already, although personalized in the lives of these men. Others, however, are more subtle. Perhaps the most important has to do with the nature of the society which these three men observed and in which they participated. Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* portrayed a society in which an unbridgeable gap existed between the French and English realities. To comprehend the historical development of Atlantic Canada, however, requires that we consider three, rather than two, solitudes. All three of these works demonstrate that in the period prior to the American Revolution the Americans and the English distrusted each other; and both mistrusted the French. In theory the Revolution should have put an end to this, at least by removing the Americans. In fact, though, among their cultural baggage the Loyalists brought with them many of the attitudes shared over the years by the colonists, and thus the three solitudes continued to plague Atlantic Canada for many years into the future. The sheer waste engendered by these attitudes is perhaps most apparent in the case of John Bradstreet, but it is arguable that in a different society both Joseph Gueguen and possibly even John Salusbury could have made greater contributions. Just how much the maintenance of these historic solitudes has cost the region is a theme well worth exploration. The questions raised by these three outsiders may prove as important to our understanding of Atlantic Canada as de Tocqueville's observations have been for understanding the United States.

LEWIS R. FISCHER

Emigrant History and Letters Home

THE STORY OF THE EMIGRANT is familiar to all Canadians, and hence the emigrant's letters home, which offer an intimate look at the newcomer and the country of his adoption, are of general interest. The appeal made by John Millar of Spencerville, Upper Canada to his brother in Scotland expresses in poignant terms the significance of letters home to the emigrant: "I wish you to write more frequently, as it is all the communication we can have".[1]

Yet any consideration of the utility of such letters for future studies of British emigration raises broader questions about emigrant history. Early works such as Helen Cowan's *British Emigration to British North America* took a narrow view of emigrant history. The field appeared to encompass little more than a general statement of why emigration occurred, an account of the journey to Canada, and an indication of the nature of the new settlement. More recently pre-Confederation emigrant history has widened significantly in scope and has

1 This quotation is taken from a letter written by John Millar to his brother James Millar in Dumfries-shire, Scotland, 29 October 1846, John Millar and Family Papers, MG24 I 167, Public Archives of Canada.

blossomed under two distinct scholarly approaches. The first has involved a more detailed investigation and analysis of the process of emigration: thus in *The People's Clearance* J.M. Bumsted has attempted to explain the context of late 18th-century Highland emigration, as well as the motivation of the emigrants. The second approach, which does not always define itself as emigration history, has arisen out of a revived interest in the various British and Irish communities in the colonies before Confederation. For instance, in *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada* J.J. Mannion has analysed the material culture of Irish emigrants to establish the rate of cultural transfer and adaptation, and while not dealing with the movement of people, Donald Akenson's *The Irish in Ontario* has provided a case study of the fortunes of Irish emigrants in one Upper Canadian township.[2]

A common subject and common historical questions link these several approaches to 19th-century British North America. What was the social, political and economic baggage carried by British and Irish emigrants? How did their various cultures evolve in Canada and what effect did this have on the creation of new communities in the colonies? The histories of ethnic groups in the New World cannot be written without a thorough knowledge of the societies which produced them and the events which led to their departure. But emigrant history does not end with people's arrival in the cities and farms of the colonies; rather the historian must analyse the process of cultural transfer and change, which ultimately leads to the emergence of new communities and values.

For such studies, letters written by the emigrants themselves can be an ideal source. It is particularly to those at home that the emigrant will describe what seems unfamiliar about the new environment, and the modern reader can thus observe over time the process of cultural adaptation, often expressed in very personal terms. To find collections of emigrant letters has not, until recently, been an easy task. Relatively few collections have been published in Canada, a reflection of the low priority generally given to the publication of pre-Confederation social history sources. Even in manuscript, Canadian archives would have been hard pressed to make available to researchers many collections of emigrant letters, and those that were available certainly did not reflect the economic and social diversity of 19th-century British and Irish emigration. By definition emigrants' letters home are most likely to be found in European archives, but a surprising number have been returned to Canada by subsequent emigration, after visits to Europe by the emigrants or their descendants, and by sale or donation to Canadian archives. Recent acquisitions in this field by the Public Archives of Canada, and that institution's survey of British archives — which has located numerous collections of emigrant letters — will provide a

2 Helen Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America, 1783-1837* (Toronto, 1928), J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh and Winnipeg, 1982), Donald Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston, 1984), J.J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada* (Toronto, 1974).

much larger body of letters for scholarly examination.[3] The three volumes reviewed here thus represent only a very narrow sampling of the emigrant letters which have survived and may be used by researchers.

