with caution, as George F. Playter contends that reading matter was scarce and little wanted in the 1820s: see The History of Methodism in Canada: with an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Work of God Among the Canadian Indian Tribes, and Occasional Notices of the Civil Affairs of the Province (Toronto, Anson Green, 1862), p. 228. In the absence of more substantive evidence, it can only be assumed that the truth of the matter lies somewhere between the extremes expressed by Gourlay and Playter.


7. Anna Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada (London, Saunders & Otley, 1838), 3 vols., I, pp. 80 - 81. Mrs. Jameson observed that, while imported books from the United States had a duty of thirty percent upon them and imprints from Britain cost at least one third more than their normal price, whiskey was extremely cheap.


13. Ibid., p. 287.


20. Ibid., p. 418.


23. Chronicle and Gazette (Kingston), July 6, 1833.

24. A basic understanding of this remarkable man and his times may be gained from The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada (Toronto, Clark, Irwin, 1960), by William Kilbourn.

25. Constitution, September 27, 1837.
26 Globe, July 16, 1844. According to Margaret Dalziel in Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago (London, Cohen & West, 1957), p. 35, Mysteries of London was published between 1845 and 1846. But Mary Noel (Villians Galore, p. 27) claims that a pirated edition was available in the United States as early as 1844. The Globe advertisement bears this out.


29 "Our Table," Literary Garland, n.s. II (July, 1844), p. 336.

30 The English Catalogue of Books Published from January 1835 to January 1863 ... Appendix B, p. 890.

31 Perth Courier, February 12, 1858.

32 The pseudonym of Louise De La Ramée.


35 These catalogues are part of a collection owned by the Metropolitan Toronto Library.

36 For a list of Haliburton's works, see R.E. Watters, A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2nd ed., 1972).

37 Curiously, the Maclean imprint appears on the title page, but the copyright statement on the verso names the printers Hunter, Rose and Company.

38 Copy examined in Boys and Girls House, Toronto Public Library.


41. Ibid., pp. 171 - 172.
42. Ibid., p. 180.
43. Ibid., p. 183.
44. Ibid.
45. Evening Telegram (Toronto), March 12, 1881.
46. Evening Telegram (Toronto), March 11, 1881.
53. "Reading in Railway Cars," Canadian Illustrated News (Montreal), May 18, 1872, p. 311. Reprinted from the Philadelphia Medical and Surgical Reporter.

CHAPTER III

The first newspaper published in Ontario was the Upper Canada Gazette, or American Oracle. Largely an organ of government, it began publishing in 1793, but poor communications and a scattered population tended to restrict its circulation.¹

While the first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a new kind of editor who acquired some measure of independence by living off the income derived from subscriptions and advertising rather than government business,² the emergence of a truly libertarian press proved to be a slow and complicated process.³ Nevertheless, for the mass of people newspapers were an important source of information and ideas.

Of the thirty or so periodicals published in British North America in the mid-1820s, the majority were newspapers. Eight of them, all weeklies, were published in Ontario.⁴ By 1833 Ontario possessed thirty-three newspapers whose combined circulation was believed to be about twenty thousand.⁵ A number of major settlements had at least one newspaper, but Toronto could boast of eight.⁶

In the years before the Rebellion of 1837 a number of papers supported a movement that strongly favoured radical reforms in the province, confronting several that
were anti-reform and conservative. Their colourful journalism could hardly have failed to excite interest among numerous readers, regardless of their political opinions, and although the Rebellion removed most of these reform papers, politics remained an important component of newspapers generally.

Commenting upon the press of the thirties, Anna Jameson deplored their "vulgar, narrow tone," but conceded that they probably did some good. These "district papers" consisted of clippings from other newspapers and extracts from books and magazines of American and British origin interspersed with local, social, and political news. It is difficult to judge precisely the impact of these journals on their readers, but it has been suggested that during this period the role of the newspaper was something less that of the tavern as a forum for the dissemination of ideas among workingmen.

By the 1850s the newspaper was still "a strange mélange of politics, religion, abuse, and general information," appealing strongly to the workingman who "would as soon think of depriving himself of his breakfast as of his morning journal."

Newspaper exchanges between editors provided a considerable boost to the dissemination of news. Early in the century MacKenzie observed that in the United States such exchanges were permitted free of postage, a privilege which would have been extended to editors in Ontario, had they made their wishes known to the American postmaster general. It is not clear when the practice became widespread in Ontario, but it was certainly officially recognized in the legislation of 1850 that brought postal services
under provincial control. Prior to this time, charges for the transmission of newspapers through the mails had been to a large extent at the whim of the deputy post-master general, an appointee of the British Crown. For many years the proceeds went directly into his pocket, a dubious practice that was abolished in 1844. In the light of such idiosyncratic behaviour it is difficult to imagine what his attitude to exchanges may have been.

In the absence of a newspaper tax and paper duty, the newspaper press was able to develop virtually unimpeded. An enterprising editor with the means to buy a simple hand press and some type could open an establishment practically anywhere. The Brockville Gazette is typical of these early newspapers, stating its aims quite unequivocally. It informed its potential readership that nothing would be printed that was anti-British; the foreign news would be as recent as possible and its literary effusions instructive as well as amusing. The subscription was very reasonably priced at fifteen shillings per year, although in common with many newspapers of the era it was prepared to accept farm produce in lieu of cash. It had agents in many parts of Ontario and Quebec.

The struggle for survival was an ever-present concern of proprietors. The Bathurst Courier, with an improved and enlarged format, hoped that its agents would try to increase subscriptions, while the price would be held at twelve shillings and sixpence if paid in advance and fifteen shillings if payment was delayed. This was also intended to discourage the practice of "clubbing." It represented a loss of revenue for newspapers when several neighbours and friends bought a joint subscription.
Each issue would be delivered to the person closest to the main delivery route who would read it first and then pass it to the next member of the "club." Newspapers and magazines were often treasured in the early days and would be read over many times before they were passed on to neighbours.

The Canadian Emigrant, publishing in the thirties, reprinted a "sermon" from the Portsmouth Journal castigating those who borrowed newspapers. The writer suggested that if the reader was, in fact, perusing a borrowed paper at that moment, it should be returned at once to avoid any feeling of "cheapness." It was further proposed that if borrowing a new coat from a neighbour for "first use" could be considered wrong, then it was certainly reprehensible to borrow a newspaper on the day of publication.

Newspaper proprietors could be unrelenting in their efforts to maintain the viability of their publications. The Bathurst Courier declared in 1850 that it would reduce the annual subscription to comply with the demand for cheap reading matter. It was, however, quick to point out that the paper could really ill-afford to do so and announced that a collector would visit the townships to induce those in arrears to pay their debts.

Appeals to the intellect and the harmonious family circle were sometimes seen as the best means of soliciting subscriptions. With the advent of the long, cold winter, many families would spend a good deal of their time indoors, cloistered and gathered around a cheerful fire; what better way to pass the time than in the company of a good newspaper that would entertain, instruct, and cultivate a taste for reading. As the Bathurst Courier
declared: "We say to every man, and every man should say to his neighbour, 'Take a Newspaper' - and pay for it in advance." 24

The tenacity of those proprietors and editors who actively promoted their product sometimes paid dividends. One typical paper was proud to announce that it had doubled its circulation within six years and was now read by about twelve hundred families spread across two counties. 25

The location of a newspaper could be the cause of high expectations among its promoters. The Windsor Herald, which began publishing in 1855, drew attention to the fact that as a rail and telegraphic communications centre, the village of Windsor had become very important, with the proximity of the growing city of Detroit adding to its stature. Because business was expected to boom, the establishment of a successful newspaper was therefore essential. The editor was prepared to include many diverse topics with the notable exception of religion which he felt was inappropriate to a newspaper and distasteful to the public. 26 Within a year or so the Herald ceased publication.

The contents of a typical newspaper near mid-century included foreign news, shipping intelligence, commercial information, ecclesiastical notices, advertisements, marriage announcements, local news, information on strayed animals, items for sale, situations vacant, parliamentary news, political matters, letters to the editor, and extravagant claims for patent medicines that cured every known disease. 27

Poetry and literary prose also found their way into the newspapers. The Toronto Globe serialized Dickens'
Dombey and Son, printing the entire work from November 1846 to August 1848 and referring to this achievement as a "new feature in Canadian newspapers." The Toronto Mail offered Dickens' works as supplements to its weekly edition. These were in twelve volumes priced at twenty-five cents each.

For many years the standard newspaper was a weekly, although a daily was attempted as early as 1836; it was very short-lived. Ontario's first successful daily appeared in 1849, and in the years that followed this format proliferated. In the second half of the century the newspaper press continued to grow and became more diversified. Dailies for a large, city readership and a weekly edition for the country were now possible through mechanical advances in production methods. By the 1890s Ontario possessed forty-seven dailies and three hundred and eighty-six weeklies. In the 1870s an urban daily that had a circulation of fifteen hundred could claim about five thousand by the late 1890s.

A group of newspapers referred to as "people's journals" gained ground during the seventies and eighties, challenging the more traditional party papers. These new-style papers were intended for a rather mixed working- and middle-class readership and were characterized by a strong element of sensationalism. They contained a number of special features which included sports items, popular science, and pieces of interest to women and children. One of the pioneers was the Evening Telegram, a Toronto paper which commenced in 1876. It aimed principally at being non-partisan, presenting a broad range of news coverage that was both palatable and entertaining. On the more serious side, its principle was "war to the knife" wherever it perceived wrongdoing or abuse. The average daily circulation figures attest to its popularity; they grew from less than two thousand in 1876 to just over twenty-one thousand in 1888.
Not all the newspapers read were published within the boundaries of Ontario. Extremely popular was the *Family Herald*, published weekly for five cents a copy in Montreal, Quebec. It began in 1859 and devoted itself to current news, art, science, literature, agriculture, and horticulture, assiduously avoiding political bias. Aimed at a family readership, the Herald acclaimed the periodical press as the great instructor of the era, believing that besides amusing and enlightening society, it did much to mould the characters of young people.  

American newspapers and magazines were also read in the province. In the early 1800s at least one agent was to be found in Toronto who took subscriptions and arranged for the delivery of many New York publications. Two of the most popular newspapers were the *Spectator* and the *Albion*. The latter contained largely European news and enabled its readers to enjoy the best English authors. In terms of format and style it was the most elegant of American papers, but at six dollars per year was costly for a weekly journal. Most weekly newspapers in Ontario averaged between two and three dollars for an annual subscription at this time.

Early Ontario newspapers contain numerous advertisements for American newspapers and magazines, many offering a variety of inducements to attract new subscribers. Typical was *Peabody's Parlour Journal* which claimed it was the cheapest periodical in the world at six cents per number. It believed, moreover, that it was of greater value and ten times more interesting that the famous *Penny Magazine*.

Only two dollars a year would purchase a subscription to the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* which claimed more
than ten thousand subscribers. On January 1, 1833, it launched an enlarged edition equal in size to a two-hundred page duodecimo book. It was packed with foreign and domestic news, market information, tales, poetry, miscellaneous essays, current events, literature, drama, sport, and police reports. Anyone who managed to secure five subscriptions obtained a sixth copy free; for ten, in addition to an extra copy, a ten percent discount was allowed; if fifteen subscribers were found then, in addition to an extra copy of the paper, the agent received a copy of a work by a famous author. Byron and Scott were cited as examples. Oaksmith and Company, New York, offered a library of more than forty bound volumes to anyone who would start a club of at least twenty-four subscribers. The club price for a subscription was three dollars if the bonus engraving of The Last Supper was desired; without it the sum was only two dollars.

The Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review, and similar British review journals were also available through American agencies. Clubs that ordered them in multiple copies from Leonard Scott and Company, New York, received a discount of twenty-five percent. If, for some reason, a potential subscriber was disinclined to correspond directly with the distributor, a subscription could usually be obtained through the office of the local newspaper.

A number of booksellers in Ontario acted as agents for the sale and distribution of periodical literature. John Young, a Toronto bookseller, included in his list Good Words, Leisure Hour, Family Treasure, and Sunday at Home. In Brockville John McMullen imported magazines to order from New York and London. He offered to supply Blackwood's Magazine, Godey's Lady's Book, and, interestingly, Lancet. Special rates were offered to clubs.
The presence of American magazines hampered the development of native products. The Anglo-American Magazine (Toronto) did not name them specifically, but when it spoke "strictly of those produced on this continent," suggesting that the "lighter" type were unsuitable for a British North American audience, it is clear that American magazines were the principal target. Susanna Moodie criticized the magazines more directly. Producing a truly competitive magazine was practically impossible; the American journals contained excellent material, were produced and sold quite cheaply, and could be found in numerous households. For example, the Literary Garland (Montreal), despite a good reputation and a fair measure of popularity, was "done to death" by magazines such as Harper's. A more positive voice credited the better class American magazines, as they existed between 1850 and 1900, with having provided a greater cultural treat than could be claimed for the "top-lofty utterances" of the British review journals.

In 1826 William Lyon Mackenzie predicted that a successful literary magazine would not be viable until the British possessions in North America had advanced themselves in every way and produced scholars of international repute. The Canadian Magazine and the Canadian Literary Magazine were early attempts at establishing literary journals in Ontario. Though their histories are obscure, it is certain that their life-spans were short. Barker's Canadian Magazine, established at Kingston in 1846, aimed at reducing the influx of "light literature" from the United States. How this was to have been accomplished will never be known as the magazine languished within a year. Mr. and Mrs. Moodie's Victoria Magazine was intended to improve the literary taste of the working classes. This magazine was also short-lived, lasting only from September, 1847 to August, 1848.
An interesting and informative feature of the Victoria Magazine was its reviews of other literary periodicals. Wilson's Canada Casket, for example, was a family journal published monthly for the incredibly low price of fifty cents a year. More in the nature of a newspaper, it was intended to attract the literate but poor members of the community with a view to inculcating the reading habit. The Huron Signal was a journal with a political cast about it, while the Canadian Gem and Family Visitor was moralistic and religious in tone. The Calliopean was unusual in that it was managed by members of the Burlington Ladies' Academy. The editors of the Victoria Magazine had reservations about the Calliopean, criticizing some of its articles and also the title which they felt to be pedantic.

Throughout the remainder of the century other attempts at producing magazines met with varying degrees of success. A few magazines were able to postpone their demise by merging with others. The Canadian Monthly and National Review, begun in 1872, merged with Belford's Monthly Magazine in 1878 to become Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review, thus prolonging its life until 1882.

The survival rate was much greater among newspapers and magazines that were affiliated with churches, professions, and similar organizations. One exception seems to have been those that promoted agricultural interests. The editor of an early agricultural newspaper offered to sell the entire printing establishment for want of subscribers. In 1850 the Canadian Agriculturist described itself as the cheapest and the best farmer's paper, being the only one published in Ontario. It upbraided the farming community for its lack of interest in an agricultural paper.
and appealed to the farmers' patriotic desire to improve their country. Among the inducements were cash bonuses; if an individual could find two hundred subscribers at one dollar each, one hundred dollars would be paid. Orders for twenty-five copies or more were supplied at half price to agricultural societies who were not permitted to take part in the bonus scheme.  

Although a lively agricultural press existed in the 1880s that did much to improve farming techniques in the province, the majority of farmers did not subscribe to any agricultural paper. Nevertheless, a number of journals survived long enough to promulgate sound principles to those who believed in scientific farming. One important point should not be overlooked: a short subscription list did not necessarily reflect the true number of readers, as many journals were available through mechanics' institute libraries, in addition to facilities provided by the agricultural societies. It is also likely that the more affluent farmers who did subscribe shared their copies with their less fortunate brethren.

Life was difficult in the early part of the century and was often fraught with danger and disappointment, factors which contributed to a serious drinking problem among the inhabitants. The first temperance society in Ontario was formed on June 10, 1828. The movement experienced rapid growth and within a few years about one hundred societies with a combined membership of roughly ten thousand were to be found in Ontario. The value of promulgating temperance aims through the press was soon recognized and a number of periodical publications were launched of which the Canadian Temperance Advocate stands as a prime example. Although
it was published in Quebec, at Montreal, it circulated widely in Ontario. A variety of methods were employed to reach the broadest readership possible. In 1839 the subscription price was halved; this had the effect of doubling the journal's circulation. Clergymen and school teachers received free copies for the first five years, presumably to encourage the dissemination of the journal and the principles it advocated among church congregations and young people in the classroom. A number of other periodicals, similar in tone, were published over the years, but copies are now difficult to find, while historical evidence concerning them is equally elusive.

As a result of industrialization the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of labour organizations, and with them, the development of a labour press. The Workingman's Journal (Hamilton), which began publishing in 1864, typifies those publications that sought to encourage and support the workingman in his quest for better social conditions and protection in the work place. While the Journal had no thought of making direct assaults upon capitalist interests, it clearly intended to assert the right of those who actually produced the nation's wealth to an equitable share in it. The Journal affirmed what it believed was a fundamental principle: the country's power and prestige rested largely upon a happy and contented labouring class; and reigning politicians, patriots, and philanthropists were invited to take heed.

Despite its predilection for social and industrial reform, the Journal was anxious to be accepted as a popular family periodical. This meant the inclusion of fiction and similar literary offerings, political pieces,
editorials, reprinted articles, classified advertisements, and a host of miscellaneous items to attract the whole family.  

Apparently the earliest among the "more self-conscious 'labour' papers," the Workingman's Journal may have stood as the model for those that followed. More than a score were published in Ontario before 1900, but the mortality rate was high. Indigenous publications were supplemented by those of the international unions, printed in the United States.  

A collection of ethno-cultural newspapers served a variety of communities that encompassed almost the entire spectrum of background and heritage. Among those directed at the Black population a few were devoted to the cause of anti-slavery. The Voice of the Fugitive, for example, published in Windsor, Ontario, was founded by a former American slave named Henry Bibb.  

For a newspaper or magazine to reach the widest possible readership, effective distribution methods were essential. Among the earliest distributors were the post-walkers, post-riders, and pedlars. Shubal Huff combined his delivery of papers and pamphlets with groceries as he traded with settlers in the Kingston area of Ontario.  

An enterprising American post-walker established a newspaper route that extended from Buffalo, New York, to the Niagara region of Ontario, a walk of some sixty miles. His visits were always anticipated with great eagerness, particularly by the children on his route. When war came in 1812 he was unfortunately compelled to curtail his activities. Proprietors who engaged men to deliver
their papers were naturally quick to recognize the value of the horse as a means of faster delivery, for post-riders soon became another familiar and welcome sight in early Ontario. 79

The post office played an important role in the dissemination of the periodical press. In the years that followed the transfer of the postal jurisdiction to the provinces, the question of postage rates and concessions for periodical literature was debated by government, postal authorities, and members of the periodical publishing interest. 80 The legislation that resulted sometimes favoured the reading public and at other times did not, although the need to encourage the dissemination of periodicals as an aid to the intellectual, cultural, and political growth of a nascent society was only rarely disputed. Consequently, legislation designed to impose charges usually exempted single copies of publications exchanged by editors, thus providing for a broad base of news and information. Provincially published magazines devoted to religious matters, education, agriculture, science, and the temperance movement were similarly privileged. Furthermore, these appear to be the only classes of periodicals that were treated with any consistency, the rest being subjected at different times to fluctuating postal rates and a variety of concessions that characterized the complex legislation enacted between 1850 and 1900. 81

As far as exchange publications are concerned, it seems certain that the development of communications systems that were faster and more efficient eventually rendered the practice obsolete. The post-rider, and presumably the post-walker, too, had largely disappeared
by mid-century, supplanted by stage-coaches, steamboats, and eventually railways. Linking these modes of transportation meant that newspapers and magazines could now be moved in greater quantities, quickly and efficiently, to distant parts of the province and beyond.

Because of the ephemeral nature of newspapers, distribution methods sometimes called for a strong degree of imagination. The Toronto Globe was distributed daily throughout western Ontario by the newspaper's own special train, claimed as unique throughout the world. This innovation of the 1880s gave the Globe an advantage of some five to ten hours over its Toronto rivals in terms of early delivery to readers. Throngs of boys ranging in age from ten to sixteen years sold the morning and evening editions in Toronto. Newsboys belonged to a special breed. Those who were homeless roamed and even slept in the streets during the summer months, seeking refuge in cheap lodging houses when the long, harsh winter began. While the more enterprising supplemented their meagre incomes by shining shoes on the street, the less fortunate were forced to beg.

The progress and influence of the periodical press and its role in society were matters that received critical attention in the final quarter of the century. The newspaper, for example, had served as a means of instruction in the early days when the educational system was in its infancy, but this no longer applied in the 1870s. Nevertheless, the demand continued to grow for what was now regarded as the "chief mental pabulum" of the people, and by the 1880s between one and two hundred million copies of newspapers were circulating in the Dominion! Opinions on the quality and wholesomeness of newspapers were sharply divided. Some were
believed to be among the finest in the world, but others, the dailies in particular, were singled out as being both licentious and irresponsible.

As for magazines, attention was again drawn to the overwhelming presence of British and American publications that adversely affected indigenous productions. It was seriously suggested that without the patronage of a millionaire or, alternatively, the application of trade protection practices to literary property, a domestic magazine could not be sustained for any length of time. Recognizing that the first solution was fanciful, to say the least, and the second tantamount to cultural suicide, the essayist held out little hope for the future. Entrepreneurs had lived with this problem for years, clinging tenaciously to the belief that indigenous magazines were essential to present a national point of view and function as the proving ground for contributions to a literature that would rival those of the United States and Britain.

Despite their transient nature, domestically-produced magazines set a rich fare before their readers. Literature, history, politics, education, the sciences, and the arts were served up in a variety of combinations and emphases, depending on the nature of the journal and the readership it aimed to serve. Fiction might consist of a serialized novel by Wilke Collins, or the exciting adventures of "Dora, the Pretty Typewriter," an innocent beauty who lived a perilous life in the business world of Montreal.

If these magazines could not compete with their American counterparts like Harper's, Scribner's, and the
North American Review, they had little chance against the more popular magazines that came from the United States in steadily increasing quantities as the years went by. As early as 1872 the hope was expressed that one day Canadian Illustrated News would be read more widely than the popular magazines published in New York by Frank Leslie. Lurid and sensational in tone, the most famous of these was Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper which began in 1855 and lasted until 1922.

As the twentieth century began, the influx of American periodicals continued unabated. Canadian laws that actually favoured the American periodicals publisher made this phenomenon possible. Fifty thousand copies of Ladies' Home Journal, for example, could be shipped to Toronto free of any customs duty, whereas the Canadian publisher was taxed on ink, type, and presses; if high quality paper was imported from the United States in preference to the more expensive Canadian product, duty of between twenty-five and thirty-five percent was levied. Consequently, any attempt to produce a competitive ten-cent magazine was out of the question.

