

William Robe, *Quebec*

Edited, with an Introduction and Notes,
by D.M.R. Bentley

William Robe (1765-1820) is now remembered primarily as the designer of two Georgian buildings in Quebec City: the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and the circular market in the City's Upper Town. Modelled on St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London and the Pantheon in Rome, Holy Trinity Cathedral was begun in 1800 and consecrated in 1804. Described twenty years later by Joseph Bouchette in terms that could equally well apply to a Georgian English gentleman—"handsome," "modern," "chaste," "correct," "judicious," "neat and unostentatious" (qtd. in Kalman 190)—it survives today as a remnant of the British tradition and qualities that it represented. As representative but less fortunate was Robe's circular market. Built in 1806-07, its strict proportions and dark wooden dome so incurred the displeasure of townspeople and visitors alike that in 1815 it was deemed by Bouchette to be "une preuve publique de mauvais goût" that should not continue to exist (468) and was demolished by order of the Legislative Assembly as a fire hazard (Noppen 55).¹ Neither as "handsome" as Holy Trinity Cathedral nor as ill-fated as his circular market, Robe's unfinished long poem entitled *Quebec* nevertheless bears the literary hallmarks of his Georgianism in its symmetrical division into "Summer" and "Winter," in its confident insistence on the benevolent rationality of "Nature's great Lord" (1: 31), and in its studious attention to the practical aspects of such matters as housing, transportation, and commerce. It is here published in its entirety from the manuscript held by the National Archives in Ottawa.

Born into a military family in Woolwich, England and prepared for a career in the Royal Artillery at the Woolwich Academy, Robe served for four years in Jamaica (1782-84) and England (1784-86) before being posted to Canada (1786-90), where he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant in November 1787 (Vetch 1228).² After ten years of further service in Holland (1793-94, 1799) and England (1794-99), he returned to Canada at the rank of captain in 1800 and served as a staff officer in Quebec City until 1806. "He was promoted regimental major on 1 June 1806, when he returned to England, and regimental

lieutenant-colonel on 13 Jan[uary] 1807" (Vetch 1228). These last two dates are especially important for the dating of *Quebec* because, though written on paper that is watermarked 1806 and apparently begun to alleviate "shipboard dullness" (1:8) on the voyage from Canada to England in 1806, its two parts are signed "Coln Wm Robe" and "Coln William Robe." This bears out what is implied by the neatness of the handwriting and the near absence of revision in the manuscript: unfinished and, in places, incomplete as it is it is, *Quebec* is not a preliminary but a polished piece of work that was probably begun on board ship in the spring or early summer of 1806 and written out on the surviving manuscript sometime after January 13, 1807 (and, it may be added, before 1815 when Robe was knighted [Vetch 1229]).³ If these deductions are correct, then *Quebec* was written shortly after the publication of Cornwall Bayley's *Canada*, which, as argued elsewhere, probably came from the press of John Nielson in Quebec City in late March or early April 1806 (see Bentley, "Introduction," *Canada* xlii).

While it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of the resemblances between *Quebec* and *Canada* evince a debt by Robe to Bayley, a more likely explanation of the poems' similarities lies in their common engagement with Isaac Weld's *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, During the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (1799; 4th ed. 1807). Weld's descriptions of *calèches* and *carrioles* (1: 306, 353-54, 392-93), for example, raise echoes in both poems (*Canada* 325-32, 403-04; *Quebec* 1: 39-42. 2: 77-83), as do his remarks on such topics as the conviviality engendered by winter in Lower Canada, the speed of the transition from winter to spring, and the butchering of cattle and poultry at the end of the fall and the consequent abundance of meat in Quebec's markets (see *Travels* 1: 391-97). Robe differs from both Weld and Bayley, however, in placing special emphasis on the shortcomings of Canadian regulations and practices regarding road maintenance, fire prevention, the care of the destitute, and the sale of liquor. Less inclined than they to view Canada through rose (and Rosa)—tinted spectacles, he frequently resembles the jaundiced J. Mackay of *Quebec Hill* (1797) both in his tendency to spot the "Thistles...[in] the corn," the "rank and noisome weeds / Which injure much the...crop, and symetry destroy" (1: 226, 267-68), and in his tendency to point the finger of morality at aspects of life in Lower Canada that fall below his standards of conduct and endeavour. Moreover (and as he openly acknowledges in his opening lines), Robe shares with Mackay a large formal and structural debt to James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1738), a poem that probably also prompted him, as it did almost every author of a long poem in Georgian Canada from Thomas Cary to Oliver Goldsmith, to contemplate the prospect of someone suffering an "unregarded" death after losing their

way in the "drifted snow" (2: 244-49). No more than Bayley, Mackay, Cary or Goldsmith did Robe expect his poem to attain the heights of its model (1: 1-6), but what *Quebec* lacks in poetic accomplishment it possesses in historical interest as a unique treatment of the physical and social landscapes of Lower Canada in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The present text of *Quebec* is based on the manuscript (MG 53 *189) in the Lawrence M. Lande collection in the National Archives, Ottawa.⁴ Written on 41 pages of a notebook measuring 18.5 x 11.0 cm that is loosely stitched together, the poem is divided into two parts entitled "Quebec Summer" and "Quebec Winter." In addition to the watermark "1806" mentioned above, the pages show vertical chain lines 2.5 (1 inch)-3.3 cm apart and part or all of a watermark ("E&S" or "E&SS"). In the following transcription, ampersands have been rendered as "and," capitalization has been regularized, and, where the grammar or sense has dictated, punctuation marks have been silently added or deleted and missing letters supplied in square brackets. Editorial notations about the manuscript are also contained in square brackets.

Notes

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1. Bouchette writes that what was most striking about the building was its deformity rather than its symmetry (468) and Noppen adds that it was perceived to be disproportionate because it was a hundred feet in both height and diameter (55). Noppen also suggests that the chief defect of the market was that it was constructed on the most prestigious site in the town at a time when its Palladian style was not acceptable to the inhabitants (55). [\[back\]](#)
2. The September 7, 1786 issue of the *Quebec Gazette* reports the recent arrival on the *Triumphant* of "Lieut. Robe of Royal Artillery." [\[back\]](#)
3. Robe was made a K.C.B. on January 3, 1815 and he died on November 5, 1820 near Woolwich. He was survived by his wife Sarah (née Walt), whom he married in about 1788 in Canada and with whom he had nine children (Vetch 1229). [\[back\]](#)
4. A photograph of two pages of the manuscript were published with

a brief commentary by Bruce G. Wilson in *Colonial Identities: Canada from 1760 to 1815* (1988), 170-71. The poem is briefly described by Lawrence M. Lande in *Canadian Historical Documents and Manuscripts* (1977), 80. [\[back\]](#)

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Quebec

Summer

Argument

Author displays his vanity and idleness—Subject begins—He shews his agricultural knowledge—A mournful comparison— Some reflections on Canadian police—Pretty markets—Lower Town occupations—Upper Town builders—Snow mills—Not Caldwell's—Advice to new comers—Some loyal sentiments and some female occupations, with author's good wishes—Summer and flies—More discription and patriotic wishes—Farming not so good as in England—How to get a [blank space] hay harvest—Sayling of summer fleet—Plentious markets and peasants' gardens— Pigeons with wise reflections—Autumn, corn harvest—Thunder and lightning—Effects—Prejudice—Woodrafts scows—Timber rafts—Barley—Brewery—Distillery—Much oblig'd to author for his wishes—Landscape painters—Sportsmen and snipe—Frigate and fur ships and trade—Fall fleet prepares and sails—Story brought to an end.

When any writer takes a subject up
Which better pens before have treated on,
How great his disadvantage! how much more
Shou'd he the favor'd steps of Thompson tread!
Yet, why discourag'd be? We have no
hope

5

Of soaring near the height that he attain'd;
Our humble verse aims but to turn the hours
Of shipboard dullness to some small account
And if it please our friends our end is gain'd.

One thing we must promise—the frozen
clime

10

Of Canada two seasons only gives,
Winter full half the circling year absorbs;
Spring, summer, autumn, with such hasty steps
Each other press, as to be deem'd but one:

At least, permitted custom we shall
plead

15

To spare our reader's patience and our time.
Stern winter quits his hold, some vestige still
Of snow in northern aspect left, remains,
And ice in streets, wick needs the wielded ax.

But soon 'tis gone; the little sail boats
now, 20

Across the bason swift their courses run
Chearing the snow tir'd eye. The dark brown herb
By quick degrees resumes a lively green,
The long bill'd woodcock, and the lesser snipe
Are now, and not in vain by sportsman
sought. 25

The earth, unbound, yields willing, to the edge
Of long neglected ploughshare;—this the time
While unabsorb'd the moisture, to prepare
Th'ensuing summer's crop; and the rich grain
Which Britons e'er the winter give to
ground 30

Here, only now is sown: Nature's great Lord
In this as all things else supremely good
Still watching o'er our wants in ev'ry clime.

The snow and ice now gone, the lively sleigh
Erst as a feather light, now drags
along 35

Pond'rous and slow, as late the mournful sledge
Which Holborn's Hill ascended, to the sound
Of St. Sepulchre's melancholy bell:

By wheels 'tis now replac'd, and rude caleche
On leathern, or on sea-cow straps
uphung, 40

More suited, certes, to Canadian roads
Than springs of steel by English carriage us'd;
Canadian roads! how much to be admir'd!
Canadian laws much more! which mend those roads,
Or leave them to be mended as they
can! 45

While wheels and carriages; and necks, and limbs
Of horses and of men endanger'd are
Almost at ev'ry step: surely 'tis shame,
While ample means are found in ev'ry rock
For forming good and solid roads, that
here 50

Th' approach to Britain's first provincial town
Shou'd ev'ry way be miserably bad!
Yet, let us hope, 'twill not be always so;
The spirit of improvement once begun,
Will soon extend itself around the
town, 55

And mend the rugged ways.

The farmers, all employ'd to till the soil,
And seed to sow, scarce ought to market bring,
Save veal, their earliest produce; so that veal,
And veal, and nought but veal, each table
crowns 60

Limber, and thin; and red; not boasting age,
But eight, and six; nay four days old is brought
Palling at once the sight and appetite.
Now Providence again displays his care;
For, first the early shad the river
mounts; 65

Not such as in the Thames is often caught
But many times as large; and comes at once
In quantity to feed the country round.
Whith these come striped bass, more delicate
And not so plenty given; but follow'd
soon 70

By salmon large, shewing his silv'ry sides,
And sturgeon, which great London's lordly May'r
Presents with pomp and state to Majesty;
Not here so highly honor'd, but in dirt,
Gro'ling he lies upon the Market
Square 75

Scarce heeded but by poor, nor finds a place
On any table delicately deck'd.
Nor want we smelts, by London cits admir'd,
Of larger size and equal flavor found.

Again the Lower Town begins to
shew 80
Its busy faces hurry'ng to and fro,
While ev'ry eastern breeze some vessel brings
Either from western Indies freighted full,
From Greenock's rising port, or Liverpool
And soon the shops display their earliest
store 85

Of Britain's fashions, and of Britain's goods.

The winter dress by all now laid aside
The troops their gay attire again display
And with their music cheer again the town:
The gardens smile, and as the sun mounts
high 90

Quick from the earth springs every latent seed,
And starts to life with steps so manifest
As almost seen to grow: the builders now
Their summer occupations recommence:

Whether the public edifice to

rear

95

Houses, for numbers still increas'd, to build

Or old ones to repair: here thy face

Dim-sighted prejudice, we see appear

Whom, not th' experience of successive years.

Thy streets encumber'd all the summer

long,

100

Nor fire's more dread effects, will e'er convince,

Or make thee, in a more effectual way

Thy chimnie flues construct; which now, all rough,

And full of holes retain the soot within

And magazines of fuel, form for

fires

105

Which oft consume this shingle-cover'd town.

Up springs the corn, the fields all green appear

The trees so lately bare, now feather'd full

With foliage divers, beautiful appear:

The genial showr's are shed; the sun grows

hot;

110

The spring in summer's lost e'er yet begun:

Rivers of melted snow from mountain side

By rude mechanic stop'd and pass'd thro' mill

Their rustic timbers saw;—the mill itself

Scarce for convenience form'd, not

elegance,

115

Requires a torrent's force to make it work:

The torrent now subsides; and till next year

The mill, of power bereft, neglected lies.

The country saw mill this,—we here not speak

Of all those works of more refinèd

art:

120

For corn and timber, each, or both design'd,

Which, Caldwell, on thy lands we frequent see,

Thy lands, which both sides, on St. Lawrence bound

Thy lands, which from Point Levi, up the tide,

Beyond Chaudiere's fam'd bason, far

extend

125

Forming at once a large and rich domain.

While yet the rivers, all with snows are swol'n

We should advise the trav'ler, just arriv'd,

To visit Chaudiere's and Morency's falls;

Nor should he pass Lorette unheeded

by,

130

Their greatest beauty now, while yet their streams

With high swoln current, rushing o'er the steep,
Fill ev'ry chasm, and hide each pointed rock;
For now they charm the pleas'd and raptur'd eye
With fulness and effect, not to be
found 135

By those who haply would these scenes explore
I' summer's driest time. Nor pester'd now
With flies, or gnats, which here mosquito hight,
And which, from woodland scenes, all pleasure
drive.

Now fast the day approaches which
reminds 140

Each loyal Briton of the birth of him,
Whom all-indulgent Heaven so long has lent,
To rule our favor'd realm with mildest sway:
To celebrate this day all hearts prepare;
Right anxious looks the fair for London's
fleet; 145

For now, on board this fleet, each costly suit
Of newest fashions form'd, and doom'd to grace
The Birthnight Ball, is stow'd; not anxious more
The merchant, who to stormy winds and seas,
His substance whole, and credit too,
confides. 150

Each tide, each wind, they watch and shou'd at last
The dear desired fleet in time arrive,
No rest the merchant, nor the master knows
Until th'expected cargo's landed safe
Display'd, and fitted o'er and o'er
again: 155

The milliner now finds a ready sale,
With crowded shop, for all her costly wares.
Each one admires, and buys; each one, her taste
At Birthnight Ball, as fashion bids, displays
And as, most late, in Britain, things were
worn. 160

Daughters of Britain, in wha[t]ever clime,
Think not these ardors we would e'er repress
Which tend to shew th'attachment of your hearts
To all your country's fashions; much less when
With loyalty and love ye
celebrate 165

His birth, whose life's whole study is our good.

Now summer rises fast, and up the tube
The merc'ry flies, nearly to reach that height

At which in torrid zone it takes its stand;
Windows, which late were clos'd, nay pasted
fast 170

Now always open stand, to let the breeze
Pass freely tho' each av'nue of the house.
Now teems the air with flies; of all the plagues
Spread over Egypt's land by Moses' rod
Flies must have been most teasing, if not
worst, 175

(The plague of ev'ry summer in this place,)
Doubtless for wisest ends created, and endued
With endless perseverance, to return
To spot from whence they're driven; teaching Man
That virtue Patience
call'd. 180

If common flies, in town, so hard t'endure
Much more the sand-flie and mosquito tribe
Are found by those who, fond of fisher's sport,
Pursue the stream o'er hung with pendant wood.
Scarce Nature's self can bear't, and the
sport 185

Of salmon, or of trout is dearly bought,
For down the neck and ears and temples, see
The blood fast trickling down; the swollen head
Scarcely appears to be of human kind:
And often many days are ta'en to
cure 190

The ravages of insects in an hour:
Not always thus for season'd to the clime
Either the skin gets tougher, or the flies,
Find not the juices suited to their taste
For European strangers please them
most. 195

Each day fresh ships arrive; the merchants now
Their speculations make, in hopes of gain,
And corn, and flour and lumber send away;
The first our tropic islands to supply,
The latter Britain's self receives. And
here 200

Take we for once the leave t'express our hope
That Britain soon will take to nearer view
Th'importance of this province to her state:
Give but th'encouragement and means, and soon
Its fish, its staves, its flour more perfect
made 205

Will to her island prove a sure resource
More plenteous than believ'd, while its vast woods
Already to her navy send its masts:
Hemp to the clime's congenial, and but wants
Th'example of an enterprising
hand 210

To shew to what extent it can be grown:
Iron of the toughest kind is here procur'd
Equal if not superior to the Swedes';
And pitch, and tar can never rare be call'd,
When woods of pine of such extent are
found 215

Such the resource which Britain can obtain
From her own provinces, and not depend
On foreign nations for her very nerves.

The country now assumes an aspect gay
The corn shoots high, the grass is sprung, and
all, 220

The prospect of a plenteous harvest gives;
But here, not England's beauties do we find,
Not fields high dress'd by cultivation's arts
And clean from weeds and trash of ev'ry sort:
Not so Canadian farming:—through the
lands 225

Thistles with corn grow up, and shed their down;
While o'er the field for hay design'd, behold
The rankling marguerite its influence spread,
Whit'ning the field, as cover'd late, with snow,
Which if not rooted out with care, the
grass 230

Will choak and of its food deprive the beast.

How beautiful is the bason of Quebec
In summer garb attir'd; full oft I've wish'd,
From deck of vessel in its center moor'd,
T'have ta'en its separate views, which join'd in
one, 235

[*Blank line*]

While singly, each, in self, is beautiful,
And highly interests a Briton's mind,
For the whole amphitheatre contains
The scenes of action of renowned Wolfe
In Britain's histr'y gloriously
famed. 240

The grass now ripens fast the scythe prepar'd
And quick the hay lies prostrate on the ground,

Not, as in Britain, many days to lie,
There to be turn'd, return'd, and turn'd again,
Lest not sufficient dry, it fire the
stack; 245

Here,—one day cut, the following perhaps
Will find it cock'd and into bundles tied
Which, third day safely lodges into barn
(So quick the moisture 'vap'rates with the sun)
Yet not so high in flavor, nor so
good 250

As English hay, prepar'd and stack'd with care.

The summer convoy now is on the underweigh
And gently gliding down the placid stream
Adds to the beauties of the charming scene;
Nor, from the harbor, scarce this fleet is
miss'd 255

So thick the wharves are crouded still with ships
While to their absent friends each one employs
The ready pen, his cares or joys to tell.

The markets all, with store of every kind,
Poultry, and fish, and fruit most rich
appear 260

Nor want we ought of vegetable kind
Which bounteous nature gives; not that the soil
Except in town is work'd with proper care:
The peasant's gardens left to female hands
Who sow and plant and dig:—not dig but
hoe 265

A patch sufficient for their yearly meed,
Leaving the sides to rank and noisome weeds
Which injure much their crop, and symetry destroy.

The annual flights of pigeon now appear;
Of breed peculiar, and in numbers
vast, 270

Who swiftly urge their flight to distant climes;
These, a repast delicious, nature gives
To savage man, while yet in woods confin'd,
But, as the land is clear'd, and his full food
By agriculture's num'rous means
ensured, 275

No more to such precarious supplies
Can he for aught but pastime e'er resort.
For as the woods are clear'd, wild beast and fowl
Will daily from the haunts of man recede.

Autumn advances fast on summer's heels—

So fast, that often, ere the grass is down,
 The corn demands the reaper's ready hand.
 Nor must it be delay'd; for at this time
 The thunder famous e'en in temp'rate climes
 Here, it is daily, almost constant
 known,

285

Attended oft with gusts of wind and rain,
 As lays the crop, no more to rise again;
 The vivid lightning strikes; and all the woods
 In every direction bear the marks
 Of its most dire effects; the lofty
 pine,

290

And sturdy oak, cleft to their nether base,
 Their branches rudely torn, stand, 'reft of life:
 Not always 'scapes the town, the lightning's blast
 (Attracted by Cape Diamond's iron ore,)
 When full of mischief fraught as late beheld—

295

The lofty buildings feel th' electric flame
 Crumbling to atoms all the works of Man
 Nay, man himself, with strong, resistless pow'r.

The corn is cut, again the bainful sway
 Of prejudicial custom here
 prevails,

300

For, not in shocks 'tis plac'd with ears set up,
 And tha[t]ch'd, if need be, with a sheave revers'd,
 As oft in Europe seen, to guard from rain
 Till dry enough to house from further harm.
 No; flat on ground as soon as cut, 'tis
 laid,

305

The ear to ripen quicker;—reas'ning false!
 For, ev'n should rain not fall, the nightly dew
 And moisture of the earth, the grain will swell,
 And into action bring its quick'ning pow'rs:
 But, should the thunder cloud with pondrous
 drop

310

Shed its contents, o'er corn just newly reap'd,
 Each year's experience shews, that quick, the soil
 Receives the striking germ, and spoils the grain.
 Yet scarce will farmers e'er persuaded be
 To alter customs sanction'd by their
 sires.

315

Now down the stream from upper country's lands
 Float many a raft with firewood fraught; to check

The sad effects of future winter's cold;
These all the shores beset but quick unpack'd,
Are carted off at purchasers'
command; 320

The [*blank space*] appears, laden with many a cask
Of flower in upper Province made, which late
Is o'er the rapid streams, with safety brought:
T[h]ro' whirl pools, rocks and shoals, strong proof
of what

By perseverance man can bring to
pass; 325

With these, the timber rafts, of wide extent,
At distance, semblance bearing of a fleet,
Of many sail compos'd, come slowly down
And cargoes fine, for naval use provide
Of oak and massy pine, perhaps as
large 330

As those from Norway, or from Rija brought.

Now ev'ry hand's employ'd. The harbor full
Of ships appears, with colours streaming gay
Either unloading cargoes just arriv'd,
Or taking in their lumber or their
wheat 335

Such as the crop will spare: the barley here
Of late has been consum'd, or made in beer
Or ale, by brewer well prepar'd,
Or still'd in whisky's form, whose dire effects
Apparent is to those who've known the
land, 340

By drunkenness more frequent than of old;
Sure 'twere the best of policy to stop
By taxes high the ardent spirit's use,
Of which no one is ign'rant; and to give
Encouragement to use of wholesome
beer, 345

Enjoyment to the peasant to afford,
And not produce destruction to his frame:
Yet little hope have we, that thoughts like these
Will alter rev'nue laws, or private int'rest curb.

The short'ning days and chilly nights
proclaim 350

The leaves' approaching fall; yet still the sun
In mild October shines serenely bright;
All vari'd now the woods, and colours gay
Purple and red and yellow, o'er the trees

Replace the lively green. The season
this, 355

Preferr'd by landscape painter for the tints
More warm and beautiful his scenes adorn
Wether in morning, with the rising sun
The gen'ral grey diffuse its mild effect,
Or the full purple of his setting

rays 360

Blends Nature's contrasts, and delights the eye.

The sportsman now his dogs and gun prepares
And for the snipe, scours all the nearer shores,
The riv'lets course, the swamp, nor e'er returns
Without a portion, which on Britain's

soil 365

Would satisfy his labor and his skill.

Not here so soon content; Ange-Gardien's shore

For him prepares a scene his skill to try

And glut his utmost fancy for the sport:

For this he now prepares; he wraps his

feet 370

In many a woolen sock, and o'er his legs

Draws on the beef-skin boot with grease well soak'd.

These boots for elegance of shape contend

With those which Fisherman on Thames adorn

And for like uses form'd,—with store of

shot 375

Of powder, dogs and food, away he goes,

Soon to return with many a snipe surcharg'd.

Along the stream which parts Orleans Isle

From lofty banks of Montmorency's falls

A village lies, Ange-Gardien call'd, whose

shores 380

Left by each tide, presents a bank of mud,

Thro' w[h]i[c]h the reed and water grass appear;

At ev'ry season this the haunt of snipe,

Who here by thousands croud and here get fatt.

Hither the sportsman comes year after

year 385

And, dragging thro' the mud each hinder leg

Arrives to where the bird their food collect,

On strand by tide new lav'd;—the trusty dogs

With steady point give notice of the prey;

And tho' in flights they rise,—no sportsman

he, 390

Unless his bird selected from the rest,

He fairly fetches down;—many there are
Who thus a number back to Quebec bring,
Which to European ears we dare not tell,
While others, not regarding laws of
sport, 395
Let fly amidst the flock by numbers kill
Would stock a country round, but here might not.

Now thro' Quebec, behold, in ev'ry house
The stove uprear'd with pipe of sable hue:
The pile of wood encumbers ev'ry
yard; 400
And coming winter by all things is shewn;
The frigate for the convoy now arrives
And down the upper stream appear the ships
Which, with a single voyage in the year
To Montreal repair, and which the
skins 405

Of many thousand of the furry tribe,
Now bring, England not only to supply,
But thence, the continent of Europe's self
And distant China's Emp'ror perhaps.
This the trade, tho' gain'd by
enterprize 410
And individual hardship patient borne,
While o'er the extensive western lands they roam—
Yet this the trade which yields the best return
Of any follow'd by Canadia's sons.

The ships ariv'd, the fleet prepares to
sail; 415
The merchant closes his accounts, and duns
All those whose payments not forthcoming are:
His bills he now remits for goods receiv'd
Each one his order sends for ensuing year;
Each one his letters to his friends
prepare; 420
Each with regret the fleet views under sail
And all to fleet and summer, bid farewell.

Finis.

Winter

Argument

Story begins with simile—Preparations and departure of last ship—

Cold work—Writer's benevolent wishes—Colder still—Beginning of idleness—Carioles—Dress—Appearance of Beau—Reflections on good living—And on poverty as fate at Quebec—More fruitless good wishes—Tommy codfishing—Restoration—Bad skating— Advice to cariole drivers and to ladies—Pretty way of makeing and of spoiling roads—Address to prejudice—How to preserve stock— And how to consume it—Barons Club—More good reflections— Road, and dangers on bason—Passage from Point Levi— Peasants' winter employments— Present customs—Hospitaliy—Christmas its ceremonies and enjoyments—Doctrine of fluids how exemplified—Thaw—Its effects— And of succeeding frost—Mardigras—its pleasures both to horse and man—Lent its deprivations—More parties—Lorette—Pont at Chaudiere and perhaps at Quebec—Amusements on ice—Good Friday and Easter—Ice houses—View from Cape—Montmorency's Cone— Escape of a party—St. Charles River—Ice breaking up pretty streets— Clear sky—Hotbeds—River craft—Expectation of vessels—Arrival of first one—Its welcome— Poem concludes.

As the fond matron, whose beloved lord
 To tented fields or foreign clime, departs,
 Seems, with his loss, existence' self to lose,
 (Save the small comfort minist' red by friends,
 Which soon she must forego) so now, thy
 face, 5
 Quebec, its dreary aspect shews. St. Lawrence stream
 Of all her fleets bereft looks desolate,
 And blank, the stragling vessel still whose crew
 Refract'ry, or whose cargo incomplete,
 Regales the longing European
 eye, 10
 With something which of home his soul reminds;
 But now! November's wintry blast blows keen,
 The icy sleet, and the heart-chilling frost,
 Bring in the wand'ers and the industrious urge
 To many fold exertion, and departure
 press 15
 Lest the dread fate of Anticostie's Isle
 At this late season 'wail them.

At length the topsail loos'd and waving flag
 Proclaims her near departure; while the pens
 Of ev'ry class are busily
 employ'd; 20
 Wether in commerce' num'rous plans; in claims
 Of friends, or interest's hopes: all are content;
 Each face with bus'ness mark'd; each hasten'd step

Bespeaks the mind's employ soon to give place
To dissipation's round, and pleasure's gay
pursuit. 25

And now! the crackling sail reluctant mounts
And, with the bleak north eastern blast, each rope
Like limb rheumattick, stiffening and cold,
Its wonted use resists; hard now the task!
Point Levi turn'd, soon from our view, the
ship 30

For six long months is hid; while of the gale
The hardy pilot make[s] his utmost use
His office to fulfil; when soon the air,
Saline and more congenial, spirits gives,
And strength to meet the ocean's arduous
cares. 35

Oh! may no snow storm in the dreaded gulph
With eastern blast and thick'ning icy wave
Spreading its mingled horrors, darkness, cold
Shoals and tremendous rocks; with shipwreck death
Or winter unprovided, on the
shore, 40

Unpress'd by foot (save of the savage tribe
Of man or beast) her progress counteract!
But rather that with prosp'rous voyage blest,
Their friends with joy may meet them! and that ours
With pleasure may our welcome lines
receive! 45

And join their hopes with ours, that yet e'er long
Together, and with chearful steps we tread,
Our native soil, dear to each Briton's breast.

Return we to Québec: commerce stands still,
The river-craft,—of sails and yards
unrigg'd, 50

With deck forlorn, and naked mast, on shore
The Cul-de-Sac does fill; save when the ship
Unstately stranded, or of men bereft,
Is here oblig'd to winter; more forlorn,
More desolate than they; while ev'ry
tide 55

Its frozen fragments heaps to bind them there,
Each creek, each shore an icy edge displays,
Increasing constantly;—but when the morn
Her influence with eastern blast combin'd
Their bonds break loose, then o'er the River
wise 60

Their floating fragments scatter to and fro;
Thus each returning tide, they pass, unless
By shore arrested, they the [*blank space*]
Of wide extended bridge or icy bridge.

Far diff'rent now the scene; all bus'ness
o'er 65

And almost from the world shut-out, the mind
To pl[e]asure's influence yields; all ranks now ere,
Foremost in social intercourse; the dance
Is now propos'd, the sumptuous dinner plann'd
And countrieparties form'd. Yet still they
wait 70

The fleecy falling snow; nor long need wait,
For reg'lar with returning moon, the clouds
Pour forth their drear contents, and o'er the herb
Dusky, and brown, their silv'ry mantle spreads
Shielding from winter blast and biting
frost, 75

Each year's prospective hope.

Now on the snow the various cariole,
Splendid, or plain, as suits the owner's taste,
With mettled steed high dress'd, and harness bright,
Or water-bearing horse, with oats scant
fed 80

Are seen in all directions chief with those
Who to the country new, its modes would try,
Its novel scenes enjoy: to them, its furs,
Its grotesque dress, for warmth contriv'd,
Not elegance, seem more than is
requir'd; 85

Yet when successive winters shew their use;
Or when rheumatic pains their limbs attack
Their sad mistake regret; tho' some there are
Who as much overdo the country's wants
And cov'ring upon cov'ring loading
on 90

Are more by heat than cold oppress'd. And thus
Their frame enfeebling, those disorders court
Which most they would avoid.

Strange would the high dress' beau appear who
late
From London's gayest walks arriv'd, and
who 95

In this far distant spot its fashions brought
By us admir'd and copied—where he now,

Like Fortunatus (as the legends tell)
Set down at will amongst his gayest friends
In true Canadian costume;—on his
head 100

The Martin cap of right [*blank space*]
As thy lov'd pen, oh Tristram, has describ'd
On head of Corporal:—perhaps to grace
The shoulders of our Bond Street beau, he wears
An ample beaver coat; his neck, a
bear 105

Provides with tippet warm, crossing his breast
And back, there fasten'd:— on his feet
Are leggins drawn, and true Canadian shoe
Of beef skin made, fill'd full with store of socks
Or, with thick woolen stocking o'er his
boots 110

His legs and feet are shrouded; while his hands,
In great fur gloves envelop'd, seem like paws
Of brother bear; nor very different
In elegance of shape, or outward shew
They seem, when on two legs each graceful
moves. 115

Now winter's dissipation full commenc'd
The invitation diverse, on all sides
Accepted and return'd. See o'er the board
Profusion spreads his costly fare, with wines
Of all descriptions; nor to outward
view 120

Will means seem wanting to uphold the scene
What e'er at times it cost them; far from me
Be the intent to stop the social band
Or intercourse most friendly to deter.
Too well I feel their value, thro' life's
path 125

To smooth each rugged and uneven spot.
Yet could I wish, that social intercourse,
That friendship's ties and companie's allure,
Might with less state and less expense be mixt;
So might those social hours thus less
alloy'd 130

With worldly cares, more heartfelt pleasures know.
Perhaps, wer't so, too strong the excitement found
Might other more essential concerns
Of parent, family, and friend absorb,
And its own end defeat. [*blank*

Turn we from life's gay scenes and festive boar
[d],

From mazy dance, and dissipating round

To view the poorer sort in this cold clime,

And see what lot they find; perchance some good

May hence arise; would to heaven 'twere
mine 140

To point some mode by which th' industrious poor

And sickly object wand'ring in these streets

Might find his lot amended, health restor'd

And his returning labor cheerful giv'n.

Nor need we sect or tenet to
prescribe 145

Bounds to such act as this: each honest man

To poverty reduc'd, with sickness worn,

Should heaven born charity's broad influence feel

As fall the dews of heav'n; then be our cares

Restrain'd by nought but vicious
impudence 150

Imposture's wiles, and shameless idleness.

O'er all th' industrious poor this clime bears hard,

But chief on those who work in open air,

Wether to navigate St. Lawrence' course,

To out door building, or the lab'rer
part, 155

Who there or on the wharf their pittance earn—

To these the Summer's transient course is short,

And oft by backward seasons short'ned still,

While this scant time, not only life's support

But fuel for the Winter must
provide 160

Clothing, and rent and food: for Winter stern!

Small and precarious are thy supplies!

Wether the cord-wood to prepare to heat

Another's fire, or from his door remove

The snow's deep drifted bank; sources
alas! 165

Too few for ev'n the hardy to employ.

What then supports the sick'ning wretch whom want

Of proper food, and warmth lays down! or he

Who still possessed of vigor, is bereft

By accident innum'rous the
power 170

Of urging Nature's means for her support?

Here the sad tale begins:—not Britain's laws
For poverty's support, are here in force;
Or if in force, employ'd; no parish house
Opens its hospitable doors to
greet
175

The poor whom thousand human ills has forc'd
To seek his fellow's aid! No means are here
Of work provided, where the honest heart
Proud of its feelings, but who cannot beg
And rather than to ask his bread, would
die
180

Where ev'n he, might find employ, and eat,
And on his earnings hope for better times:
Nor aught, save the precarious [*word erased and illegible*]

Or church collections, or the written pass,
By magistrate's authority, to
beg
185

That aid from house to house, which better were
Provided by the public: means how small
For six months' winter! Far be here from me

The Gen'ral Hospital and Hotel Dieu
To pass unheeded by; the lib'ral
aids
190

Their means and rules permit are freely given,
And many a pining wretch is snatch'd from death
Yet cir[*remainder of word erased and line blank*]
Of those who need, can gain admittance there.

May we at some not very distant
time
195

'Mongst all thy late improvements, see arise
On broad and gen'rous basis fixt, the means
Of nourishing the worn out poor, and those
Whom sickness or misfortune leave unfit
To gain their daily bread! and work to
give
200

To those more able, who such aid require.

Now on th' indented shore, and riv'lets' mouths
Fast forms the ice, which rising with each tide
Floats in majestic state, and o'er th' expanse
Of fam'd St. Laurence, to and fro is
borne,
205

By ev'ry tide encreas'd: thy tribute scream
St. Charles its surface cover'd o'er,
And firmly bound displays a diff'rent scene

For now! a village all at once appears
Of huts uprear'd with ice, where men and
boys 210

For tommy cods their fishery pursue;
Nor by the cold deterr'd: and strange to tell
Yet by each year's experience verified,
The fish when hard and stiff'ned with the cold
To all appearance dead, will oft
revive 215

When into water plac'd: so near their blood
Is to the season's temp'rature allied.

The skater here his circling mazes shews
For little while; too soon the ice is lost
By overwhelming snows, not to be
clear'd, 220

As in more temp'rate England's clime, by men,
Nor, if at times left bare, by chance, or drift,
Such pleasure will its flinty surface yield,
Cracking and splint'ring 'neath the skate whose edge
Scarce any hold can take; more pleasant
now 225

In cariole high deck'd and [*blank space*]
The fair to drive, while scarce by road confin'd
Nor by the jolt of cahos yet disturb'd:
Smooth is the surface, bright the sun, like life
Whose early scenes nor care nor hardships
know. 230

Let not the fair deceiv'd by early sun,
Ride out too thinly clad; nor his warm coat
And most his gloves, the driver want for soon:
The bleak north-west, the ready fall'n snow,
In piercing drifts may raise; or low'ring
east 235

Its storms pour forth; and e'er to town return'd
The drive for pleasure meant be fraught with pain
Chilling the very heart:—ev'n so in life,
Would I each youth, each fair, with prudence arm
That not its chilling blasts, its storms, its
cares, 240

May in the ev'ning of their days, disturb
Their calm return to home, that home where all
To happiness or mis'ry must return.

Now rising to our view, we see each road
O'er all the snow clad country marking
out 245

With boughs of spruce; without aid full oft
The flound'ring horse, and 'wilder'd traveller
Their way would lose, and plunging into depth
Of drifted snow, might unregarded die.

Nor long e'er these new roads are trodden
hard 250

By market sleigh, and as each frequent snow
Its fresh deposit leaves, full soon are fill'd
By heavy laden wood slays retched form
With undulating cahos, deep and broad,
Which all the pleasures of a Winter's
ride 255

Destroy, and give a motion quite as bad
As ship by head sea top'd: and if perchance
A train of sleighs you meet, the narrow road
Gives you with difficulty breadth to pass
Without an hurt; or into snow o'er
whelm'd, 260

You're left to gather up your store of skins,
Of cushions, passengers, and whatever else
The cariole contain'd: yet safe from harm
Th'adventure serves to make the laugh as round.

Thy baneful influence we again
deplore 265

Dim sighted prejudice, who the beaten path
Wouldst always tread, and 'gainst improvement
bland

Settest thy stubborn face; not the experience
Of thy neighbour states, nor the pow'r of him
Who thrice thy sov'reign's delegated
sway 270

O'er all this country bore, could ough[t] avoid
To form the double path or change the shaft
Which now the [blank space]
Whate'er is from authority prescribed
To counteract: howe'er the good
design'd. 275

The frost well set, and cattle hous'd, e'er yet
The Christmas sports begin, the farmer now
To spare his fodder, and his daily toil
To lessen, sharply sets the murd'rous knife
And stock of every kind profusely
bleed 280

The markets to supply; for rightly pack'd,
And thaws not intervene, safely 'tis kept

Until the sun's returning influence
Makes it no longer needful; while each morn

[*Manuscript ends.*]

Explanatory Notes

Summer

- 4 *Thompson* James Thomson (1700-1748), the author of *The Seasons*, a series of four poems entitled "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter" that were first published together in 1738 and subsequently printed in several revised and corrected editions.
- 10 *clime* Region, country.
- 21 *the bason* The bay and harbour on the St. Lawrence below Quebec City.
- 35 *Erst* Formerly.
- 36-38 *the mournful sledge...Holborn's Hill...St. Sepulchre...* Prior to the abolition of the Tiburn procession in 1783, criminals destined for public execution in London, England were taken on sledges from Newgate prison (the Old Bailey) in the parish of St. Sepulchre, up Holborn and along St. Giles to the gallows at Tyburn (Marble Arch).
- 39 *caleche* Calèche: a two wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse, built to carry the driver and two passengers.
- 43-44 *Canadian roads...Canadian laws...* The poor condition of the streets and roads in and around Quebec City was a matter of continual concern and comment during the years when Robe was in Canada (1786-90, 1800-06) and he is scarcely exaggerating when he writes that "carriages...horses...[and] men [were] endanger'd... / Almost at ev'ry step" (46-48). A Road Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1796 and strengthened in 1799 "to provide more ample and efficacious regulations for the opening of Highways and Roads and construction of Bridges within the Province, and for the amending and repairing the same" (qtd. in Ruddel 249), but poor enforcement of the regulations meant that the situation continued until well into the nineteenth century (see Ruddel 189, 219-20).
- 51 *Britain's first provincial town* Quebec.
- 65 *shad* A food fish of the Atlantic coast in North America.
- 66 *Thames* Robe is referring to the river that flows through "great London" (72), England.
- 68 *bass* Although this word could be "barr" (an obsolete spelling of "bar," a large and flavourful European fish) it has been transcribed

as "bass" because Robe is almost certainly referring to the sea-bass, a species caught off the eastern coast of North America.

72-73 *sturgeon...to majesty...* Sturgeon, a species of fish found in northern waters, were termed "royal fish" because they belonged to the monarch when found on the sea-shore.

78 *cits* Abbreviation of citizens, usually applied snobbishly to city dwellers and tradespeople by those who regard themselves as superior by virtue of their rural connections or social position.

79 *the Lower Town* The portion of Quebec City at the base of Cape Diamond and the site of much of the City's commercial, manufacturing, and, of course, maritime activities (see Dêchene, "The Town of Quebec, 18th Century"). Weld, *Travels* 1: 350 draws a sharp distinction between Quebec's Lower and Upper Towns, describing the former, "mostly inhabited by the traders who are concerned with...shipping," as "a very disagreeable place" and the latter, despite being poorly "laid out," as "extremely agreeable."

83 *western Indies* The British possessions in the islands of the West Indies (and see l. 199).

84 *Greenock...Liverpool* British ports, the former on the Clyde River in southern Scotland and the latter on the Mersey River in western England.

95 *Wether* Whether.

95 *the public edifice* Robe probably had in mind not only the buildings that he himself had designed (see Introduction, above), but also the courthouses that were built in Quebec City and Montreal between 1799 and 1803 and Quebec's Hall (or Hotel), the foundation stone of which was laid in the summer of 1805 (see Kalman 1: 184-91 and *Quebec Mercury*, August 17, 1805).

103 *chimnie flues* Smoke-ducts in chimneys.

105 *magazines* Stores, heaps, or receptacles.

105-06 *fires / Which oft consume this...town...* Because of the extensive use of wood in the construction of houses in Quebec City and the heavy reliance on fires for heating and manufacture, "fire's more dread effects" were common in Quebec and elsewhere in Lower Canada until well into the nineteenth century. An "ordinance for preventing accidents by fire" that prohibited the use of "shingle[s]" and regulated the construction and cleaning of "chimnee flues" (103-06) was enacted in 1777 and amended in 1790 but, partly due to poor enforcement, conflagrations continued to occur in both the Lower and the Upper Towns (see Ruddel 225-36). Robe's name appears on the subscription lists of the Quebec Fire Society in the January 13, 1803, May 26, 1803, and June 14, 1804 issues of the *Quebec Gazette*.

107 *corn* Wheat, barley, oats, and other cereal plants (possibly

including maize or "Indian corn").

- 119- mill...*Caldwell...rich domain* After 1774, when he took
26 ninety-nine year leases on several seigneuries, including the large
seignury of Lauson on the south shore of the St. Lawrence
opposite Quebec City, Henry Caldwell (c.1735-1810), played
increasingly important roles in the development of the
agricultural and forest industries in Lower Canada. Shortly after
leasing Lauson, he "buil[t] a grist-mill there" and during the
Napoleonic Wars "[h]e was able to organize effectively the
cutting and selling of timber [for the Royal Navy] by setting up
sawmills beside his gristmills.... His sawmills were the best
known in Quebec and the Etchemin mills at the mouth of the
River Etchemin were among the largest. Important visitors who
went to see the falls of the Chaudière were sometimes invited to
tour Caldwell's installations" (Caya 130-31). A founder (1789)
and later (1791) president of the Quebec Agricultural Society,
Caldwell was particularly interested in improving the "breeding
of livestock and the growing of hemp" in the Province (Caya
131). In 1801, he purchased the seigneuries that he had thereto
leased and from 1802-1805 he increased his landholdings by
buying two seigneuries adjoining Lauson and several thousand
acres of land in various townships (see Caya 131, Dêchene, "The
Seigneuries," and, for further discussion of Caldwell's sawmills,
Ruddel 119-20).
- 124 *Point Levi* Now Lévis, Pointe Lévi (or de Lévy) on the St.
Lawrence River opposite Quebec City.
- 125 *Chaudiere's fam'd bason* The bay (basin) into which the
Chaudière River flows north into the St. Lawrence just above
Quebec City.
- 129 *Chaudière's and Morency's falls* The falls on the Chaudière
River (see previous note) and on the Montmorency River, which
flows south into the St. Lawrence below Quebec City.
- 130 *Lorette* The Falls of Lorette on the St. Charles River, which
flows south into the St. Lawrence just below Quebec City.
- 140- *the day fast approaches...birth of him...Birthnight Ball* The
66 birthday of King George III (1738-1820; reign, 1760-1820),
June 4, was celebrated annually in Quebec City with a levee and a
ball "for [s]uch Ladies and Gentlemen as have been
presented" (*Quebec Gazette*, June 4, 1795; and see *Quebec
Mercury*, June 9, 1806).
- 169 *torrid zone* The region of the earth between the tropics.
- 173- *plagues / Spread over Egypt...by Moses' rod* See Exodus 7:12
74 for the ten plagues that Moses inflicted on the Egyptians to
persuade the Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage. The
transformation of "Moses' rod" into a serpent is described in