A.G. Bailey's edition of *The Letters of James and Ellen Robb: Portrait of a Fredericton Family in Early Victorian Times* (Fredericton, Acadiensis Press, 1983) provides one emigrant's view of early British North American society. Though not the archtypical "Scot on the make", James Robb did come to New Brunswick in 1837 in search of greater opportunity than was available to him in Scotland. Robb was the son of Dr. Charles Robb of Falkirk whose early death left his widow Elizabeth to raise James, his two brothers and a sister Jane. Whether from the father's medical practice or another inheritance, a modest family income saw James through university at St. Andrews in 1831 to a degree in medicine at Edinburgh and further studies at the Sorbonne. The letters give no hint why Robb was offered the lectureship in chemistry and natural history at King's College, Fredericton, but the young scholar wrote enthusiastically about his new position. Once settled in New Brunswick, Robb found it impossible to return to Britain where salaries were even lower and a patron essential to obtaining the university professorship he desired. Instead the emigrant Scot laboured diligently towards the advancement of his fellow colonists. Robb familiarized himself with the geological and botanical character of New Brunswick and put his scholarly expertise to use for the benefit of the community with public lectures, the preparation of a geological map, and reports and committee work for the improvement of agriculture.

The 81 letters published in this volume span the years from Robb's arrival in New Brunswick in 1837 to 1864. They are addressed primarily to James' family in Scotland, particularly his mother, sister and brother William. Not surprisingly Robb wrote home most frequently during his first four years in the colony, prior to his marriage; after 1840 his wife Ellen wrote more than half the letters included here, although James frequently added a postscript to her remarks. Robb's early letters provide a vivid picture of his reaction and adaptation to New Brunswick: his work in the college is described in detail, as is the social and political atmosphere of Fredericton. The impression given the reader is of a man full of energy and enthusiasm. The letters written in the years following Robb's marriage differ substantially in content, tone and even authorship. These later letters document the joys and tragedies of an educated, Victorian family, but they also reveal the growing weight of Robb's personal and professional responsibilities in a period of financial and political uncertainty for King's College. James had less time to write to his family in Scotland, so his letters decrease in number and focus more on his young family, somewhat less on society and politics in New Brunswick. Both Ellen's and James' letters describe the heavy

3 The survey of British archival institutions will be edited for publication in the near future; in the meantime researchers may consult the extensive manuscript reports at the Public Archives of Canada.

pressures on the young lecturer, and their tone seems one of endurance under a heavy load rather than the earlier zest for his work. The years also brought distance from Scotland, as reflected in the decreasing number of letters and the references to friends with whom James had lost touch.

The Robb Letters chronicle the life of one family in Fredericton and detail in particular the vicissitudes of academic employment in the formative years of Canadian universities. The letters are the work not of an essayist, although in the early years they sometimes bear that quality, but of an emigrant attempting to keep in touch with the family he has left behind. As such the letters also provide evidence of the process of cultural change and retention following emigration. Details such as Robb's persistent ordering of books from Scotland reveal how difficult it was for the scholar to remain *au courant* with European intellectual development. Regrettably *The Robb Letters* present a picture of only a small segment of New Brunswick society. Like other members of the colonial elite, the Robbs were part of "the upper set" who knew not "the common set (storekeepers etc.) but when on business". Thus there is virtually no reference to any aspect of commercial or working-class life in the colony. Somewhat more surprising, in light of James' involvement with the improvement of local agriculture, is the absence of any detailed account of rural life in New Brunswick.

In his introductory remarks, A.G. Bailey explains that the letters included in this volume came to him from the family of James and Ellen's daughter Katherine, and are now housed in the University of New Brunswick Archives. No comment, however, is offered to document the survival of the letters or their reappearance on this side of the Atlantic. Without such information the reader is left to wonder what portion of the original correspondence survives and how representative it is. Generally the collection lacks sufficient introductory material to enable the reader, particularly the non-specialist, to make best use of the volume. The glossary of names is not comprehensive and while it includes many public figures whose lives are well documented elsewhere, neither Robb's mother, his wife, nor his brother-in-law are mentioned. Only a brief, biographical sketch is given of the Robb family, and the reader is left in ignorance of such basic facts as the circumstances of Robb's appointment to King's College or the fate of his family after his tragic death. Further research, especially into Scottish sources, might have provided a somewhat broader context in which to view Robb's letters.

In contrast to the story of James Robb's success in New Brunswick, Robert Critchlow Tuck's edition of *The Island Family Harris: Letters of an Immigrant Family in British North America, 1856-1866* (Charlottetown, Ragweed Press, 1983) reveals the misfortunes and delayed, second-generation success of a Welsh emigrant family to Prince Edward Island. W. Critchlow Harris was the son of an Anglesey merchant whose business failure and death occurred just as Critchlow reached maturity in 1832. With the education and attitudes of a gentleman, the young Welshman drifted from clerical positions, to farming, and to living on

the less than adequate rents from his father's estate. His marriage to Sarah Stretch in 1843 and the biannual addition of children thereafter increased Critchlow's responsibilities while his fortune declined. An apparently satisfactory tour of Upper Canada resulted, somewhat perplexingly, in the Harris family's emigration to Prince Edward Island two years later. Here too Critchlow found prosperity and the life of a gentleman as elusive as in Wales. It was left to his sons not merely to put the family on sure financial footing, but also to achieve outstanding success in the arts: Robert as a major Canadian painter and Willam as a noted Maritime architect.

The Island Family Harris includes the letters written by Critchlow Harris from July to September 1854 describing his journey through the Canadas and particularly the district about Peterborough, but the body of the letters was written chiefly by Sarah Harris between 1856 and 1864 during her family's first eight years in Prince Edward Island. Sarah describes in detail the material conditions of the family's daily life: cramped housing and frequent moves; clothing received from Wales or cut down for the children; the fruit enjoyed in summer. But social life and attitudes also made up a significant portion of her letters home and she refers to such subjects as pregnancy, social relations, schooling, recreation and illegitimacy. Medical problems are a perennial concern and poor Robert's long bout with ringworm almost leads Sarah to despair of a cure. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the letters is the impression they give of Critchlow's character. Although Sarah refers sympathetically to his inability to find steady employment for several years and his moody dissatisfaction with life on the Island, the reader will find it difficult to avoid judging Critchlow more harshly. The volume is a worthwhile addition to the local history of Prince Edward Island, and art historians will welcome this very accessible source of background information on Robert and William Harris. Similarly those interested in the history of women, and of the family, or in the depiction of Victorian life in museums and historic sites, will also appreciate the letters.

Robert Critchlow Tuck's presentation of *The Island Family Harris* combines historical writing and collected letters in a somewhat unusual fashion. The volume is organized chronologically: it presents both Sarah and Critchlow's family history from the late 18th-century to 1854, then their letters from 1854 to 1864, and finally an epilogue explaining later family history. Certainly the author is to be applauded for providing information about the family's British origins, as well as its ultimate fortunes in Canada. However this very mixture of letters and historical writing — the latter includes quotations from additional letters — leaves the reader in some confusion. A clear physical separation of the letters and the history, or the use of distinctive typefaces for each, would have avoided this problem. The editing gives rise to other questions as well. Where are footnotes 9 to 16 for Chapter 8? Why are the letters arranged in the form of a journal? If this is not the style of the original, why is no explanation offered for the choice? Do the numerous entries for a single year represent the actual

number of letters written, or have individual manuscripts been split or combined in some unexplained fashion? If the letters survive in discrete collections, which letters are located in each? Tuck offers no precise statement of his editorial policy, and while his organization of the Harris letters may satisfy the general reader, it will leave the specialist uneasy.

Unlike James Robb and the Harris family, Juliana Horatia Ewing did not intend to settle in British North America, and she in fact remained in the Maritimes for little more than two years. In June 1867 the newly married Juliana and her husband Captain Alexander (Rex) Ewing arrived in Fredericton where Rex was posted to the British garrison, in charge of the Commissariat. Juliana was then 26 years of age, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman and intellectual, Alfred Gatty, and his wife Margaret Scott, author and natural scientist. As a girl in the Yorkshire village of Ecclesfield, Juliana displayed the literary talent that was to bring her, at the time of her arrival in Canada, to the beginning of her success as a respected and best-selling author of children's literature. Juliana's husband shared her cultural interests. Captain Ewing's army career had begun only 12 years earlier when his father's death forced him to abandon musical studies in Germany. The young officer had already written the hymn *Jerusalem the Golden* and he maintained an interest in music, while trying his hand at children's stories and the study of foreign languages. For the military couple, Fredericton did not represent a new home to which they had committed their future, but rather a temporary colonial station with certain unexpected attractions.

In *Canada Home* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1983), Margaret H. Blom and Thomas E. Blom present 100 letters written by Juliana Ewing to her family in England. The author's 27-month sojourn in New Brunswick resulted in an even larger volume of letters than is presented here, a reflection of her fluency as a writer and her desire to keep in touch with family members. Since Juliana intended the letters to reassure her mother of her health and happiness, the almost weekly letters contain frequent references to these subjects. But the letters provide much more as well. Juliana describes in some detail the work of the Anglican church in New Brunswick, life as a married woman, the Irish inhabitants of the province, fashion, government officials and politicians. Her accounts of servant problems, household decoration, and food preservation reveal a growing interest and skill in domestic economy. Like all those who live in Canada east of the Rockies, Juliana complains of the time it takes to dress for the outdoors in winter, but she marvels at the quiet pleasure of a canoe on the river in summer. The letters also make clear Juliana and Rex's interest in literature and music, while underlining the central role that Christianity played in their lives.

Adding to the effectiveness of the collection are the numerous sketches and water-colours that the author included in her letters home and which are printed here as an integral part of the text. Like many British gentlewomen, Juliana was

an accomplished artist, and in her drawing she sought to present the everyday sights of New Brunswick for English readers unfamiliar with Canada. Most of her work consists of simple sketches capturing a scene with a few lines; there are distant views of the woods and the St. John River as well as illustrations of a wallpapering bee, flowers, and costumes. The reader cannot help but be charmed by drawings, like that of the terrier Hector choosing his fortune, which reveal a sense of whimsy not otherwise obvious in Juliana Ewing's work.

Canada Home should appeal to a wide audience. It offers to the general reader an easily digested account of mid-19th century New Brunswick, and to the specialist literate observations on a variety of subjects. The volume will be of particular interest to students of Victorian literature: Juliana discusses her writing at length, commenting on her choice of subjects, the problems involved in crafting certain stories, concerns about editorial changes, and publication. In addition, the book makes a significant contribution to Canadian documentary art. Juliana's sketches provide a vivid iconographic record of the physical and social environment of Fredericton and vicinity, all the more valuable for the rarity with which such an extensive collection appears in print. The very circumstances which gave birth to Juliana's letters, however, also set certain limits on their utility. *Canada Home* is travel literature and not emigrant letters; Juliana did not have sufficient time to absorb Canadian attitudes nor any commitment to the country to encourage her to do so. What her letters therefore reveal is how an educated British gentlewoman viewed New Brunswick in the mid-19th century. Nonetheless with the fine editorial work of Margaret Howard Blom and Thomas E. Blom, Juliana Ewing's letters home from Canada make an attractive addition to printed historical sources for the Maritime Provinces.

Together these three volumes suggest the rich material that can be found in letters written home to Britain; they illustrate some of the limitations of such collections, and make clear the responsibilities which fall on the historical editor. The element of the past which the letters most clearly reveal is personality. Eighty or 100 letters written over a long or short period will always highlight the personality of their author. No single document can capture the conflicting values, goals and actions that establish the character of an individual, nor can any but the most deft historical writing successfully convey the personality that is reflected in a series of letters. For those interested in local history or for students beginning a study of the past, the appeal of these letters lies in their effective recreation of historical personalities. For the professional historian, who has easy access to primary material and who may request the filming of a collection, the value of published letters must in part be measured against the quality of the editorial work they contain. Here *Canada Home* ranks high. The index presents both nominal and detailed subject entries, the notes fully explain obscure references in the text, and the introduction adequately describes Juliana Ewing's life and work. The other two volumes suffer in comparison. Neither the introduction nor the notes do justice to *The Robb Letters*,

and only a proper noun and not a subject index is provided. Similarly the usefulness of *The Island Family Harris* is lessened by the complete absence of an index and by idiosyncratic notes.

Emigrant letters should be used with other historical sources to provide a longitudinal view of the process of emigration to Canada and of the creation of new communities. Yet not all collections of letters delineate the emigrant experience. Although both the Robb and Ewing volumes concern a single community, Fredericton, over 30 years, only the Robb letters actually document the adaptation of a Scottish emigrant to his new home. Using the papers of Robb's professional and social acquaintances, it may be possible to assess the cultural transfer and change experienced by upper middle class Scottish emigrants to New Brunswick. However only a small proportion of emigrants to British North America belonged to the class represented by Robb or the other two authors whose letters are discussed here. It is to be hoped that the letters of labouring and agricultural emigrants can be found, if not for publication, then at least for analysis in historical studies of emigrant groups. The import of recent writing on pre-Confederation Canada is to deny and finally lay to rest the concept of a single ideological fragment shaping Canadian society and politics. The separate cultures and distinct experiences of emigrants from the British Isles dictated that diversity; conflict and compromise were written into the Canadian nationality from its origin. The task before historians is to identify our varied cultural inheritances and to map their transfer to and development in this country. The letters of 19th-century emigrants offer a valuable starting point.

MARIANNE McLEAN

Propos sur le *Dictionnaire biographique* et les classes dirigeantes

LORS DE LA PUBLICATION EN 1966 du volume I du *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, nous avions fait paraître un compte rendu dans lequel nous insistions entre autres sur l'intérêt primordial de cette oeuvre collective pour l'histoire des élites et des structures sociales au Canada.[1] Cette remarque allait presque de soi puisque ceux qui avaient conçu et planifié cette entreprise de grande envergure, avaient voulu que le *Dictionnaire* fasse état de la façon la plus exhaustive et équilibrée possible de la contribution des individus les plus marquants de ce pays et de ceux des autres pays à l'évolution du Canada. Comme il s'agissait non seulement d'une oeuvre de portée nationale, habitée d'une certaine intention patriotique, mais surtout d'une production scientifique faite d'études rigoureusement construites à partir de recherches originales, le choix des personnages qui

1 *Canadian Historical Review*, XLVIII, 1 (March 1967), pp. 60-61.