

by reference to their past activities, but it never appeared to be a serious factor in the debate.

12. Like the other poems in this period, *The Petition to Ottawa* reflects the alienation of Nova Scotians from Ottawa and the attempt of the antis to foist the blame for all the ills of Nova Scotia on Confederation. It refers to the petition drawn up by the Nova Scotia Party to be presented to the Spring sitting of the House of Commons in 1868. It called for the release of Nova Scotia from Confederation, but like all the others it was without effect. The imagery that it attempts to conjure up is most interesting, since it reflects the political stance of the antis. If Confederation was to be opposed, the arguments of the Unionists that it would bring prosperity had to be denied.
13. I owe this poem to the interest of Prof. C. I. Miller of McGill University, who brought it to my attention a few years ago. It was written between the provincial election of June, 1886, and the federal general election of February, 1887. The earlier election had seen the triumphant return of W. S. Fielding on the general platform of provincial rights to more federal funds or repeal of Confederation. The success of that campaign and the difficulties that Sir John A. Macdonald's government faced in other parts of the Dominion made the 1887 election a crucial one. Charles Tupper, who had been able to dominate federal politics in Nova Scotia since Confederation, was recalled from his post as Canadian High Commissioner to London to lead the Conservative forces in the election. He was successful. The Conservatives won 14 of 21 seats. A good account of the campaign and the issues may be found in C. Howell, "Repeal, Reciprocity and Commercial Union in Nova Scotian Politics, 1886-1887", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1967.

## MOMENT

*Alastair Macdonald*

The day she died  
 a redbreast hopped  
 through the open door  
 in stilled December,  
 inquiring near  
 with little confident bounce,  
 starting  
     my first tear.