

"The celebrated author of 'The Deserted Village' has pathetically displayed the anguish of his countrymen on being forced, from various causes, to quit their native plains, endeared to them by so many delightful recollections; and to seek a refuge in regions at that time unknown, or but little heard of. It would, perhaps, have been a subject of astonishment to him, could he have known that in the course of events some of his own relations were to be natives of such distant countries, and that a grandson of his brother Henry, to whom he dedicated his 'Traveller,' would first draw his breath at no great distance from the spot where

'Wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound.'

"In the Rising Village I have first endeavored to describe the sufferings which the earlier settlers experienced, the difficulties which they surmounted, the rise and progress of a young country, and the prospects which promise happiness to its future possessors."

The poem is written in the graceful rhyming couplet, which was so popular in the latter part of the eighteenth and early in this century. This form of verse is certainly a fine medium of poetic expression; it has such an easy pleasant swing and its elasticity permits the swelling heart to give utterance to its feelings freely. This is the earliest of Canadian poems, poems written by Canadians, that is, by dwellers in the country now called Canada, and treating of the country—the earliest at least of those poems of special importance. This will add interest to it in the eyes of the bibliophile, and it will have an importance to the student of his country, for it is the sole description in verse by an eye witness of the birth of a settlement in Canada a hundred years ago.

He first addresses a few lines to his brother, and then—

"And thou, dear spirit! whose harmonious lay
Did'st lovely Auburn's piercing woes display,
Do thou to thy fond relative impart
Some portion of thy sweet poetic art;
Like thine, Oh let my verse as gently flow,
While truth and virtue in my numbers glow;
And guide my pen with thy bewitching hand,
To paint the Rising Village of the land."

What dire distress awaits the hardy bands,

That venture first on bleak and desert lands.
How great the pain, the danger, and the toil,
Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.
When, looking around, the lonely settler sees
His home amid a wilderness of trees.
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,
When not a voice upon his ear intrudes;
When solemn silence all the waste pervades,
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades,
Save when the sturdy woodman's strokes resound,

That strew the fallen forest on the ground
See! from their heights the lott'ry pines descend.
And crackling down their pond'rous length extend.

Soon from their boughs the curling flames arise,
Mount into air, and redden all the skies;
And where the forest once its foliage spread,
The golden corn triumphant waves its head."

The aggressions of the Indians next are described; but with the accumulation of dwellings and the formation of a community the neighborhood became too strong for its foes.

"In some lone spot of consecrated ground,
Whose silence spreads a holy gloom around,
The village church in unadorned array,
Now lifts its turrets to the opening day.
How sweet to see the villagers repair
In groups to pay their adoration there;
To view, in homespun dress, the sacred morn,
The old and young its hallowed seats adorn,
While grateful for each blessing God has given,
In pious strains they waft their thanks to Heaven."

The wandering pedlar is metamorphosed into a merchant with goods of all kinds, and then he humorously describes the village quack:

"The half-bred doctor next then settles down,
And hopes the village soon will prove a town.
No rival here disputes his doubtful skill,
He cures, by chance, or ends each human ill;
By turns he physics, or his patient bleeds,
Uncertain in what case each best succeeds.
And if, from friends untimely snatched away,
Some beauty falls a victim to decay;
If some fine youth, his parents' fond delight,
Be early hurried to the shades of night,
Death bears the blame; 'tis his envenomed dart
That strikes the suffering mortal to the heart."

And now he describes that all-important personage in the village, the pedagogue. It will be interesting to compare the sketches of this man as they were made by both poets. Thus is he drawn in the *Deserted Village*:

"Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay;
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view:
I knew him well, and every truant knew: