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Mary Buchanan and James McIntyre Award Winner

It is a great pleasure to announce that Elizabeth Thompson has won the Mary Buchanan Award for Unintentional Humour in Canadian Poetry for “Follies of To-day” by Mary Jemima MacColl (1847—?).

A poem that unabashedly celebrates contemporary advances in female rights by calling for a male backlash, “Follies of To-day” made its bibliographical debut in *Bide a Wee, and Other Poems*, a volume first published in 1880 by Peter Paul in Buffalo and opportunistically reprinted two years later by the Rose Publishing Company in Toronto. In both printings, MacColl’s volume is prefaced by a Dedication that speaks as eloquently of her compositional circumstances as of her imbrication with patriarchal society:

I offer these Poems to an indulgent public, feeling deeply their incompleteness in every respect. They have been written hastily, at intervals, under circumstances far from favourable to the clothing of poetic thoughts in a fitting garb. I dedicate them, with fond affection, to my dear Father, from whom I have inherited what little poetic feeling they may display. MJM

Here, indeed, is writing in the father’s house—the self-effacing utterance of a female imagination that has internalized the “fitting garb” of patriarchy and accepted the constriction of female identity to which the diminutive names of the first three stanzas of “Follies of To-day” return with a repetitiveness that would be almost pathological in its intensity if it were not so girlishly skipping in its rhythm. In “Follies of To-day” the madwoman in the attic sports the “garb” of the New Woman, the female poet accepts the role of proper lady, “Mary . . . is Mate.”

Although the richness of “Follies of To-day” has not hitherto been fully appreciated, a mere sampling of the accolades assembled under the heading of “Complimentary” in the Toronto edition of *Bide a Wee, and Other Poems* attests to the high esteem in which Mac-

Coll was held in her own day, both in Canada and in the United States:

Your little volume is full of poetic beauty and deep feeling. *Henry W. Longfellow.*

'Bide a Wee' contains a chaste and graceful collection of poems which do credit to the heart and intellect of the author. *John G. Whittier.*

Your little book confirmed all my favourable impressions. I found your poems truthful and melodious. *Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

The imagery of Miss MacColl's poetry is surpassingly good. *Hamilton (Ont.) Spectator.*

It is an irony explicable only by the enduring hold of patriarchy on the Canadian academic institution that, while *Bide a Wee, and Other Poems* has languished in almost complete obscurity, another volume of poetry first published in the same year, *Orion, and Other Poems* by Charles G. D. Roberts, has come to be regarded as the harbinger of the Confederation era in Canadian poetry. Is it vain to hope that, with the re-publication of "Follies of To-day," the work of Mary Jemima MacColl will once again receive the recognition that it deserves? If so, Elizabeth Thompson will have earned the profound gratitude of all students of Canadian literature, and the Mary Buchanan and James McIntyre Award fulfilled one of the high purposes for which it was intended.

FOLLIES OF TO-DAY

Caddie, Mintie, Hddie, Hodie,
Pattie, Pinkie, Dulie, Dodie,
Flossie, Nonie, Tannie, Todie,
List, ye shades I pray!
Grandames all, of every station,
Issue forth in protestation,
And rebuke with indignation,
Follies of to-day!

Gussie, Hennie, Minnie, Mattie,
Dollie, Gratie, Sadie, Hattie,
Tiny, Beebie, Birdie, Cattie,

And a dozen more
Full as senseless and erratic.
O, ye belles, who search the attic,
Take their names, —'twould be ecstatic,—
 With the robes they wore.

Grand Matilda, now but Tillie,
Milicent, instead is Millie,
Sweet Cecilia, lost in Cillie;
 Sarah, Edith, Kate,
Jane, Eliza, Rachel, Dora,
Helen, Lucy, Ruth or Flora,
Anna, Margaret and Nora,
 Mary, *now* 'tis Mate.

Fathers, husbands, all are mourning,
Fashion's strange, uncouth adorning,
For the "gentler sex" are scorning
 Feminine attire.
Collars, neckties, Derbys, Sailors,
Coats and vests by modish tailors
Made—and ulsters,—canes from Gaylor's,—
 Can they more desire?

Yea, "sub rosa," be it spoken,
Else my peace of mind were broken,
Cigarettes—the signs betoken;
 What will follow then?
Very little more is needing,
Other garments superseding
Skirts. 'Tis thus Dame Fashion's leading—
 Strike for rights, O men!

Reprinted from Mary Jemima MacColl, *Bide a Wee, and Other Poems*
(Toronto: Rose Publishing Company, 1882), pp. 96-97.