

INTRODUCTION

THE author of this book of verse, Archibald McKillop, better known as the "Blind Bard of Megantic" was born in "The Big House" at Loch Ranza, Arran, Scotland, on July 4th, 1824. His father, Archibald McKillop, was then "Tax Gatherer" for the Duke of Hamilton.

In April, 1829, a large party from Loch Ranza sailed for Canada in the brig *Caledonia*, under the leadership of Mr. McKillop. The author of these poems was then a lad almost five years of age. The party finally settled in Inverness, Quebec, where for years Archibald McKillop, senior, was the acknowledged leader of the colony. He went to Quebec at the time of the Rebellion of '37, as captain of a company of volunteers, whom he had gathered himself. After the war he was duly gazetted as colonel.

Young Archibald grew up on his father's farm, trained to hard work, such as the clearing of the heavily-timbered land, and the harvesting of the crops by hand. From his early youth he gave promise of literary ability. His father had been trained in Edinburgh University, and so all his family were brought up to value education. Archibald was sent to school at Lachine, Quebec, and after teaching school for some time, he went with his brother Malcolm to Toronto University. It was while home for the Christmas holidays that he received an injury to one of his eyes that brought on complete blindness in the course of a few years. With dauntless courage he refused to give in to his handicap. For years he was a well-known temperance lecturer throughout Canada. As a political and religious controversialist he was logical and splendidly vigorous. He was a great lover of children. Many who are now bearing the responsibilities of life remember with pleasure the kindly, blind gentleman who in their childhood days took infinite pains to please and amuse them.