

A Canada 150 poem from 1879

In 1879 the MP for this riding (then York North) was Frederick W. Strange.

Dr. Strange was the second owner of Hillary House, from 1869 to 1876, but had moved to Toronto in 1876. He won the York North seat in the 1878 election.

In his maiden speech in the House of Commons (21 March 1879) he delivered the poem below. He did not give the author's name, but said it had been written by an old resident of the area in 1852. I have not been able to find the verse elsewhere except as a quotation from Dr. Strange's speech.

I am no expert on poetry, but I suspect one might describe this piece as 'stirring,' rather than 'fine' or 'exquisite'!

Here is how it appeared in Hansard (House of Common Debates, Fourth Parliament, First Session: volume 1, p. 629):

I see thee, not at natal hour,
But ages hence, in sovereign power ?
When the fleet iron-horse shall rear
From Nootka Sound to Labrador;
When thy rich belt, with commerce spanned,
Shall send its wealth from land to land,
And millions shall find happy homes
Where now the untamed buffalo roams;
When teeming cities, villas fair,
And all the arts of peace are there;
When college, school and churches' spires,
All glitter in solstitial fires;
And mountain, mine and spreading plain
Diffuse their wealth from main to main,
And jarring races, fused in one,
Rejoice in name ? Canadian.

Jacqueline Stuart
Aurora