

splendid deeds. But if that war produced no poets or poetesses who sang inspirational martial verse for the occasion, it must have increased the sense of solidarity amongst the people inhabiting Canada, which would still more increase as the years went on up to the time when not a foreign foe but internal civil strife drew the Canadians together for the preservation of their inherited homeland within its own borders and within the possessions of the British Crown. All that was further necessary to make possible the appearance of martial songs in Canada was the presence of someone who possessed natural lyrical gifts, the surcharge of patriotic and militant emotion which would compel lyrical utterance, and the leisure to "turn off" ready verse which had the rhythm that trips naturally along the tongue and that also sings its way into the heart and memory.

All these conditions were fulfilled in the genius and solitary "bush" life of Mrs. Susanna Moodie. And she became the first Canadian singer of inspirational, as distinguished from commemorative, martial verse. She must have been a woman of extraordinary good sense, and certainly gifted with a saving sense of humour. At any rate, she had a very modest and half-humorous estimate of the value of her martial verses, and, from the critical point of view, her own modest estimate of them is sound and admirably phrased in the plain vernacular. For while the writer of "The Advertisement" (which is a sort of Preface inserted by the publishers) to her "Roughing It in The Bush," states that "during the rebellion in Canada, her loyal lyrics, prompted by strong affection for her native country, were circulated and sung throughout the colony, and produced a great effect in rousing an enthusiastic feeling in favour of public order," Mrs. Moodie herself modestly remarks (*op. cit. sup.*, vol. ii., p. 191):

"I must own that my British spirit was fairly aroused, and as I could not aid in subduing the enemies of my beloved country with my arm, I did what little I could to serve the good cause with my pen. It may probably amuse my readers, to give them a few specimens of these loyal staves, which were widely circulated through the colony at the time."

I should be a myopic critic if I did not respect the beginnings of things, and so, before I deal with the aesthetics of martial verse, I will quote a few lines of Mrs. Moodie's "loyal staves," as she calls them, which, fifteen years after they were composed ("Roughing It in the Bush" was published in 1852), might, in her opinion, serve to "amuse" readers of her book in which her martial lyrics were reprinted. I will quote the third and last stanzas of her "Address to the Freemen of Canada," (*op. cit. sup.* p. 191):

"Canadians will you see the flag  
Beneath whose folds your fathers bled,  
Supplanted by the vilest rag  
That ever host to rapine led?  
Thou emblem of a tyrant's sway,  
Thy triple hues are dyed in gore;  
Like his, thy power has passed away,  
Like his, thy short-lived triumph's o'er."

In a footnote Mrs. Moodie explains that "the vilest rag" is "the tri-coloured flag assumed by the rebels." The use of the phrase has, of course, both psychological and aesthetic warrant. The thought of the tri-coloured flag, of its bloody history in the French Revolution disgusted her sense of nobility and righteousness, and like Homer's, her diction and imagery sank in correspondence with the fall in spiritual dignity of her subject. I observe this in order to forestall the criticism that this specimen of her martial verse is hardly martial and not worthy verse. Aesthetically, she is quite justified in sinking and rising with the emotional dignity of her subject. She sinks in the third stanza, but she rises magniloquently in the fifth (final) stanza. Thus: