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THE BEOTHUK INDIANS OF NEWFOUNDLAND IN FACT AND FICTION

FEW EPISODES in the history of our dealings with the natives of what is now Canada are quite so shocking as the extinction of the Beothuks or Red Indians of Newfoundland, a shy people who were hunted down in sport in the early nineteenth century by coastal settlers and finally, after some efforts by the British authorities to save them, lost tragically and completely. The story has become well known and, despite efforts to blame the outcome on disease or an alleged traditional enmity between the Beothuks and the Micmacs, the "planters"—both English and French—are now known to have been guilty of murderous attacks that were either entirely unprovoked or were caused by the inability of the natives to understand European attitudes to property.[1]

In the middle of the nineteenth century, after it had become quite certain that the tribe was extinct, two writers produced fictional accounts of the last days of the Beothuks. For some time, the books have been virtually forgotten, but they now seem worth some revival, whatever may be thought of their literary weaknesses and their essentially derivative nature; for both writers tried as best they could within their own ages to stand against common attitudes and to argue that the North American native should have been offered the best rather than the worst of Western European civilization.

The earlier and slightly better known of the two books is a romantic novel called *Ottawah: Last Chief of the Red Indians of Newfoundland*, published in anonymous parts in London in 1848, but in later American and German editions attributed to Sir Charles Augustus Murray. The purported author was a Scottish aristocrat, who gave up legal studies and a Fellowship at All Souls to travel to North America. There he lived with a wandering band of Pawnees and met his future wife, whom he courted with a novel, *The Prairie Bird*, a very popular romance. After his return to England he

had a distinguished diplomatic career in the Orient, which led to the writing of two further romances, set in the East.[2] Whether he wrote *Ottawah* or not is a question practically beyond solution, but it seems most improbable. Against the attribution of the novel to him by the Philadelphia and Leipzig publishers stand three strong reasons. First, *The Prairie Bird,* which was published under Murray's name, is a rather good novel written in a clean, lively style in the manner of James Fenimore Cooper, who was in fact a friend of Murray's, while *Ottawah* is slipshod in construction and written in a florid pseudo-archaic style—a whale is actually called "the sovereign of the finny tribe"—rather like that of popular American writing of the period about dying tribes. Secondly, the author of *Ottawah* claims to have visited Newfoundland more than once and to have had discussions with the Micmacs, and neither the island nor the tribe is mentioned in Murray's *Travels in North America.*[3] Thirdly, Murray was, as one might expect, well connected and not at all likely to publish a book anonymously—when all his other books are given his name—in the obscure "Roscoe's Series" in penny numbers. Supporting the late contemporary attribution are some affinities in attitude between *Ottawah* and Murray's other books, particularly a patronizing assumption of the obligation of white society to lead and improve the Indians; and the use in both *Ottawah* and *The Prairie Bird* of Shakespearean epigraphs from *The Tempest,* implying the Caliban-Ariel function of the Indian characters, capable of great things and of utter degradation, and the Prospero-Miranda function of white family life as a source of edification and salvation, even to the point of intermarriage. But Murray's name appears first in the American editions, published by T. B. Peterson of Philadelphia, a firm known to have traded on the names of successful authors without bothering to get them to write any new books;[4] it is more than likely that the appearance of Murray's name results from the affinities between the anonymous work and *The Prairie Bird,* and that in fact he had nothing to do with *Ottawah.*

The first edition of *Ottawah* was advertised on the wrappers of books in Roscoe's Uniform Library in 1847 as due for publication in twenty penny numbers or four sixpenny parts. It was brought out by the owner of the series at that time, E. Appleyard, in 22 sections "Printed at the Steam Machine of W. H. Cox, 5, Great Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields", with the first twenty parts only, as a result of the printer's planning error, starting with gloomily romantic engravings from Greenaway & Wright, many of the earlier ones signed by Birket Foster. Peterson's American edition followed, presumably within a year, printed from stereotype plates of the London original,

doubtless by agreement with the London publishers, but not in numbers, and with the writer identified as "the author of *The Prairie Bird*". Another anonymous stereotype reprint followed in Roscoe's Series, under the imprint of G. Slater. And, presumably still later, Peterson published another edition, naming Murray as the author. In 1858 a German translation by Ernst Susemihl appeared at Leipzig. All four editions in English are from the same setting of type: all contain an asterisk in the third line of text referring to a footnote which occurs only in the first edition, and referring in turn to a preface which also occurs only in the first edition.

According to the preface the author visited Newfoundland and spent "a long sojourn" with the Micmacs before building his story from "traditions" and "monumental remains", for the discovery of which, he added:

> we are indebted to more than one enterprising English traveller, and to the English and French fishermen frequenting the northern shores of the island. From these, it is at least certain, that a remnant of a tribe of Indians, which there is reason to believe had not a common origin with the rest of the native Americans, did, even recently, exist, within a hundred miles of our settlements: and it is probable, that the dread of white men, with whom they seem never to have had intelligible intercourse, and by whom they have been wantonly destroyed wherever found, may have induced a few that may yet survive to confine themselves to the unexplored districts of the island, where they may still live in their native freedom and primeval simplicity.[5]

In the novel, however, the blame for the wiping out of the Beothuks is almost entirely laid to the Micmacs—who are said to have had guns from white settlers and, incredibly enough, to the Eskimos. It is the Micmacs in the novel who destroy the Beothuks as a people, leaving the suggestion that those shot later by Newfoundland settlers were a leaderless fragment of a once proud nation.

Ottawah is not marked by any assumption of equality between "red"[6] and white people. Rather the Indians are seen as innocent but likely to turn savage, inspired by superstition and primitive emotions and by a sort of Manichean religion, which led them to swerve between worship of the Good Spirit, venerated by Ottawah himself, and the Evil Spirit, followed by the seer Uttermoot and the Micmacs. Their salvation must therefore come from white leadership, or rather from "white" education of their own hereditary chiefs. This is shown in the nobility of the aged Ottawah, an equal to the unnamed white hero of the book; in the corresponding virtue of his son Ahtomah, who accepts white values in his love for the white exile's daughter Adalie; and in

the unselfish loyalty of the Indian retainer Shahdac, exiled by tribal tabu and attached to the white man and to Adalie. The Indians, even among unhistoric evocations of the past grandeur of the Beothuks, are assumed to be totally inferior. Shahdac's position in the white family combines "respect and veneration on the part of the Indian for his companion of a superior race" with "the deepest sympathy and kindness on the part of the white man" (p. 12). The first signs of love between Ahtomah and Adalie lead the old white man, despite his self-assumed role as saviour of the Beothuks, to exclaim that his "blood must not mingle with a savage race", since Adalie is "doomed to become the bride of a white man" (p. 54), ignoring the fact that Ahtomah is the only eligible man his Miranda can meet. For indeed his whole purpose is to restore the Beothuks to their original glory, defeat the Micmacs, and then to bring the Newfoundland Indians to a fuller understanding of life. He has come to believe that his ability to forecast the weather is a divine gift, an opportunity to unite friends and enemies in tempest or calm; that it has been given to him to enable him to reach the Beothuks, for "one of the means by which the Great Spirit proposed to reestablish the ancient glory of their race, was through an intercourse with those very white men, whom they so much abhorred" (p. 72).

Thematically *Ottawah* is at the beginning a confused series of Shakespearean evocations, largely derived from *The Tempest* and stressed by chapter epigraphs; and it is set accordingly in the early seventeenth century. The old exile, cut off from Europe by the Indian massacre of his Newfoundland settlement and left with his infant daughter, stands as a Prospero, planning to use apparently supernatural abilities for the good of others and raising a virtuous daughter as a pledge of future good order. He and his daughter live in a sacred grove on the mountain where the Beothuks worship, and there he raises his child and studies natural phenomena as a means to a future intervention into Beothuk and Micmac affairs, to restore peace and so "to reclaim a part of the human race from savageness and barbarity" (p. 75). His daughter Adalie is a new Miranda, lovely and dutiful, who has "grown almost to womanhood, without having beheld any other man than her parent, and the old Red Indian", Shahdac (p. 12). Shahdac is unable to return to the Beothuks because, in a past effort to save the wife of Ottawah and her infant son from the Micmacs, he has accepted slavery in the enemy tribe. As the author pleasantly puts it, "he continued faithfully to do those offices for the father and daughter, which his habits enabled him to perform, and to which the inferiority of his mind naturally led him" (p. 14).

As in the Shakespearean inspiration, the beginning is in action and storm, with a period of quiet following, and then renewed activity; with the difference that the wisdom of the old white man and of Ottawah, supported by the true love of Ahtomah and Adalie, fails against the traditional enmity between the Beothuks and the Micmacs, the intractability of both tribes, and the treachery of the evil seer Uttermoot, who betrays the last of the tribe to the Micmacs.

The opening of the novel proceeds rapidly to a storm, forecast by the exile, which interrupts the sacrifice of a Micmac prisoner at the holy mountain—an event outstanding as the emergence of Ahtomah as the future leader of his people. In the confusion, the young brave is led away to the sacred grove by the "Angel of the Mountain", Adalie, who has been trained by her father from infancy for just such an event. In the grove he is told of the planned restoration of the Beothuks—while the reader learns how the exile and his daughter have lived, developing an ever-increasing faith in their function as instruments of divine intervention—and of how Shahdac came to attach himself to the family. With Ahtomah a Ferdinand under his control and the rest of the Beothuks prostrate with fear at the foot of the mountain, the exile becomes quite convinced that his propitious moment has arrived.

> Hitherto, it had only been when engaged in instructing his daughter and the Red Indian, that he had felt in reality the superiority which his knowledge gave him, and that he seemed to stand excused for the false position which he occupied; but, now that circumstances had induced him to make a bolder attempt, and favoured his success in carrying the deception to the utmost limits, he was confounded with the position he had taken, and the awful responsibilities which he had perhaps incurred. His child, and an Indian dwelling with him in the same cave and familiar with him for years, believed that he possessed supernatural powers; while a youth, evidently of quick and strong intellect, that was impressed with the belief that he was the immediate agent of the Great Spirit and Creator of the Universe, now slept in his cell. One minute it seemed to him to be just, that he should assemble the inmates of the cavern, and formally put them in possession of the whole truth, by disclosing the real source of his power over their minds; and at another, he remembered the great work in which he had determined to engage, of opening a negotiation for a general peace among the savage tribes, and of ultimately introducing to the knowledge of the wild, yet apt, inhabitants of the forest, the purer religion of the civilized world (p. 19).

The exile's new start comes with an impending battle between the Beothuks and the Micmacs, which he interrupts with the sudden appearance of

Ahtomah and Adalie, again coinciding with a forecast lightning storm; Adalie, at last ready to play her part in his plan, warns the invaders:

> "Brave warriors of the Micmac race! ye have advanced beyond the limits of your empire. Ye know not where ye stand. Ye have entered into a land ye cannot conquer. Ye stand within the limits of the sacred territory of the Angel of the red tribe. Ye know not the extent of your danger. If the sun rise upon the bent bow of a Micmac, on this side of the mountains which are behind ye, your nation's destruction is at hand. Ye shall be driven to the utmost limits of the world; or perish by the tomahawk of your enemies" (p. 67).

After the hasty withdrawal of the Micmacs, Ottawah and his son are reunited; the old chief is brought into contact with the white exile, who begins the re-education of his new friend, his equal or superior in all but a knowledge of European law and values.

> The Lord of the Mountain, and supposed agent of the Great Spirit, did not pass the just limits, which he had prescribed to himself, and thought lawful, in the character he had assumed, when he endeavoured to impress upon Ottawah the nature of his mission, and the necessity that existed of the most absolute, and unconditional compliance with his will. He had long conceived himself to be, by natural means, the special agent of the true God—the messenger of the glad tidings from the Creator: that the soul of man whom He hath formed, he hath made immortal—and that the just shall hereafter partake of felicity, such as no eye hath seen nor thought conceived (p. 72).

For the time being the new start has been made. But the chapter has two Shakespearean epigraphs, one from *The Tempest*, with Prospero's words at his happy reconciliation of old enemies, and one rather more ominously from *The Merchant of Venice*: "The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me". The movement towards reconciliation and renewed peace ends. The seer of the evil spirit, the malevolent Uttermoot, has begun scheming; and the agreement established between the white exile and Ottawah, sealed by the love of their children, is given a foreboding epigraph from *Coriolanus*.

The shift from a redemptive to a tragic theme is made very awkwardly, as if the author had realized too late the incongruous use he had been making of his Shakespearean themes and ineptly apt epigraphs. The agreements, the love of the young couple, and the friendship of the exile and Ottawah—all are false portents of a happy ending, always impossible, since the novel has begun with a statement of the historical fact that the Beothuks were extinct. And so, after their betrothal has been approved, Ahtomah gives Adalie the first hint of the impending tragedy. He has had a dream vision, not of a restored Beo-

thuk Newfoundland, but of a land beyond the grave, a New Jerusalem, a kingdom not of this world. It is at this point, of course, that the author abandons his analogues with *The Tempest*, and the epigraphs to each chapter come increasingly from Shakespearean tragedy and from *Ossian*.