Added to this was growing alarm at the increasing number of "yellow" journals that continued to pour in from the United States. They were largely Sunday papers and cheap magazines variously described as "socialistic," "atheistic," and "sensationalism run riot." The principal fear was that they would corrupt young people by fostering crime, weakening their morals, and destroying both their desire for "rational" amusements and a taste for better-class reading material.
In the years that followed, higher-toned American magazines continued to cater to a significant readership, but one that was small compared to the audiences that clamoured for the cheap, popular magazines mass-produced in the United States. This class of magazine numbered its circulation in Canada in the tens of thousands. Printed on poor quality paper and given over almost entirely to fiction, the prose was described this time as "sensational," "suggestive," and "demoralizing," "literary swill" that was devoured mainly by the younger generation: men, women, boys, and girls.  

Apart from the moral issue, there was general concern for the survival of the Canadian periodicals industry. In the late 1920s the Magazine Publishers' Association of Canada informed the government's Advisory Board on Tariffs and Taxation that the number of American newspapers and magazines entering Canada annually totalled seventy million copies. What had started as a trickle in the early nineteenth century had become, in the twentieth, an almost uncontrollable flood.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. William Canniff, History of the Settlement of Upper Canada (Ontario) with Special Reference to the Bay of Quinte (Toronto, Dudley & Burns, 1869), p. 351.


4. Colonial Advocate, April 6, 1826.

5. Kesterton, p. 25.


11 Susanna Moodie, Mark Hurdlestone, the Gold Worshipper (London, Bentley, 1853), p. xxi.

12 Isabella Lucy Bird, The Englishwoman in America (London, Murray, 1856), p. 317. Mrs. Bishop makes the startling and unsubstantiated claim that thousands of subscribers to these newspapers were so illiterate that they had to rely upon their children to describe and explain the contents. Ibid.

13 Colonial Advocate, April 6, 1826. An interesting method of syndicating news was developed in the early 1880s. Known as "time copy" or "ready-print," editors received sheets with stock news already printed on one side; by printing local news on the verso a respectable newspaper could be produced quite cheaply. See: Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, The Province of Ontario; a History, 1615-1927 (Toronto, Dominion Publishing Co., 1927-28), 5 vols., II, p. 788.

14 13 and 14 Vic., Cap. 17, 1850.


16 Ibid., p. 241.

17 Brockville Gazette, August 22, 1828.

18 Ibid. The agency system sometimes produced its own problems. An agent canvassing in Toronto for the Canadian Illustrated News (Hamilton) was dismissed after only a few days. He continued, however, to solicit new subscriptions, posing either as the official agent or as the proprietor. Canadian Illustrated News (Hamilton), May 9, 1863, p. 302.

19 Bathurst Courier, June 30, 1846. Altick in the English Common Reader (p. 323) notes a similar phenomenon in the form of "newspaper societies."


21 Ibid.

22 Canadian Emigrant, and Western District Advertiser, February 2, 1832.
23 Bathurst Courier, February 1, 1850.
24 Bathurst Courier, January 19, 1847.
25 Bathurst Courier, April 2, 1852.
26 Windsor Herald, January 6, 1855.
27 Bathurst Courier, June 30, 1846.
28 Globe, January 2, 1847.
29 Photocopy of the title page from Nicholas Nickleby, courtesy of the Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.
30 This was the Royal Standard (Toronto), lasting from November 1836 to February 1837. Wallace, pp. 20-21.
31 British Whig, Kingston. See Kesterton, p. 25.
33 John George Bourinot, Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness ... (Montreal, Foster, Brown & Co., 1893), p. 66.
36 Ibid., pp. 175 - 178, passim.
37 The Evening Telegram: a Story of the Years (Toronto, Telegram Office, 1889), pp. 6 - 7.
38 Ibid., p. 8.
39 Ibid., p. 42.
40 Family Herald, November 16, 1859.
41 Upper Canada Gazette, January 15, 1818.
43 Colonial Advocate, April 6, 1826.
44 Canadian Emigrant, and Western District Advertiser, March 15, 1834.
45 Canadian Emigrant, and Western District Advertiser, July 13, 1833. An interesting discussion of these American weeklies is contained in Mary Noel's Villains Galore ... the Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly (New York, Macmillan, 1954).
46 Perth Courier, February 12, 1858.
47 Bathurst Courier, December 24, 1852.
48 The Canada Observer and Presbyterian Advocate. The date of this fragile newspaper could not be precisely determined, but the advertisement bears the date January 9, 1865.
49 Bathurst Courier, June 14, 1850.
51 Moodie, Mark Hurdlestone, pp. xv - xvi.
53 Colonial Advocate, March 30, 1826.
57 "Editor's Table," Victoria Magazine, I (March, 1848), pp. 167 - 168.
60 Colquhoun, p. 148.
61 Ibid., p. 146.
62 Colonial Advocate, March 22, 1827. The journal in question was the Farmer's Gazette, located in the village of Markham, near Toronto.
63 Bathurst Courier, February 1, 1850.
66 Ibid., p. 352.
67 Ibid., p. 355.
69 Prospectus of the Workingman's Journal, June 18, 1864.
70 Ibid. Additional information was kindly supplied by Miss Katharine Greenfield, Head of Special Collections, Hamilton Public Library, Ontario.
71 Hann, p. 92.
72 Ibid., p. 109.
73 Elliott, p. 220.
74 Hann, p. 92.
As periodicals of this type are really outside the scope of this study, they are mentioned only in passing.

Canniff, p. 355.


Bathurst Courier, January 19, 1847.

The history of the anti-postage movement is summarized in the Canadian Press Association's publication A History of Canadian Journalism in the Several Portions of the Dominion with a Sketch of the Canadian Press Association, 1859 - 1908 (Toronto, 1908), chapter XVIII.

Statutes relating to the transmission of periodicals are as follows:

13 & 14 Vic., Cap. 17, 1850; Canada, Province. 
18 Vic., Cap. 79, 1855;see 
20 Vic., Cap. 25, 1857;see 
22 Vic., Cap. XVII, 1859;see 
31 Vic., Cap. X, 1867;Canada, Dominion. 
38 Vic., Cap. 7, 1875;see 
45 Vic., Cap. 9, 1882;see 
61 Vic., Cap. 20, 1898;see 

Implementation of these statutes in the form of regulations are to be found in various nineteenth-century directories and almanacs.

Bathurst Courier, January 19, 1847. Deprived of house to house delivery, rural readers were sometimes obliged to travel long distances to the nearest post office to collect their newspapers and magazines. Rural mail delivery was not reinstated until 1908. See George Wilcox, History of the Rural Mail in Canada (Ottawa, Public Affairs, Canada Post, 1975).

Photocopy of an undated advertisement in the library of Massey College, University of Toronto. The advertisement states that the train commenced running on March 3, 1887.

Christopher St. George Clark, Of Toronto the Good, a Social Study: the Queen City of Canada As It Is (Montreal, Toronto Publishing Co., 1898), pp. 81 - 82.

Bourinot, Intellectual Development of the Canadian People ... , p. 83.

87 Bourinot, Intellectual Development of the Canadian People ..., p. 78.

88 Christopher St. George Clark, Of Toronto the Good ..., p. 32.


92 "Canadian Literature," Canadian Illustrated News (Montreal), June 8, 1872, p. 358.


97 Ibid., p. 154.
CHAPTER IV

The sustaining power of religion comforted many who struggled to survive in primitive Ontario. All the major Christian churches and sects established themselves in the province, and if Popery was sometimes feared and Anglicanism looked upon with suspicion, the frontier did engender a noticeable community spirit among those immigrants, Catholic and non-Catholic, who shared the common bonds of impoverishment and the need to survive. Gradually, certain unifying influences were seen to be at work among the Protestant churches. Children received the same secular education and attended Union Sunday schools where all shades of Protestantism were embraced; church members had access to the same sources of reading matter, all of which tended towards cultural uniformity. The work of the churches was supported by an abundant flow of missionary publications that emanated chiefly from the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and from individual churches. Religious literature was sometimes imported directly by individuals and was also available through commercial channels in the shape of booksellers.

Ministers who wished to provide books for their parishioners sometimes found it difficult in the early days of the province. Featherstone Osler supplemented a
meagre donation of eight dollars from the Toronto Sunday School Society with money from his own pocket. He hoped that between eighty and one hundred members of his congregation would join his newly-formed lending library for an annual subscription of just one dollar. Besides providing for further acquisitions, this nominal subscription was in keeping with Osler's philosophy that gratuitous services were valued far less than those that entailed remuneration of some sort.³

Individuals sometimes had parcels of Bibles and prayer books sent out from England for distribution in the community. Special needs included Bibles in cheaper formats and some with a larger type-face for elderly readers.⁴ Emigrants were encouraged to bring out religious and "loyal" prints to counteract the seditious influence of "tawdry sheets" from the United States that portrayed George Washington, and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was expected that such blatant republicanism would be nullified by portraits of the royal family, scenes depicting scripture stories, and views of Windsor Castle.⁵

The first Bible society in Ontario was formed at Niagara in 1818, but it was not very successful.⁶ The Upper Canada Auxiliary Bible Society was inaugurated at a meeting held in the Masonic Hall, Toronto, on November 3, 1828. Although its principal aim of disseminating the Bible "without note or comment" was identical with that of its parent body, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the auxiliary reserved the right to act independently in policy matters whenever it was deemed necessary. Ladies and gentlemen in the surrounding districts were exhorted to form associations in support of the society. Large
management committees were recommended with each member functioning as a "collector." Funds so provided would be used to purchase Bibles and Testaments from the parent society. Copies would be either sold or given away, depending upon the circumstances. In little more than a decade the society distributed over twenty-seven thousand Bibles and Testaments, including translations for the Indian population.

A large measure of the society's success was due to the zeal of the travelling agents who displayed great fortitude in the face of numerous hardships brought on by a frequently inhospitable climate and difficult terrain. A single journey might last several months, with the agent engaged in establishing new auxiliaries and resuscitating old ones. A clergyman traveller might also be expected to do some preaching.

A typical tour was undertaken by the Reverend James Richardson between June 1839 and March 1840. He arranged his meetings in advance and held them in the most convenient place of assembly; this might be a Congregational chapel, a Presbyterian church, or a schoolhouse. His congregation comprised the principal Protestant denominations: Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Preaching and an explanation of the work of the Bible Society formed the major parts of the "service." At the end of this particular journey, Richardson estimated that he had travelled more than twenty-six hundred miles.

A similar tour was undertaken by the Reverend William Brookman in 1868. His district encompassed ten formidable counties. Brookman averaged ten thousand miles...
each year, preaching and extending the work of the society. It sometimes took a considerable amount of patient explanation to persuade those present at a meeting to subscribe. The Reverend was not without his share of tribulations, and in the course of his travels he was required to cope with a derailed train, a broken harness, a sick horse, and the pain and indignity of being thrown from his horse-drawn carriage.10

Despite the arduous nature of the work, agents usually derived a deep satisfaction from their efforts. If their meetings consisted of only four or five people, they were not discouraged. The first portion of each subscription collected was retained to settle the branch's account with the central body. The residue was regarded as a "free" contribution and would usually be divided between the Upper Canada Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society.11 If a traveller carried any stock with him, and the record is not clear on this point, the quantities could only have been small; large orders would have been shipped by a more conventional means of transportation. Nevertheless, a great deal of work remained for the agent; explaining the work of the society, collecting donations and subscriptions, settling accounts, and tending to the upkeep of the depositories.

A close ally of the Upper Canada Bible Society was the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society. Formed on January 10, 1832, the society dedicated itself to the aims of the Religious Tract Society in Britain, resolving to circulate the publications of the parent organization. Moreover, if the opportunity arose for indigenous publishing, the books and tracts produced would be modelled upon those of the London society. It was hoped that auxiliaries would be established throughout Ontario.
The reasons for establishing a tract society were unequivocal in the minds of the organizers. In the 1830s ministers were few and the population scattered and often remote. There was also a need for a more substantial type of literature to counterbalance ephemeral publications like the newspaper. It was, moreover, recognized that the press could be more powerful than the pulpit; while a sermon might fall on deaf ears, or be forgotten quickly, a tract had the propensity to reinforce its message again and again, passing from neighbour to neighbour until it finally disintegrated.

Because of its potential impact, much care and attention was given to the form and content of the tract. The Religious Tract Society in London established the criteria aimed at promulgating "Pure Truth." The tract had to be Christian in every sense of the word; a particular denomination could not be favoured or singled out for attack; everything worldly and irreligious was to be excluded. Working within these guidelines, tract writers conveyed a variety of messages to their readers. Swearing and similar deprivities were the targets of many, while others simply gave advice and comfort to the sick, the aged, and the needy. Tracts were frequently written for members of particular professions and occupations and for those in hospital or prison. Such segments of the population as rural readers also received attention. A similar cross-section of potential readers was to be found in Ontario where the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society was convinced that tracts of a secular nature embracing, for example, history, biography, and poetry, should be available to people in all walks of life and of differing temperaments.
The strength of the society lay in its principal method of distribution through colporteurs who travelled through the province selling Bibles, Testaments, and tracts door-to-door. That those who governed the province attached great importance to the promulgation of religion and high moral standards is clear from the statute that exempted employees of temperance, benevolent, and religious societies from the law that required pedlars to possess licences. 15

Through their religious zeal and willingness to explain patiently and carefully the nature of their wares, colporteurs performed an important missionary function. Working in concert with the Upper Canada Bible Society, whose publications they frequently sold, colporteurs fought to counteract what they sincerely believed was a pernicious and immoral literature in the guise of popular newspapers, magazines, and books. The society was realistic enough to appreciate the press as "the great circulating library of the people," but regretted that so much of it, in their eyes, regurgitated "the very filth of the sewer," singling out "police reports" as a prime example. 16

The American Tract Society developed its successful system of colportage in the early 1840s. The Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society wished to take advantage of this agency and was persuaded to make its own attempt at colportage, but on a limited scale. The venture was not very successful. 17 A German from New York, who owned land in the Waterloo area of Ontario, noticed that property values were proportionally higher in the areas possessing a strong religious presence. Wishing to increase the value of his lands, he arranged for two German colporteurs, commissioned by the American Tract Society, to commence work in the province. 18
The American Tract Society established a branch at Rochester, New York, in 1853. Its superintendent soon established relations with societies in Ontario, which proved to be a great advantage. The Rochester agency experienced no difficulty in recruiting colporteurs, many of whom were students working part-time for the society. Their success was such that renewed interest was aroused not only in Ontario, but throughout the country, resulting in a fresh attempt at extending the system of colportage, particularly in the remote bush settlements where the greatest need was felt.

The principal aim of colportage was evangelization, so colporteurs were drawn from the ranks of pious laymen and ministers not fully active in church ministry. Colportage was not seen as simply a weapon in the war against "vicious books and periodicals," but was also intended to encourage education, promote Sunday schools, correct religious error (particularly Catholicism), strengthen Christian unity, and provide an important link between the clergy and the people. Colporteur associations were formed, and members met for prayer and discussion. Their main function was to promote the work of the society to which they belonged.

In its fifty-fourth annual report (1887) the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society drew attention to the remarkable fact that the year's work had been accomplished by just two colporteurs! A third had given some time to routine colportage, but the major part of his effort had been expended upon the Welland Canal Mission. Begun in 1824 as a link between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, the Welland Canal went through a series of modifications and improvements. At the time of his report, the Reverend Bone was working with the sailors
whose ships plied the waterway and with the navvies engaged to deepen it. It was Bone's custom to join the men at mealtimes and offer them books and tracts. Boarding one vessel, he encountered a cabin maid whose favourite reading matter was the *New York Ledger*, perhaps the most successful of the cheap story papers that circulated in their thousands at that time. According to Bone, the young lady's reading habits were soon altered by a judicious selection of tracts and books.  

Besides attending to his charges at the Welland Canal, Thomas Bone visited thirty-six townships between 1886 and 1887, including in his itinerary factories, Sunday schools, and the penitentiary at Kingston. During that time he distributed gratuitously over twenty-five thousand tracts, booklets, periodicals, and portions of the Bible. He sold only slightly more than one thousand books, packets of scripture cards, pictures, mottoes, tracts, Bibles, and New Testaments. He did, however, collect over two thousand dollars in subscriptions and donations.  

Richard Irvine spent some time as a colporteur in the lumber camps of Ontario. Most of his sales were made to camp labourers, clerks, and storekeepers in the nearby villages, for the settlers in the area were quite poor. Irvine found, however, that money was plentiful and sales healthy wherever factories were situated. His method was to traverse each neighbourhood several times before expanding into a new area. Irvine lamented the shortage of colporteurs, believing that one, at least, could be supported by each county. Among the publications he dispensed, the penny Testaments were a great favourite. It was Irvine's conviction that the publications he sold made a real contribution to the spread of the reading
A romantic description of the typical colporteur is worth quoting in full:

... one can picture with satisfaction the sturdy colporteur going his monthly round; accosting the ploughman a-field, or the blacksmith at his forge, and received by both on the footing of equal companionship as he takes up some general topic of common interest, or prosecutes the business of his own mission; anon giving a Bible or other reading to a group of humble listeners gathered round him of an evening, or praying with the sick and infirm; and again joyously welcomed by the children of the hamlet who have been counting the days till his return that they may get their few carefully-hoarded halfpence expended on the much-prized illustrated magazine or little book.

The Religious Tract Society had its own auxiliaries in Ontario. The first, established at Kingston, had a chequered career, but was eventually made successful. As early as 1825 financial assistance was given to the Niagara district. The Indian population received particular attention and acquired a school and a village library. Another auxiliary was formed in Ottawa.

Within the first fifty years of the nineteenth century the Religious Tract Society issued over four hundred million copies of its publications. From an assortment of writers whose works enjoyed large circulations, Issac Watts, a hymnographer, proved to be the more popular. A four-page tract entitled The Swearer's Prayer, by an unidentified author, was the bestseller with nearly two million copies circulated. Its nearest rival, On the Lord's Day, reached almost one million. Eleven tracts by the Reverend Richard Knill deserve particular mention. They enjoyed a total circulation exceeding
three million copies, bearing such macabre titles as A Whole Family in Heaven, The Happy Deathbed, and Nurseries for Heaven. The Dairyman's Daughter and The Young Cottager, both written by the Reverend Legh Richmond, also achieved popularity. 28

The society developed imaginative formats to spread the gospel message. Sabbath-breaking, death and the grave, swearing, drunkeness, and redemption were important topics treated in a series of handbills available in shilling packets. Broadsheets were printed for posting on factory and cottage walls. Tracts with a Braille text were produced for blind readers. A long series of monthly volumes came in two formats: cloth boards and gilt edges for tenpence, or "neat" (paper) covers for sixpence. The purchasers of this series could read about Julius Caesar, Alfred the Great, discover the mysteries of the atmosphere, glimpse the Dark Ages, and explore the solar system. In yet another volume more ambitious readers were given the opportunity for self-improvement. 29

The need to put all missionary literature on a firm commercial basis was voiced in the 1880s. It was thought that paying stricter attention to publishing details would be a beginning. Formats, binding styles, and typefaces needed choosing with more deliberation, keeping in mind always the utility of the publication in hand. A viable stock with suitable weeding arrangements and effective advertising were also considered important. 30
The Religious Tract Society's success in the periodicals field was less than spectacular, but the weekly Leisure Hour deserves particular mention. It commenced publication in 1852 with the intention of providing instruction and recreational reading for the entire family. It was not launched without some misgivings, for there were those who doubted that the provision of a magazine of this type was the proper function of the society. But these doubts were dispelled by the positive need for a magazine that would counteract all that was considered to be pernicious and immoral in the truly secular press. The magazine survived until 1905.

Sunday at Home is also noteworthy. It commenced in 1853 with a view to providing suitable Sunday reading for young and old alike. Again, doubts were raised that anything but strictly religious reading should be encouraged on the Lord's day. Commonsense prevailed, for there was abundant evidence that something in a lighter vein was warranted. The magazine was not unlike Leisure Hour, except that the religious content was noticeably higher. It ran a popular serial entitled Jessica's First Prayer, by Hesba Stretton, which was eventually published as a book in 1868, selling over one million copies. Sunday at Home did not cease publication until 1940.

Like its fellow missionary agencies, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was quick to recognise the press as a powerful instrument. Year after year the society distributed vast numbers of Bibles, prayer books, tracts, and works of a "useful" nature. An increasingly liberal viewpoint added numerous titles to the society's catalogue drawn from almost the entire field of human knowledge, but always in keeping with the views and
objectives of the S.P.C.K. Many of the early publications were intended for use in the charity schools supported by the society and for distribution among the poor.

In the early decades of the century district and diocesan committees were formed in Britain to assist in disseminating the society's publications and increase revenue. The idea soon spread to the colonies, and the first overseas committee was established at Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1814. This was followed by further formations in other settled parts of the country. The committee at Kingston, Ontario, sold some of its tracts through provincial post offices.

The nineteenth century was also notable in the society's history as the period when it launched a series of attacks upon the "infidel" press in Britain. During the 1830s, when the second Anti-Infidel Committee was at work, Ontario was facing a different problem: a shortage of clergymen and churches. In 1837 it was calculated that at least one hundred thousand people were "beyond the reach of the public means of grace." Eventually, two thousand pounds were provided by the society to alleviate the problem, and when John Strachan was consecrated Bishop of Toronto in 1839, he was charged with the disposal of this grant. Possibly, some of it was expended on tracts and similar publications.

