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EMINENT CANADIANS IN NEW YORK

THE FATHER OF CANADIAN POETRY

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II.

IN response to my ring, an alert youth in a button-bestrewn uniform of bottle-green, swung open the great, many-panelled oak door, and showed me up three flights of stairs. The house was one of those substantial old New York mansions of an earlier century, still to be stumbled across in the neighborhood just north of Washington Square—and what nook of all Manhattan is more quietly alluring and home-like than that mellow, time-softened corner of the city, hemmed in by the rattle of the Fourteenth Street cars, and the rumble of the Fourth Street drays!

But, as I was about to say, the alert young buttons had ushered me into an airy-looking, sky-lighted, well-furnished studio apartment, littered with rare prints, and cabinetted chinaware, and ponderous bookshelves. Seated at a great desk, behind a rampart of papers and books and manuscripts, I beheld a clean-shaven, dark-skinned, regular featured, bespectacled, oldish-young man of about forty. He looked up from his work, nervously, and asked in his crisp, clear-cut voice if I would mind waiting a moment or two, politely confessing that three more sentences would put an end to his day's work. As he turned back to his manuscript, and

once more bent over his book-littered desk, I had a further opportunity to study the face before me. For the sanctum which I had invaded was none other than that of Professor Charles G. D. Roberts, the poet, the naturalist, the novelist, the pedagogue, and the honored and acknowledged head of what, with perhaps unconscious provinciality, has been called "The Canadian School of Poetry"—as though iambs and trochees north of the Great Lakes, like the polar bear and the silver fox, took on a coloring all their own. In fact, Professor Roberts himself has even been called "The Father of Canadian Poetry," a phrase poignantly expressive of the lingering territorial sectarianism which still threatens to stultify in us that international *camaraderie* so essential, as Matthew Arnold has pointed out, to artistic and literary progress. Yet I must hasten to add, once we pass by the odium of the well-frayed phrase, that no man better deserves to be designated as the father of his country's poetry than does Professor Roberts, maintaining, as his poetry does, those traditions of form and phrase-making toward the most perfected expression of man's emotions and aspirations, and yet naturally and harmoniously introducing that newer local note which we now pride ourselves on as distinctively Canadian. For, as I said in