

*The Canadian Lyric and Music*

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In the year 1597 Pope Clement VIII issued a Papal Bull that the rondeau form must be abolished from French poetry in favor of the sonnet. If I had any influence with the present Pope, I should be inclined to recommend His Holiness to abolish the sonnet from Canadian poetry as something that has served its purpose and is ripe for a decent burial. And I should replace it with a tradition which has almost passed out of English poetry but persists still in Scotland, namely that of writing lyrics with a tune in the head.

Katharine M. Wilson, in her book "Sound and Meaning in English Poetry" (Jonathan Cape, 1930) says:

"Many poets of Scottish newspapers write with this aid; after the title they tell us their tune (To the tune of 'The Bluebells of Scotland' or 'Charlie is my Darling'). These are not freak or acrobatic poets, but humble shoemakers and housemaids."

Miss Wilson is inclined to ascribe this practice to their insecure metrical technique, though she admits that to sophisticated minds this way of making a new song seems a wonderful, difficult, almost an unnatural thing.

The practise is certainly not confined to the shoemakers and housemaids, for the very accomplished poet, W. H. Hamilton, who edits an admirable collection of modern Scots Poems under the title of "Holyrood" himself contributes one of the best to the tune of "The De'il Among the Tailors."

During the earlier half of the eighteenth century Alexander Pope helped to banish music from association with the English lyric in favor of rhyme. He himself was tone-deaf and therefore naturally indifferent to the inspiration of melody, but it is unfortunate that his dictatorship resulted in an estrangement between poetry and music which has continued for two hundred years, with only a few exceptions. John Gay and the ballad writers of George the Third's reign to some extent carried on the seventeenth century tradition of writing new words to old tunes, and Allan Ramsay preserved this tradition for Scottish poetry and for Robert Burns, Robert Tannahill, James Hogg, Lady Nairne and many others of lesser note. It will be my endeavour in this brief