Uttermott extends his seditious cult among the warriors, using as an argument Adalie's observed attentions to a Micmac captive, which have been in fact inspired by charity mixed with a feminine urge to discover whether or not Ahtomah's intended bride, Manamana, is still living. The reaction culminates in an attempt to sacrifice the white exile, an event with strong overtones of the Passion, especially in the taunting of the intended victim.

> One said, "If thou art the child of the Great Spirit, command the elements to obey thee." Another said, "Loose thyself, if thou dost represent the Angel of the Mountain." And a third, exultingly exclaimed: "Art thou the messenger of the patron of the red tribe, and deliverest us into the hands of the Micmacs? Behold thou art taken in thine own snare which thou hast laid" (pp. 116-7; cf. Luke 23:35-38).

But the sudden collapse of Ottawah and the seemingly magical reappearance of Ahtomah and Adalie halt the sacrifice; Ahtomah exerts his hereditary authority, and announces his betrothal, thus uniting the tribe behind him, bringing hope of "a line of chiefs, destined to recover the lost glory of the red tribe" (p. 120); and a second flash of hope occurs, strengthened by the appearance of Manamana, acting as a spirit.

For the betrothal, Shakespeare is again evoked: "Heaven rain grace on that which breeds between them". But there are further appearances of the wraithlike Manamana, seeking now to be sacrificed at Ottawah's burial, "a frequent custom among the red men", according to the author (p. 132), though she admits to wishing to die to allow the marriage of Ahtomah and Adalie to go ahead. A thrown tomahawk kills her. Dying she reveals Uttermoot's treason with the Micmacs, who were purportedly also worshippers of the evil spirit.

The development of the plot, such as it is, is then interrupted by an expedition to Labrador for the annual seal hunt, which comes almost to disaster because of attacks by further traditional enemies, the Eskimos, referred to as "four-paws", and rather more grandiosely as "quadruped Indians" (p. 140)—a term that appears among the few Beothuk words that have survived. This further trouble combines with yet more storms to bring the story back to the lost tribe. As he interjects:

> The opportunity which the last chapter afforded, of presenting the wild man, in the fairest light in which he might perhaps be seen, was readily embraced. We have there beheld the influence of the smallest portion of knowledge over the sons of the desert, and the power of beauty, when adorned with such feminine excellence as its union with knowledge and purity of heart might alone create. But it must be confessed, that if the more powerful component which mingled with the attributes of the savage mind, was capable of producing such fair fruit it could not be pretended, without violating probability, that all that was evil, was swallowed up and lost in the new motive, whose effects upon the character and actions of the red men we have just seen (p. 148).

In fact, his view is certainly that the Indians are easily swayed by emotion and primitive passions, just as they are easily swayed to the good by the exile's ability to forecast lightning storms; and, as the braves falter, it is an aged warrior, admired for his many battles, who unites them behind the true leadership of Ahtomah to fight the Eskimos and the Micmacs.

The battered party returns to Newfoundland, is reunited with the exile, who has come to realize that things are not going well, and who speaks "the first words of despair that the maiden had ever heard her father pronounce" (p. 166). His only hope indeed is that God, having chosen Ahtomah, will let the young chief "overcome the Micmacs, unite the red blood with the white, and confirm the introduction of the religion and laws of white men" (p. 166).

All are jubilant and confident as the superior Micmac force approaches, guided by the evil Uttermoot and a few defected Beothuks. But again, suddenly and unexpectedly, the omens go against them:

> the face of heaven, which had been studded with its myriad lights, became obscured; and the first dread sign of the assured predominance of the power of the evil spirit over that of the angel of good, was followed by yet ruder and more constant blasts from the mountains, which as they passed over the grove, seemed now about to rend and tear up every tree from its roots, and sweep away every defence that the red men had raised (p. 171).

Daunted by "a tempest dropping fire (epigraph on p. 171, from *Julius Caesar*) the Beothuks retreat to the northern extremity of Newfoundland, falling one by one until only Ahtomah and Adalie, separated again from the exile, remain. The chief realizes that the tragedy is complete.

> "It is then the end. My people are already extinct: and I alone remain, like a blasted juniper after the trees of the forest have long fallen around. Would that the lightening [sic] had not spared me! I was born in the evening of my people's

> pride. I came but to witness the extinction of a race, which record not the time when their father's [sic] first hunted the deer on the hills. They are departed. They are fallen. What record of their fame shall remain? When the tall canoes of white men come, the spirits of red men will be heard amidst the mist that the tempest drives over the plain; but none will be found to tell the tale of a race already remembered no more" (p. 175).

As the Micmacs approach, the couple, with arms about each other's waists, leap from the cliffs, and so the novel ends, in a melodrama verging on the ludicrous, with an elegy to a paternalism that might have been.

Four printings and one translation presumably represent a modest success, but it can hardly be argued that the book is of any particular significance. Its interest to modern Canada lies in its treatment of the ill-fated Beothuks, seen by the author as a foredoomed people, a leaderless fragment even when the white men began to settle on the coasts of Newfoundland; and in its relatively enlightened view of a possible North America, in which the grandeur of the native would combine with Christianity and European law and customs. Like Cooper and lesser writers about the Indians, he divides his native characters sharply into very good and very evil leaders, with a people easily swayed to one side or the other—a view perhaps no more patronizing than Shakespeare's of his contemporary Englishmen. Like most such writers he sees the advance of the white man and the doom of native culture as inexorable. Unlike many, however, he recalled a lost hope that two people could share North America, and that the Indians could be converted to Christianity and the best of European civilization without the loss of what was best in their own.

A rather more modern view of the extinction of the Boethuks is found in George Webber's *The Last of the Aborigines: A Poem Founded on Facts,* published in St. John's in 1851. Webber was evidently a Newfoundlander himself, a newspaperman familiar with fireside stories of the atrocities committed against the Beothuks. He knew also of the efforts to reach them peacefully and prevent their extinction made by the British naval authorities—remarkable as that may seem—and of the work of the St. John's Beothuk Institute. Though his poem is a romantic epic with a cast of invented characters, it is indeed "founded on facts", mostly derived from conversations with coastal settlers, often outlined in the notes appended to the text. Unlike the author of *Ottawah,* Webber lays only a small part of the blame for the loss of the Beothuks upon the Micmac invaders, who are mentioned only twice.[7] Unlike him also, he fails to see Western civilization offering anything of value to the Indians, and emphasizes the antithesis between pretence and reality by referring

to the whites always as "Christians". Despite their assumed values, the Christians cannot understand the generosity of the Beothuks, and make no effort—as the records of the hunters show—to comprehend either the humanity of the Indians or the importance of their family ties. Webber differs yet again from the author of *Ottawah* in basing his story on a Beothuk family, crediting the Indians rather than the whites with the redemptive bond between parents and children.

The poem begins with only three Beothuks still alive: the beautiful Soloa, her father Norac, and the last warrior Bravora. It soon goes to the past, when Soloa was captured by Micmacs but saved by the mysterious son of a white adventurer and the Micmac chief's daughter; the two fall immediately in love, but the stranger returns her to her father and goes back to his people, after which the two surviving Beothuk men go hunting, leaving the chief's wife Sombrina with their son, aged three. At this point Webber inserts the first factual episode, which he had heard from an old settler at Griquet.

> By times he bounded gently on—
> By times he rested on the thong,
> Which round her breast and shoulders hung,
> And cradl'd oft her darling son;
> E'en so it was when on her view,
> Appear'd of Christian hunters two;
> One levell'd the unsparing gun,
> Aim'd at the mother—slew the son.
> There was no cry, there was no moan,
> If so she heard not, but when home
> Was gain'd, and band which form'd his bed
> Unlac'd, she found the child was dead! (pp. 13-14).

The maddened Sombrina captures a white child of the same age,[8] and then dies, leaving the boy to Soloa. As Soloa travels to try to restore the child, the last Beothuk home is "found by Christian men", and destroyed (p. 18).

On Bravora's return the story is told, and Soloa begs him to bring the white child to its parents, as he presses his love for her, which she cannot return in spite of her admiration for him and her gratitude for his courageous defence of her family. Maddened by unrequited love he almost kills her, again following one of Webber's eyewitness stories (p. 37-38). But Soloa's song calms him, and finally she offers to become his wife if he will try to return the white child. He attempts to do so, but is immediately shot, and dies chanting a "Death Song", based on the published reports of the capture in 1819 of Mary

March, the Indian girl through whom the authorities hoped to establish contact with the Beothuks (p. 38).[9]

