

WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

indecisive proof that a poet has a definite call. He had written other poems in the dialect of the French-Canadian *habitant*, hitherto the medium of buffoonery in verse, but dignified by him to graver purposes, and his own recitation of these poems at occasional public gatherings earned for him the name of "Poet of the *Habitant*" before he had published a single book.

In an old house in Mountain Street, Montreal, which had sheltered Jefferson Davis during the first years after the American war, the poems for Drummond's first book were written rather for domestic entertainment than for the world, and at the solicitation of his wife and brothers, the manuscript of "The Habitant" was sent to the publishers of New York. Its merits were discerned by the Putnams, and the book, beautifully illustrated by Frederick Simpson Coburn, whose drawings marvellously caught the atmosphere and spirit of the poems, immediately proved successful. Drummond's place in the highest rank of North American bards was assured. He was hailed by the Poet Laureate of Canada, Louis Fréchette, as a new "pathfinder in the land of song," and the credentials of such a French-Canadian dispelled all fears that the fidelity to the dialect, portraiture, and foibles of the *habitant* might prove unpleasant to the race and class delineated.