The main depository at Toronto was located in a newspaper office. There were subsidiaries located in several parts of Ontario for those who could not reach Toronto easily. The publications offered in the society's 1831 catalogue were inspiring only in the spiritual sense,
for, despite claims to the contrary, there was little to attract the general reader. A variety of Bibles and Testaments were offered in English, French, German, and Gaelic, selling from ninety shillings for a three-volume Bible to fifteen pence for a stereotyped Testament in twelvemo. Single "homilies" were available for just pennies each on subjects as diverse as salvation and swearing. Spelling books, moral tales, and spiritual writings by the formidable Sarah Trimmer were also advertised in the catalogue. 40 Ironically, also listed is Robinson Crusoe, a work Mrs. Trimmer regarded as detrimental to children because it tended to incite restlessness and dissatisfaction. 41 A handful of historical works, accounts of voyages, bowdlerized poetry, a book of trades, and natural histories of domestic animals, fishes, and trees brought some relief to an otherwise oppressively pious and didactic collection. The Toronto depository issued over four thousand Bibles, Testaments, prayer books, catechisms, tracts, and books between January 1830 and July 1831. 42

The S.P.C.K., too, felt some obligation to offer alternatives to the secular periodical press. Saturday Magazine, an illustrated weekly miscellany, was published for some twelve years from 1832 to 1844. Twenty-three years passed before a second attempt was made in the form of the People's Magazine, similarly devised to appeal to all classes. Its circulation in the first year was close to thirty thousand, but before too many years had lapsed this figure had dropped dramatically, the magazine expiring in 1873. The society had greater success with Dawn of Day which commenced some five years later. Selling for only one halfpenny, it experienced a steadily increasing circulation and lasted well into the twentieth century. 43 The degree of popularity enjoyed by these magazines in Ontario is not known.
Publishing was not the monopoly of the missionary societies, for a number of churches shared in this activity. George Dawson, a Toronto bookseller, began publishing monthly the Christian Recorder in 1819. The Anglican connexion is implicit in the fact that the magazine was placed "under the inspection" of Dr. Strachan. It comprised a miscellany of topics that included moral and religious gleanings from British magazines, obituary notices, and some biographical intelligence. Agents were offered a handsome twenty percent commission on their subscription lists.44

The Catholic Church, anxious to explain and support its doctrines, began publishing the Catholic in the 1830s. The magazine contained religious, moral, and theological essays, with room for occasional poetical offerings. The annual subscription was just two dollars with postage added. Priests in the province were asked to act as agents.45

Among Congregationalist magazines, only the Canadian Independent achieved any measure of success. It began in 1854 and continued until 1925 when the United Church of Canada was formed from congregations of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. The Independent was variously a weekly, a fortnightly, and a monthly. To sustain the viability of the magazine, its proprietors moved into other areas of publishing in 1866 as the Canadian Independent Publishing Company. At incorporation in 1877 its title was changed to the Congregational Publishing Company of Toronto.46

Not to be outdone, the Presbyterians also marketed a number of magazines over the years. Their outstanding publication was the Presbyterian Witness which
began in 1848 and lasted until the union of 1925. Although it was published for much of its life in Halifax, Nova Scotia, it was read in other parts of the country, in Britain, and the United States. While the circulation figures were not large, the magazine exercised a not inconsiderable amount of influence. In its time it advocated free education, railways, confederation for the provinces, temperance, and also supported the sabbatarian movement. The Witness also recorded many important historical events of the period. In 1925 it united with the Methodist Christian Guardian and the Canadian Congregationalist to form the New Outlook. Among the remaining Presbyterian magazines it is noticeable that they were largely sustained through a series of mutations.

The Methodists were undoubtedly the most successful publishers of all. What began as a pioneer attempt at establishing a magazine grew into a million dollar business in less than a century. The prime mover was Egerton Ryerson who set off for New York City in 1829 to purchase printing equipment. In that same year the Christian Guardian began publishing in Toronto with Ryerson as its first editor. A large measure of the magazine's success was due to Ryerson's conviction that there was an obligation to report political news, which clearly broadened the Guardian's appeal and influence.

Another distinctive Methodist publication was the Canadian Methodist Magazine. Its talented editor displayed remarkable skill in his ability to acquire well-written and interesting articles at no cost to the magazine. Some of the success was attributable to the journal's connexion with the largest Protestant church. The magazine also functioned as a vehicle of expression for
an emerging British North American literature, and with two changes of title it lasted from 1875 to 1906.

The publishing and bookselling business grew quite naturally from the original printing operation. It was deemed imprudent to allow the machinery to stand idle when the church's magazines were not in press, so commercial work was undertaken to occupy the plant more fully. When it became evident that the demand for books by domestic authors was on the increase, the Methodist Book and Publishing House was not slow to respond. Because the press was anxious to promote such works, it sometimes published titles that had little likelihood of commercial success, simply to provide encouragement to their authors.

The bookselling side of the business developed over the years, and soon a special department was needed to administer sales to the bookselling fraternity. Local productions were supplemented by publications from the United States and Britain. At first they were actually reprinted, but later came in the form of plates, or sheets that were bound locally. A typical catalogue, published in 1844, displays a surprisingly liberal selection of secular works, considering the strong religious connexion of the publishing house. Not only are perennial favourites like Aesop's Fables, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and Defoe's Robinson Crusoe present, but also volumes of natural history, mathematics, geography, cookery, science, medicine, history, religion, and spelling, all reasonably priced and calculated to attract a fairly good cross-section of the reading public.

The Methodist Book and Publishing House survived well into the twentieth century as the familiar Ryerson Press, a fitting tribute to those early itinerant preachers
who braved the Ontario wilderness on horseback with the Bible and perhaps a few other books in their saddlebags, bringing not only the word of God, but frequently the opportunity to read where reading matter was scarce. 55

The missionary press in general was unswerving in its determination to bring Christianity to the people, but was quick to recognize the need to temper the moral with the amusing and the instructive with the entertaining. Thus it broadened its appeal without compromising its aims and, however accidentally, contributed to the spread of the reading habit. 56
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Ontario, Statutes, 13 & 14 Vic., Cap. 7, 1850.

17 Upper Canada Tract Society, Colportage in Canada; an Address of the Committee of the Upper Canada Tract Society; to Which is Added, a Report of Convention of Colporteurs, Held in Toronto, September, 1854 (Toronto, the Society, 1854), pp. 3 - 4.

18 Ibid., p. 25.

19 Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.

20 Ibid., pp. 11 - 14, passim.

21 Ibid. Advertisement for the formation of colporteur associations.


23 Ibid., pp. 24 - 26.

24 Ibid., pp. 27 - 31, passim.

25 Ibid., pp. 5 - 7. The annual cost of keeping a colporteur in the field was about two hundred and fifty dollars. p. 20.


27 Jones, pp. 578 - 579.

28 Ibid. See unpaged appendices.


32 Ibid., p. 74.

33 Gordon Hewitt, Let the People Read; a Short History of the United Society for Christian Literature (London, Lutterworth Press, 1949), pp. 50 - 51. The Cottager was started in 1861, but was not very successful. Ibid., p. 51.

35 Ibid., pp. 185 - 189, passim.

36 Ibid., pp. 312 - 313.

37 Advertisement in the Brockville Gazette for July 3, 1829.

38 Allen & McClure, pp. 189 - 190.

39 Ibid., pp. 326 - 327.

40 Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Report of the York Committee, of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, at the Annual Meeting, Held in St. James' Church, 15th July, 1831 (York, Stanton, 1831), to which is appended: Catalogue of Books, for Sale at the Depository, Gazette Office, King Street, York.


42 Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Report (1831). All the available reports are unfortunately restricted to the 1820s and 1830s, with little else available dealing with the S.P.C.K. in Ontario.


44 Advertisement in the Upper Canada Gazette, January 28, 1819.

45 Advertisement in the Brockville Recorder, August 17, 1830.


47 Ibid., p. 127 - 147, passim.


51 Moore, pp. 71 - 72.

52 Ibid., p. 72.


54 From a catalogue of books prepared by Anson Green in 1844, now in the Metropolitan Toronto Library.

55 Withrow, p. 274.

56 In addition to the reading materials described in this chapter, there were, of course, innumerable theological treatises, biblical commentaries, ecclesiastical and scriptural histories, devotional and similar works that were read largely by the clergy and pious laymen, and are unremarkable as they contributed little to the spread of the reading habit. A commentary on religious fiction will be found in Gordon Roper, et al., "The Kinds of Fiction, 1880 - 1920," in Literary History of Canada (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2nd ed., 1976), 2 vols., I, pp. 298 - 326.
While the province was young and the population sparse, bookselling was naturally a precarious business. As a result, it was usually more profitable to combine bookselling with other lines of business. Dr. Z. Smally established himself as a physician, surgeon, and apothecary at the sign of the Golden Mortar in Kingston. In addition to a stock of medicines, drugs, paints, oils, dyes, putty, and nails, he sold ladies' bonnets, garden seeds, books, and stationery.¹

Although few books were actually published in the British North American colonies at this time, booksellers were well supplied from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia where very cheap editions of new English publications were produced the moment copies arrived from England. Forty-eight hours after a copy of Sir Walter Scott's *The Fortunes of Nigel* was received in New York City, a cheap reprint of this novel was in the bookshops.²

In the thirties and forties books could still be purchased from general-purpose stores. Mrs. Anna Jameson observed that she and her family purchased books from the same store that provided shoes, spades, sugar, and pork. She also noted the presence of two bookstores in town, one of which operated a subscription library for the dissemination of "common" novels.³ Although
bookselling was well established in its own right in the 1860s, there were still instances of bookselling complementing, or being complemented by, other types of business. In addition to selling literary products, Joseph Lyght, established in Hamilton, was an agent for the Toronto Steam Dye Works, while a Toronto bookseller, Charles Backas, operated a "postage stamp depot." This trend was still to be found in the 1890s among establishments that styled themselves as bookstores. Sailsbury's in Peterborough, for example, stocked a broad range of sporting goods as well as books.

Before bookstores were a normal part of the commercial scene, newspaper offices frequently sold books. Their stocks were not large and in many instances were restricted to a few school texts, some basic reference works, and family medical books.

Importation from Britain and particularly the United States was the life-blood of the province's burgeoning book trade. Competing for customers among themselves, Ontario's booksellers also faced direct competition from American publishers and distributors who advertised in the province's newspapers. Consequently, some booksellers tried to supply new publications faster than their American rivals (some of whom had agents in centres like Toronto), while others offered their stocks at American prices.

The contiguity of Ontario to the United States was an important factor in nineteenth-century trade. A variety of sailing ships and steamers plied the lakes, rivers, and canals of the region, eventually linking up with the railway systems that developed as the century progressed. Thus readers in Ontario were guaranteed a
steady supply of extremely cheap reprints of British publications, acquired with very little delay. Importing directly from England was a much slower business and considerably more expensive, as book prices and freight charges were very high.9

This pleasant state of affairs was suddenly disrupted by the enactment of the Imperial Copyright Act of 1842 which, to protect British authors, forbade the importation of reprints of British copyrighted works into British North America.10 The Legislative Assembly of Canada (Ontario and Quebec) responded by striking a select committee to investigate the implications of legislation that virtually separated the population from its principal source of English literature.

Reporting in December 1843, the committee concluded that the importation of American reprints could not affect the profits of British publishers and their authors, as most people were too poor to buy "English Literature at English prices." This was borne out by the fact that during the time the act had been operative there had been no increase in the number of works imported directly from Great Britain as compensation for the loss of American reprints. The committee expressed the fear that resorting to American literature as the only remaining cheap source of reading matter might lead to the growth of republicanism and a hatred of Britain and the monarchy. But perhaps the most telling point was that the statute was being ignored by the majority of people. American reprints could be purchased quite openly and were found "on the tables or in the houses of persons of all classes in the Province."11
Booksellers suffered some hardships at the hands of customs officers who searched individuals and consignments of books and magazines at the border, ruthlessly confiscating reprints and magazines that contained English reading matter. Consequently, to ensure that the reading public was not deprived in any way, booksellers adapted their business methods to suit the new circumstances, and a "war of wits" developed between the book trade and customs officials. For example, one official, piqued because he could not stop the influx of American reprints, seized a steamboat that had transported contraband literature. Nevertheless, booksellers blatantly advertised their ability to supply quickly and cheaply any book printed in the United States.

The Foreign Reprints Act of 1847 was not adopted in Ontario and Quebec until 1850. As an amendment to the 1842 act, it permitted the importation of American reprints as before, except that now a duty of twelve and one-half percent was to be collected for the benefit of the British author. Displaying its customary ingenuity, the book trade took advantage of the fact that lists of recently published British works subject to the copyright impost were prepared and dispatched only quarterly; the long intervals between receipt of consolidated lists thus enabled importers to obtain as many new American reprints as they desired duty free. Although among the literati there were those who resented American reprint publishers for "mutilating" and bowdlerizing English classics, reprints still represented the cheapest and most convenient way for the average reader to enjoy the best of English literature.
Subscription agents and pedlars formed an important part of the nineteenth-century book trade. Pedlars were first on the scene, travelling the backwoods and selling haberdashery, toys, and picture books to the settlers. "Drummers and Book agents" acquired a poor reputation in some quarters and were accused of inundating the country with inferior publications from the presses of the United States. This "migratory tribe of itinerant Peddlers" proved to be a particular nuisance to school trustees who were responsible for acquiring suitable texts and library books for the school system.

Agents with tenacity and a strong constitution could make a reasonably good living selling completed works and taking up subscriptions for new publications. In Perth John McMullen advertised for twenty book agents to sell fifteen tons of stock for which they were promised an income of between four and fifteen dollars a day. The New York firm of Robert Sears claimed that agents could make profits ranging from five hundred to one thousand dollars a year. All that was required was a minimum capital investment of thirty-five dollars.

J.B. Magurn in Toronto called for agents to take up subscriptions for a one-volume edition of Shakespeare's works. It was to be published in twenty parts at thirty cents each. Purchase would be by subscription only. Maclear and Company, Toronto, offered to pay generous premiums to anyone who would send the firm reliable and hardworking agents.

By the 1870s the practice of selling products through agents had become so well established that a magazine devoted to door-to-door salesmanship was
launched in 1874. The prospectus stated that the Agents' Companion would be published monthly and represent the interests of publishers and manufacturers as well as agents and canvassers; the journal would act as a medium between agents seeking employment and prospective employers. Sound advice was offered to beginners and to agents with experience. For example, they were advised to carry a selection of twenty-five cent, illustrated books published by the Barclay Company of Philadelphia. These, it was claimed, would "out sell anything on the road" and, as a side-line, were an ideal means of defraying expenses. Business cards were recommended as the most effective form of introduction to new customers.

Judging by the amount of space devoted to literary products, the Agents' Companion seems to have been aimed principally at the book and magazine markets, but other business interests were not neglected. Agents were invited to apply for concessions in such lines as Chinese starch enamel, window-sash locks, and novelties and conjuring tricks.

Published in London, Ontario, the magazine hoped to play a role in making the agents of the province as successful as their counterparts in the United States. Furthermore, the Companion would defend the canvassing business from the frequent attacks made upon it. Any justification for these assaults would be dispelled by the simple expedient of publishing the names of firms and agents found guilty of dishonest or unethical behaviour. 24

The practice of selling books by subscription continued to be criticized. Legitimate only as a means for disposing of esoteric works, it was otherwise
considered to be a device to trap the unwary into purchasing publications they really did not want. A more serious charge was levelled at "American swindlers" who contrived to make large profits from the subscription-book business in British North America. City dwellers could fend for themselves, but "the rural book-buyer, in his Arcadian simplicity," was "as a sheep in the hands of the shearer." A later critic thought the system undermined the "regular" book trade and discouraged the proliferation of bookstores which were essential to the intellectual and cultural life of the community.

The mail-order catalogue added a new dimension to the book trade. The 1898 catalogue from Timothy Eaton and Company, for example, offered adults and children numerous works of fiction and non-fiction at considerably less than normal trade prices. Communities were invited to organize "club orders" so that savings could be realized on freight charges. The mail-order system was undoubtedly a great boon to rural readers, particularly those who lived in remote areas, as their access to books was increased considerably.

An assortment of libraries existed for those who were either disinclined to buy books or simply could not afford them. A subscription library was established in Toronto that lasted from 1810 until 1822. A small circulating library connected with the Kingston Gazette was started in 1815. Providing enough subscribers could be found, a reading room was proposed in Toronto that would stock the latest magazines and newspapers. G. Dawson, the organizer, promised to furnish a suitable room and provide fuel and candles. These and similar enterprises were symptomatic of the need for increased
resources that would stimulate cultural and intellectual growth. The village of Hallowell, for example, called a public meeting in the local inn to discuss the formation of a reading room.  

But at this early stage, culture and the intellect were not considered important by everyone. Robert Mudie advised potential emigrants that "book-learning" would be of little value and considered an appetite for reading a positive vice. He reinforced his argument with the comment that a fashionable novel would be as useless in the backwoods as "Paganini, or even his fiddle," although Mudie thought that wild animals probably had more feeling for music than for novels.

Despite the skeptics, more circulating libraries were established over the years. In the thirties James Macfarlane's library in Kingston was well patronized. For less than one penny per day subscribers could select from several hundred volumes comprising reading matter of every type. Charles Daly, at one time librarian to the Atheneum in London, England, opened a circulating library. He hoped to attract the "gentry" from the town and make the library a credit to Toronto. The subscription was two pounds a year, and the library contained everything from theological, historical, and scientific works to travel books, memoirs, and "approved" novels. An "elegant and commodious" reading room was to be added eventually.

Toronto in the 1870s had several subscription libraries that were characteristically different from those described so far; these circulating libraries catered to a much broader cross-section of the reading
public and tended to stock the more popular works of the day. Robert Marshall claimed that his establishment was the most popular in the entire city and was the place where subscribers were certain to meet all of their friends. The subscription was a modest two cents per day. 35

Exercising the mandate provided under the Common School Act of 1850, 36 Egerton Ryerson set about developing libraries to complement his remodelled school system and provide "useful and entertaining" reading for the entire population. The system began operating in 1853. 37

Although ostensibly the municipalities were given the broadest discretion in the creation and management of their libraries, they were warned that no books could be admitted to the collections that were not listed in the official catalogue of the Educational Depository, prepared "according to law." This was a safeguard against the acquisition of "improper" books, 38 that is, those of a licentious or immoral nature and works that were clearly hostile to the Christian religion. 39 Ryerson, of course, interpreted "licentious" and "immoral" in extremely broad terms.

The Reverend James Fraser, Assistant School Commissioner in Britain, reported upon this library system in 1866 as part of a general survey of school systems in the United States, Ontario, and Quebec. 40 He concluded that the overall system was anything but a success with viable and effective libraries the exception rather than the rule. 41 Fraser drew particular attention to the difficulty of developing and sustaining libraries in rural areas, 42 from which it may be inferred that a happier situation prevailed in the towns and cities.
The analysis of the library system was based upon reports received from local, school superintendents. Fraser could not decide if the lack of support for public libraries was due to poverty, ignorance, or indifference; but one unidentified superintendent suggested another reason: "Public moneys are used in making and repairing roads in preference to making and repairing minds." 43

Another critic took up the matter of Ryerson's "township" libraries in the 1880s, by which time many of them were in a state of severe decline. Alpheus Todd suggested two causes for their ultimate failure. He believed that government assistance "forced the libraries prematurely," whereas they ought to have been the result of an expressed need manifested locally by each particular community. Secondly, supplying the libraries from a central depository imposed a uniformity upon the collections that took little account of the needs and predilections of individuals or the communities in which they lived. 44

Ryerson believed that a new phase in the intellectual and social history of Ontario would commence with the introduction of his school libraries, soon to be described as "the crown and glory of the Institutions of the Province." 46 While he recognised that the level of enthusiasm for public libraries would vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, 47 Ryerson failed to understand that good taste in reading, as in all things, cannot be imposed but must be carefully fostered. An unidentified school superintendent summarized the matter: "In course of time, I really believe that the new generation will have more taste for reading; if not, I do not see the utility of libraries." 48
Library provision for the provincial penitentiary and the county goals followed upon the establishment of the public library system in the 1850s.\(^4\) The prison library was soon regarded as an essential factor in the rehabilitation of offenders.\(^5\) It was further believed that the presence of a library acted as an incentive to good behaviour on the part of those who wished to take advantage of the facility. On the other hand, among non-readers, a library could stimulate the desire to learn the art of reading, or even function as a substitute for formal schooling.\(^6\)

A number of institutions were supplied from Ryerson's Educational Depository\(^7\) with chiefly moralizing tales of "practical life," travel books, and similar works of non-fiction.\(^8\) For young "criminals," a well-selected library, the prison schoolmaster, and the chaplain were considered to be the instruments that would "open the door for the return to rectitude, and honour."\(^9\)

In addition to the libraries that belonged to institutions of higher learning, several more owed their existence to a variety of scientific and literary associations located throughout the province.\(^10\) Established in the 1850s, the Y.M.C.A. was another important agency that provided substantial libraries and reading room for its members.\(^11\)

Thus a mixture of public and private enterprise provided library services to various segments of the population until the public library movement was given new impetus by the passing of the Free Libraries Act in 1882.\(^12\) But the story of public libraries in the modern sense of the term is essentially the story of the mechanics' institute libraries which are considered fully in the next chapter.
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2. Colonial Advocate, April 6, 1826.


4. Canadian Illustrated News (Hamilton), December 13, 1862.

5. Canadian Illustrated News (Hamilton), December 20, 1862.


7. Brockville Recorder, April 27, 1830.

8. Information gleaned from contemporary newspaper advertisements.


10. 5 & 6 Vic., Cap. 45.

11. Canada (Province), Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, 1843-1844, Appendix P.P., "Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Effect of the English Copyrights Act ..." (7 Vic., 1843).
12 Dawson, p. 16. He notes that "the booksellers suffered, but the public got their books as before, for the trade was diverted into the hands of travelling book-agents." As Dawson does not amplify this statement, it is not clear whether booksellers employed book agents to evade customs officials, or if these agents simply took advantage of the plight of the booksellers and purloined their customers. In either case, the manner in which book agents circumnavigated customs houses at the border is not explained.

13 George F. Payne, advertising in the Globe, August 13, 1844.

14 10 & 11 Vic., Cap. 95.

15 13 & 14 Vic., Cap. 6.

16 James J. Barnes, Authors, Publishers and Politicians; the Quest for an Anglo-American Copyright Agreement, 1815-1854 (Columbus, Ohio, Ohio State University Press, 1974), p. 150.


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103.

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41 Ibid., p. 275.

42 Ibid., p. 277.

43 Ibid., p. 275.


45 Canada (Province), Annual Report of the Normal, Model, Grammar, and Common Schools, in Upper Canada, for the Year 1853, p. 133.

46 DHE, XIX, p. 81.

47 DHE, XIII, p. 53.

48 Fraser Report, p. 276.

49 J. George Hodgins, Historical and Other Papers and Documents Illustrative of the Educational System of Ontario, 1792-1876 ... (Toronto, Cameron, 1911-12), 6 vols., III (1853-1868), p. 310.

50 Ibid., p. 311.

51 Ibid., p. 312.

52 Ibid., p. 310.

53 Ibid., p. 310n.

54 Ibid., p. 319.
55 See J. George Hodgins, "Historical Sketch of Education in Upper and Lower Canada," in Eighty Years' Progress of British North America ... (Toronto, Nichols, 1865), pp. 468 - 477.