> But let me, ere my final fall,
> On early scene a moment dwell,
> The dim and distant past recall,
> When thou, my father, fought and fell;
>   All lonely did'st thou go,
> A fierce marauding band to brave,
> Thy captive wife to shield or save,
>   From slavery and woe,—
> With battle blade and bow in band,
> And harmless branch alone in hand.
>
> Emblem of peace, display'd in vain,
> And scoff'd at in an evil hour;
> For foemen press'd the icy plain,
> Who yielded not to pity's power,
>   Tho' thou did'st reason mild;
> And plead with pathos wild and high,
> That they would let the father die,
>   And mother join her child,—
> The treach'rous answer, thou did'st feel—
> Not hear—the base assassin's steel;
>
> Yes! there, upon that frozen lake,
> The sanguinary contest dire,
> Was witness'd by the wife, whose fate
> Depended on one hero's fire,—
>   Nor seem'd the struggle vain;
> Ere rais'd on high thy battle brand,
> The foemen feel beneath thy hand,
>   And strew'd the gelid plain,—
> Until they sped the fatal ball,
> Heroic chief thou didst not fall! (pp. 29-31).

And again Webber ironically underlines the religion of the savage attackers:

> Oh! if I knew where sleeps that brave
> And faithful Indian, o'er his grave
> A stone of adamant should tell
> To latest ages how he fell;
> "That from deep forest, dang'rous wild,

"Or from an unknown early grave,
"Indian would save a Christian child,
"And Christians slew who wish'd to save!" (p. 31).

Hunted by men and hounds, Soloa flees with the child. The sudden appearance of Norac leads to his death, and she and the child disappear forever among the islands of a lake.

She nears the channel, dark profound,—
Is eddied by a whirlpool round,
Then swiftly darts the passage thro',
Passing for aye from mortal view! (p. 34).

Neither of the two books has now any great value, except as an obscure example of a minor literary vogue, and of the survival in Victorian popular literature of eighteenth-century modes. Yet both are worth a little time and effort as the only depictions in English literature of the most tragically lost of all tribes of Canadian Indians. In spite of its setting, *Ottawah* is not a Canadian novel; but Webber's poem is Canadian, and deserves revival for the clarity of its reporting and the nobility of the poet's views, as well as for its closer approach to accurate narrative and portrayal.

NOTES

1. The main studies of the Beothuks have been J. P. Howley's *The Beothuks or Red Indians* (Cambridge, 1915), which reprints most of the original sources, and Frank G. Speck, *Beothuk and Micmac* (New York, 1922) in which the alleged enmity between the two tribes is denied. Cormack's *History of the Red Indians of Newfoundland* (1829, cited by Thoms) is the probable main source of both books treated in this article. Recent studies have been summarized by James Thoms in 'The First Newfoundlanders: the Beothuks', *Book of Newfoundland*, iii (St. John's, 1967), 225-237, which includes information from the Liverpool Manuscript, the main evidence against the white settlers.

2. *DNB*, an article based mainly on Sir Herbert Maxwell, *The Honourable Sir Charles Murray, K.C.B.* (Edinburgh, 1898).

3. (London, 1839).

4. Charles A. Madison, *Book Publishing in America* (New York, 1966), p. 36.

5. *Ottawah* (London, [1848]), p. ii. Subsequent references are given in parentheses in the text.

6. John Cabot observed (1497) that the Beothuks painted their bodies with red ochre. His description led to the frequent use of the terms Redskins and Red Indians. (See, e.g., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*, s.v. BEOTHUKS.)

7. *The Last of the Aborigines* (St. John's, 1851), pp. 7, 23.

8. Again based on a story from one of Webber's informants; pp. 37-38.

9. The most recent account of Mary March can be found in Thoms, 235. Her husband was shot dead while attempting to prevent the capture of his wife by a group of planters; her infant was left to die without its mother; while she was "placed in the care of a Church of England minister, the Rev. John Leigh". By the beginning of 1820 she was dead of tuberculosis, and her body was formally brought back to her people's camping grounds as a gesture of goodwill. Understandably, it made no favourable impression on the surviving Beothuks.

IN MEMORIAM

Bill Howell

Try overlooking the ocean. Or take Freddy
McIsaac then, when his boat fell on him.
Just after the week he lost his baby by the 'monia
it was, and his traps too, in the storm.
Lucky to get home at all to his wife, Jackie,
and it was still just the start of the season,
and him, just twenty-seven. Under his God
damn thirdhand Cape Islander, full of holes
'stead of lobsters, the one he was still paying
for, and still fixing too. And it wasn't him
being stupid that the blocks weren't right on it,
when he was caulking there, but the tide coming
in that done the shifting. You can't blame Jackie
at all, her leaving the village like that,
'cause after all, all she had was the place
on the point there. . . .