57 45 Vic., Cap. 22.
CHAPTER VI

Mechanics' institutes had their origins in Britain. In 1800 Dr. George Birkbeck gave a series of lectures to mechanics at the Andersonian Institute in Glasgow. As a result, he is credited with an idea which led to the establishment of numerous institutes throughout the country from the 1820s onwards.¹

Ontario's first mechanics' institute was organized in Toronto on December 24, 1830.² In the years that followed, institutes were founded in a number of centres throughout the province. While some flourished others did not long survive, although a few were eventually resuscitated with some success. As a result, it is extremely difficult to say precisely how many institutes there were at any given time. A special report on mechanics' institutes, which were examined in 1880 by Dr. S.P. May, indicated a total at that time of one hundred and twenty-five. However, the number of incorporated institutes actually in operation was about one hundred, with only seventy-four receiving government aid.³

Exaggerated claims were often made for mechanics' institutes, only occasionally tempered with realism. The Reverend J.B. Gallaway, addressing the mechanics of Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1843, admitted that the question of the usefulness of such establishments was "even yet warmly agitated,"⁴ noting that both "the opponents and
the friends of these Institutions have been tempted ... to indulge in extravagant assertions."  

The principal aim of the institutes was to impart scientific, mechanical, and some literary knowledge to the whole adult population, but concentrating upon "that portion which we generally denominate the working classes." Despite such noble aims, there were those who feared that the institutes would degenerate into "mere training schools for revolutionary democrats" and become "hot-beds of infidelity." Gallaway saw them only as contributing to the common good and extolled their virtues which included the promotion of peace in the community, the fostering of "domestic virtue," the acceleration of progress in the arts and sciences, and, besides certain financial rewards, the promulgation of Christian principles.

An enlightened and intelligent view of the ideal mechanics' institute is to be found in two prize essays written in 1876 by institute members from Toronto. While it was believed to be important to promote and protect the interests of the workingman, it was considered equally important that these aims should not be accomplished at the risk of alienating that portion of the middle class (largely those in commerce and the professions) who were strong supporters of the institutes and their aims. James Eadie maintains that the Ontario institutes were predominantly middle class, a not uncommon view, but it is a claim that is anything but substantiated. Foster Vernon lists the trades and occupations of students attending evening classes in mechanics' institutes; among them are bakers, butchers, drivers, milkmen, servants, and well diggers.
It was imperative that the institutes should be as attractive as possible and formidable rivals to taverns and saloons to which many potential institute members resorted as "an asylum from the cold charities of a boarding-house."\textsuperscript{13} Mechanics' institutes were expected to fulfill two main functions: they were to provide elementary education for those members of the "industrial classes" whose early schooling had been deficient and "special education," both technical and cultural, for the remainder. It was thought that this would enable the majority to enjoy the fruits of the intellect and make them useful citizens.\textsuperscript{14}

As in most other areas of education, Egerton Ryerson held strong opinions about technical education, believing that those engaged in the mechanical and manufacturing trades were as important to the welfare of the country as "classical Lawyers, and literary Scholars,"\textsuperscript{15} but his feelings towards mechanics' institutes were somewhat ambivalent. For example, he was clearly unhappy with the government's lack of supervision and control over them, believing that many of the books the institutes bought for their libraries were unsuitable for young people. Ryerson regarded the manner in which they expended their income as "a beacon of warning for us to avoid rather than as an example for us to imitate."\textsuperscript{16} Supervision of institutes by public school inspectors did not come until 1872,\textsuperscript{17} but even then they had no jurisdiction over book selection.\textsuperscript{18}

There seems no doubt that when Ryerson formulated his plans for school libraries and the Educational Depository, he drew partly upon the British experience as recorded in the report from the U.K. select committee on public libraries (1849). It was made abundantly clear from the evidence that because education was fostering a
taste for reading, as a corollary, provision must also be made for gratifying that taste. As one witness explained: "In plain language, you have made them hungry, but you have given them nothing to eat." As Ryerson's response to this need was to develop a catalogue of approved reading matter which he imposed upon his system of school libraries, his designs upon the mechanics' institutes may be seen as a desire to impose similar censorship upon them. For many years Ryerson allowed the institutes to buy books from the Educational Deposit­ory and on at least two occasions petitioned for legis­lation that would make this practice statutory and bring them under some measure of control. He was unsuccessful, and it was not until 1880, long after his retirement, that control of the mechanics' institutes passed to the Department of Education.

The government in Ontario was involved in the affairs of the institutes almost from their inception. This was in sharp contrast to the British experience where government intervention was viewed with great sus­picion and resulted in the institutes remaining largely independent. In 1835 the Toronto institute received eight hundred dollars to purchase "philosophical" instru­ments. The institute at Kingston was granted four hundred dollars to acquire books in addition to instruments. The following year a select committee was struck by the government to investigate the most suitable means of promoting the mechanics' institute movement in the prov­ince. Unfortunately, as far as it can be ascertained, no report was ever produced.

An act enabling the incorporation of mechanics' institutes was passed in 1851, followed in 1857 by the incorporation of the Board of Arts and Manufactures which
was to provide assistance and exercise some control over institute affairs. Up to this point no inspection of mechanics' institutes receiving financial assistance had taken place. Consequently, the Minister of Agriculture, who, at this time, was ultimately responsible for the institutes, circulated a memorandum soliciting information regarding membership, the size and nature of the library and reading room, the number of lectures given, attendance, other types of instruction, and subjects chosen; also required were pertinent financial statements. This was 1858, the year in which government grants ceased for reasons not readily apparent. However, Dr. May, in his report, assumed that it was because the managers had been remiss in failing to provide lectures and evening classes and had allowed the institutes to degenerate into little more than circulating libraries. As it transpired, this became a recurrent theme. The withdrawal of financial assistance caused some institutes to fail, while the effectiveness of others was somewhat diminished. Nevertheless, a number managed to survive and proved not only to be self-supporting, but in some cases were actually prosperous.

Because the mechanics' institutes failed to cooperate with the Board of Arts and Manufactures, and because this corporation lacked adequate funding to function properly, it was abolished in 1868 and replaced by the Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario. Among the objectives of this new organization was the preparation of a catalogue of books suitable for institute libraries, emphasizing, of course, works of a technical and practical nature.

1868 was also the year in which the Commissioner of Agriculture and Public Works assumed respons-
ibility for mechanics' institutes. At about the same time, the government began to realize that if the institutes were to fulfil their prime function of educating the industrial classes, they would need to be encouraged through increased aid and a more liberal policy towards their libraries, the mainstay of the majority of establishments. A concession of this kind could not be made, however, without some misgivings. Besides strong regrets that evening classes and lectures had been ignored, or given a low priority in many cases, there was the fear that without such instructional programmes the institutes (particularly those in the smaller centres) would rise no higher than "mere reading rooms for the supplying chiefly a shallow and sensational literature, that is inimical alike to sound knowledge and to morality." 

Between 1868 and 1880 existing legislation was not only amended, but was augmented by some new enactments, all of which had considerable effect upon mechanics' institutes. Grants were resumed to a maximum of two hundred dollars per institute which, at first, had to be matched locally dollar for dollar. Later, when the grants were increased to a maximum of four hundred dollars, institutes were then only expected to match fifty percent of the amount granted. Public school inspectors were to examine the institutes at least twice a year; this was later reduced to once per annum. Library committees were allowed to expend a portion of the government grant on literature of a more general kind; fiction was excluded, but collections of poetry, biographies, philosophical works, historical treatises, and travel books were admissible. This was an important concession because the library and the reading room were the principal attractions, the major part of institute funds frequently being expended to improve them. For example, the Toronto Mechanics'
Institute issued 32,920 volumes in 1878-79, a figure which represents a broad range of taste:

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>595</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>875</td>
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<td>Sciences &amp; Art</td>
<td>511</td>
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<td>Voyages &amp; Travels</td>
<td>1,111</td>
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<td>Works of Reference</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>25,209</td>
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The low popularity of religious works may be due in part to a lack of provision in this field, as many institutes endeavoured to be non-sectarian, although religious and controversial works offered as gifts would probably have been accepted.

The question of whether or not fiction should be provided is one which afflicted not only those responsible for mechanics' institutes, but was a problem inherited by their successors in the public library movement. As it seems certain that fiction of the dime-novel genre was excluded from institute libraries, the controversy in this case centred on the alleged dangers inherent in excessive novel reading rather than on the quality of fiction, for the bulk of institute collections comprised those eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novelists who were acceptable. An apologist for the inclusion of fiction in institute libraries remarked in 1876 that many writers like Dickens, Thackeray, and Scott were now regarded as respectable by a number of eminent clergymen.
There remained the question of whether or not it was the government's responsibility to provide recreational reading in the form of fiction for the general public. This was finally settled in 1880 when the Minister of Education conceded that the provision of some "light reading" was necessary. The institutes were authorized to make use of the grant to purchase approved fiction from the Education Department's general catalogue. They could, of course, still purchase fictional works from other sources, but if any part of the grant was to be used, the titles chosen had to be sanctioned by the Minister of Education.

Fiction of one kind or another was available in institute libraries from the beginning, the most formidable argument for its presence being demand. This is demonstrated most dramatically by the fact that almost eighty percent of the volumes borrowed from the Toronto Mechanics' Institute in 1878-79 were fictional works. The futility of persuading those of limited education and unformed literary sensibilities to read works of philosophy, history, or science was occasionally understood. "We must excite and gratify their imagination as the most accessible faculty of their natures," declared one writer, believing that it was better for them to read "light literature" than none at all. This was, indeed, an enlightened view when it is remembered that such terms as "excite," "gratify," and "imagination" were usually anathema to the opponents of novel reading. Consequently, the institutes struck a compromise between providing an over-abundance and supplying no fiction at all. At least one government official reluctantly agreed that this was "the true view of the case," but cautioned that a lack of discrimination
In book selection would inevitably lead to the library becoming "a mere slop-shop of sensational fiction."\textsuperscript{40}

In the early days, when only a small selection of minor fiction of an "improving" or "practical" sort was to be found in the catalogues of the Educational Depository, books purchased through its system may well have imparted "a serious, moralistic tone" to mechanics' institute libraries,\textsuperscript{41} except that they were under no obligation to use the Depository and could buy wherever they wished. The 1860s saw a reluctant softening in Ryerson's attitude towards the kind of reading matter he had previously believed to be inadmissible, and a selection of "standard works of fiction" was added to the Depository's general catalogue. This was brought about by pressure from "ratepayers" who desired a more catholic selection of fiction embracing writers such as Scott, Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Disraeli, Eliot, Haliburton, and Lever.\textsuperscript{42} This stamp of approval eventually extended to such fiction writers as R.M. Ballantyne and Mayne Reid whose works were offered as school prizes.\textsuperscript{43}

For many the library and reading room were sufficient inducements to join the mechanics' institute, but the Commissioner of Agriculture and Public Works, in his annual report for 1871, said that to make the institutes really useful and popular, amusement and instruction should be combined. The introduction in England of a social element which included music, dramatic readings, and similar recreational activities helped sustain mechanics' institutes in that country. The Commissioner was gratified to learn that similar results had been obtained in Ontario by introducing "rational recreation" into several of its institutes.\textsuperscript{44}
There was still the question of what to do with members who, after a long, hard day of manual labour, were disinclined to read or study. One recommendation was the establishment of a conversation and games room. Chess, drafts, and dominoes were suggested as harmless but interesting diversions. Where space permitted, gymnastic apparatus could also be added to enable "the enervated Dry-goods or Bank Clerk to strengthen his muscle."\textsuperscript{45}

In 1881, S.P. May, Superintendent of the Education Department's Educational Museum and Library, offered a number of suggestions for the improvement of mechanics' institutes. He thought the system of giving four hundred dollars for every two hundred dollars raised locally was a failure. Dr. May suggested that an annual grant of one hundred dollars for the purchase of books would be much more practical, hinting that too much was spent on the libraries and not enough on evening classes. Up to this time the institutes had been supported largely by government grants, subscriptions, donations, and, in a few cases, assistance from the municipality; the participation of all municipalities in cost-sharing was now recommended with the reminder that the Government of Ontario was the most liberal in the world when it came to supporting the movement. Dr. May spoke disparagingly, describing the majority of establishments as "only circulating libraries, and that, too, for the dissemination of light literature."

The lack of formal instruction was also a target, a topic which, over the years, had been debated ad nauseam. Other types of improvement included series of popular lectures, the establishment of museums, and
the holding of industrial exhibitions and conventions. All were calculated to make mechanics' institutes more palatable and secure their future.46

Otto Klotz, a public figure who had close ties with the mechanics' institutes, took it upon himself to criticize Dr. May's report. While concurring with the majority view that most institutes at this time were largely circulating libraries purveying "light literature," he deplored the fact that a remedy for this "ailment" had not been proffered. Klotz observed a connection between novel reading and the desire for instruction to the extent that those who spent their time reading novels were not usually interested in attending evening classes. He laid the blame squarely upon "clergymen, professional men, and other gentlemen of education and standing in society" for defending or approving of novel reading to the detriment of evening classes. Considering the problem realistically, however, Klotz recognized the futility of attempting to prohibit novel reading and opted for what he believed to be the only course left open: "precept and persuasion"; if people could be induced to read books that were practical and informational, this would lead to a desire for instruction. This naive assumption was, of course, truly utilitarian in spirit.

Dr. May was also taken to task for suggesting that government grants should be based on the number of students taught in evening classes. Klotz pointed out that this system would be prejudicial to institutes in small towns and villages, where revenues were minimal and students few in number, and would favour institutes in the larger towns and cities which had many more
potential students and revenues that made the government grant insignificant. He was also annoyed at the idea of restricting the grant for library purchases to one hundred dollars.

Among other aspects of the report criticized by Klotz was the matter of industrial exhibitions of which he believed there were already far too many. The recommendation that the Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario be abolished evoked this response: "Peace be to its ashes." He was, however, delighted with the recommendation that municipalities should contribute to the upkeep of mechanics' institutes; such legislation would materially benefit those establishments which were struggling for survival.

Klotz detected a strong desire to centralize the supervision and government of the institutes under the aegis of the Education Department, a move which he believed would reduce the office of the director in a mechanics' institute to the level of "a mere machine or menial servant." He upheld the principle of self-government, pointing out that the law had made ample provision for supervision of the institutes and all that was required was for the "machinery" to be "properly set in motion."47

A typical provincial establishment was to be found in Peterborough, Ontario. This mechanics' institute was one of the more successful organizations, which is remarkable, as nineteenth-century Peterborough never had a particularly large population. In 1851 there were about two thousand inhabitants, a figure which slightly more than doubled in the next twenty years (4,611).
In 1881 the population was nearly seven thousand; this had increased to almost ten thousand by 1891.\textsuperscript{48}

There was a mechanics' institute in Peterborough as early as 1843. Its objects were the instruction of members in various branches of the sciences, both pure and applied, and the provision of a library and museum.\textsuperscript{49} Little else is known about this particular establishment.

The Peterborough Library Association and Mechanics' Institute was established in 1853. Shares were one pound currency each. In addition, members paid five shillings per annum for the privilege of using the library. The institute must have lain dormant for a number of years, as the Commissioner of Agriculture and Arts reported in 1869 that the Peterborough Mechanics' Institute had opened its reading room in July 1868 and had put its library into operation in the early part of 1869.\textsuperscript{50} Incorporated in 1867, it was among the first to apply for the full amount of two hundred dollars when the government grants were resumed in 1868.\textsuperscript{51} At some period in its existence the institute also received an annual grant of one hundred dollars from the town council.\textsuperscript{52}

From the beginning, non-members could, on payment of a subscription, use the library and reading room. This privilege eventually extended to whole families. In the early days the novels of Scott and Maria Edgeworth were to be found upon the library shelves. By the 1870s readers could enjoy the novels of George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, and James Fenimore Cooper, in addition to a broad range of non-fictional works that included many that were scientific or technical in nature. Although the library committee
claimed to have been careful to exclude light literature and sensational works, ephemeral reading matter was available. Furthermore, a gradual increase in the number of lady subscribers made it necessary to augment the collection with works more suited to this class of reader. The reading room was always well supplied with the principal domestic newspapers and periodicals of the day, in addition to numerous foreign journals, such as Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Scientific American, and Dickens' All the Year Round.

Neither were young readers neglected. The library shelves contained, typically, Robin Hood, Little Red Riding Hood, Robinson Crusoe, Swiss Family Robinson, and the novels of Charles Reade, while in later years Girl's Own Paper and Boy's Own Paper were available in the reading room. Students from the local grammar school were allowed to use the institute library on a letter of permission. When the institute was inspected in 1880, the examiner described the library as excellent. He also noted a large law library connected with the mechanics' institute whose patrons were also required to be members of the institute.

It is clear from the Agricultural and Arts Act of 1868 that the prime purpose of the grants was to promote the establishment of evening classes. To comply with the requirements of this act Peterborough offered at various times between 1869 and 1878 classes in bookkeeping, arithmetic, mechanical drawing, grammar and composition, penmanship, chemistry, and phonography (a form of shorthand). The preponderance of "clerical" subjects provides a clue to the types of patron dominating the institute at that time.
The institutes were heavily criticized for failing to achieve their principal objective: that of providing technical and "useful" instruction for the industrial classes. Their failure in this respect is not surprising when it is remembered that among those for whom such education was intended were many who were deficient in basic academic skills, or a high level of intellectual comprehension; besides, a long, hard day in factory or field was hardly conducive to intensive study. Nevertheless, the mechanics' institute library provided many with the opportunity to educate themselves leisurely and to read simply for pleasure.

Comparing British and Canadian institutes in terms of their eventual failure, Eadie cites impecuniosity as a common factor. This is not entirely a valid comparison as it is evident that the mechanics' institutes in Ontario generally fared better financially than those in the United Kingdom. A more likely reason for the failure of the institutes in Ontario, if "failure" is the right word, was their shortcomings in providing formal, adult education. However, they cannot be dismissed lightly, for one fact is inescapable: their libraries did contribute in some measure to the development of the reading habit, making the institutes an important milestone in the cultural history of Ontario.

Legislation in 1882 (Free Libraries Act) and in 1895 (Public Libraries Act) provided for the transition from mechanics' institute to tax-supported, free public library. Prior to the 1895 legislation only seven or eight communities had taken advantage of the earlier statute. But by the time the new century had dawned, there were over four hundred public libraries in the
province. 62 This earned Ontario the title of "premier province" with respect to library provision, but some of the credit for this belongs to the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. 63

Phoenix-like, the public library movement arose from the ashes of the mechanics' institutes, but it was soon to face strong competition from new phenomena among which were the phonograph and the motion picture. 64
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1 For the description of a similar phenomenon in the United States that competed with the mechanics' institutes see Carl Bode's The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (Southern Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press, 1968).

2 Toronto, Mechanics' Institute, Papers, etc., Metropolitan Toronto Library.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 5.

7 Ibid., p. 7.

8 Ibid., p. 8.

9 It is clear from the style of writing and the ideas expressed that these were no ordinary "mechanics," but either master tradesmen or clerks from the ranks of the lower middle class.


13 Davison, p. 221.


15 J. George Hodgins, Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, from the Passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791 to the Close of the Reverend Dr. Ryerson's Administration of the Education Department in 1876 (Toronto, Cameron, 1894-1910), 28 vols., XI, p. 40. Hereinafter cited as DHE.

16 DHE, XXVII, p. 125.

17 35 Vic., Cap. 32, 1872.

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19 Great Britain, Parliament, Report from the Select Committee on Public Libraries ... (London, 1849), Question 1308.

20 DHE, X, p. 171 and XIX, p. 233.

21 43 Vic., Cap. 5, 1880.

22 The Reverend Dr. Hook noted the continuing existence of "a morbid dread of government interference" among the supporters of the British mechanics' institutes, observing that a proposal to introduce parliamentary grants would arouse strong feelings of hostility. "On Institutions for Adult Education," Meliora: or, Better Times to Come, 1st series (1852), p. 42.

23 Special Report, p. 3.

24 DHE, III, p. 45.

25 14 and 15 Vic., Cap. 86, 1851.

26 Special Report, p. 6. 20 Vic., Cap. 32.

27 Ibid., pp. 7 - 8.

28 Ibid., p. 10.
29 Ibid., p. 11.
30 Ibid., pp. 13 - 14. 31 Vic., Cap. 29.
31 Ibid., p. 21.
32 Ibid., p. 25.
33 Ibid., pp. 21 - 36, passim.
34 Ibid., p. 43.
35 Davison, p. 220.
36 Special Report, p. 43.
37 Ibid., p. 64.
38 Ibid., p. 43.
39 Lewis, p. 230.
40 Special Report, p. 44.
41 Eadie, pp. 212 - 213.
43 DHE, XXVII, p. 142. It is interesting that Mayne Reid was, in fact, a dime-novel writer for Beadle! See: Charles Brigin, Dime Novels, 1860-1964: Bibliography (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1964), p. 3.
44 Ontario, Department of Agriculture and Public Works, Bureau of Agriculture and Arts, Report of the Secretary for 1871 (included in the annual report of the Commissioners of Agriculture and Public Works for 1871; 35 Vic., 1871-72), p. xi.
45 Davison, p. 221.
47 Otto Klotz, A Review of the Special Report of the Minister of Education on Mechanics' Institutes, Ontario (Toronto, 1881), pp. 8 - 15. For many years, Klotz was president of the Preston Mechanics' Institute and Horticultural Society. For a period of twelve years, he was also a member of the executive of the Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario, becoming first its vice-president and later its president. See: A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography (Toronto, 1888), II, pp. 26 - 29.

49 Peterborough Mechanics' Institute, Constitution (1843), in Bata Library, Trent University, Peterborough.


51 Special Report, p. 22.

52 Ibid., p. 154.

53 Peterborough, Ontario, Mechanics' Institute, Papers, etc., in Peterborough Public Library.

54 Special Report, p. 154.

55 Ibid.

56 31 Vic., Cap. 29, 1868.

57 Special Report, pp. 49 - 59, passim.

58 Eadie, p. 220.

59 45 Vic., Cap. 22, 1882.

60 58 Vic., Cap. 45, 1895.

61 The Week, April 5, 1895, pp. 444 - 445.

62 J. Bain, "Canadian Libraries," Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature, XVI (November, 1900), p. 31. It is not known how many were, in fact, converted mechanics' institutes.


64 "Bookishness in Canada," Canadian Bookman, I (January, 1919), unpaged.
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