Exodus 7 and the plague of flies in Exodus 8.

- 177 *embued* Endowed.
- 184 *pendant wood* Trees with branches that hang downwards.
- 187 *ears* Robe has written "lears" but clearly "ears" is correct.
- 205 *staves* Strips of wood used to make barrels and other containers.
- 208 *Navy...masts* Since the late eighteenth century, and especially during the Napoleonic Wars, Canada was a source of pine masts for the British navy.
- 209 *Hemp* The context suggests that Robe was wholly or primarily interested in the plant as a source of coarse fibres for the production of rope (and see the note to 119-26, above).
- 224 *trash* Waste matter, particularly (though perhaps not exclusively) cuttings and leaves from trees and bushes.
- 228 *marguerite* Daisy, and similar flowers.
- 232-38 *...separate views...join'd in one...* Despite the broken syntax and blank line in this passage, Robe's meaning is clear enough: the scenery at Quebec is a suitable subject for a panorama, a term coined by its inventor, Robert Barker, in c. 1787 to describe "[a] picture of a landscape or other scene, either arranged on the inside of a cylindrical surface round the spectator as centre (a *cyclorama*) or unrolled or unfolded and made to pass before him, so as to show the various parts in succession" (*OED*). Barker patented his invention in 1787 and in the same and subsequent years exhibited his first panorama, a view of Edinburgh, in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London. Panoramas were very much in vogue in the ensuing decade in Britain and Europe, but Robe's vision of a panorama centred on "the bason of Quebec" does not appear to have been realized; however, in 1830 a picture of the "Basin of Quebec" was included in Robert Burford's *Views of the City of Quebec* "taken from the highest part of the heights of Abraham" (3), which was exhibited at the Panorama in Leicester Square, London (see also Altick 128-97; Bentley, Introduction, *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* xliii-xliv).
- 239 *The scenes of action of the renowned Wolfe* The places associated with the victory and death of General James Wolfe (1727-1759) on the Plains of Abraham in 1759—for example, the sites of his encampments and batteries, the passage by which he led his troops up the cliffs to the plains, and, of course, the battlefield itself and the spot on which he died after hearing of the defeat of the French that was pivotal in Britain's acquisition of France's North American colonies under the Treaty of Paris (1763).
- 252 *summer convoy* During the Napoleonic Wars, British merchant ships travelling to and from Canada, Britain, the West Indies and

elsewhere were assembled into fleets under the protection of ships of war.

- 252 *on the underweigh* On the move, "underweigh" being a variation of "underway" by association with such phrases as "weigh anchor."
- 256 *crowded* Crowded.
- 269 *pigeon...Of breed particular* Passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*), a North American species that migrated in vast flocks in August and was eventually hunted to extinction (the last one died in 1914).
- 293 *...lightning...Cape Diamond's iron ore* By a circular logic, thunderstorms and lightning were believed to be especially plentiful and potent in places that were (therefore) assumed to bear large deposits of iron or copper ore, one such place being Cape Diamond, the promontory that surmounts Quebec City.
- 295-96 *as late beheld...lofty buildings feel the electric flame* The referent for Robe's observation has yet to be identified.
- 301 *shocks* Propped-up groups of bundles or "sheaves" of corn (see the note to 107, above).
- 331 *Rija* Riga, Russia's principal port on the Baltic Sea.
- 367 *Ang[e] Gardien shore* Côte de L'Ange-Gardien: the north shore of the St. Lawrence downriver from Quebec City beyond the Montmorency River and near the village of L'Ange-Gardien (see l. 380).
- 378 *Orleans Isle* Île d'Orleans: the large island in the St. Lawrence downriver from Quebec City.
- 384 *fatt* Fat.
- 403 The word "down" is repeated between "the" and "upper" in this line.

Winter

- 16 *the dread fate of Anticostie's Isle* The treacherous reefs of Anticosti Island (Ile d'Anticosti) in the Gulf of St. Lawrence at the entrance of the St. Lawrence estuary earned the island the title of the "Graveyard of the Gulf."
- 17 *'wail* Wale: choose, select. The presence of the apostrophe suggests that Robe might have had in mind Edmund Spenser's (mis)use of the word "bewails" (meaning, to mourn or lament) in Book 1, Canto 6: 1-3 of the *Faerie Queene*: "As when a ship... An hidden rocke escaped hath unwares / That lay in waite her wrack for to bewaile."
- 52 *Cul-de-Sac* A street in the Lower Town.
- 77 *cariole* Sleigh drawn by one or two horses. Small carriages accommodated only the driver, larger ones a driver and

passengers, and others were used for such purposes as transporting goods to market.

94 *beau* Man of Fashion.

98 *Fortunatus* The hero of a popular tale that appeared in Europe in the sixteenth century, Fortunatus was given by Satan a magic hat that transported him to any place where he wished to be.

101 *Martin cap...Tristram...Corporal* A "Martin cap" is a hat or toque resembling a pointed nightcap, the reference being to Martin of Cambrai (or Cambrai), one of the figures on the clock in Cambrai, France whose peasant attire was regarded as ridiculous. In Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), Tristram makes numerous references to the hat of Corporal Trim and makes it the unlikely focal point of a humorous meditation on morality in Volume 1, Chapter 5.

103 *Bond Street* A fashionable street in London, England.

106 *tippet* Cape or short cloak, usually made of fur or wool, covering the shoulders or the neck and shoulders.

108 *leggings* Extra outer coverings for the legs, usually of leather or heavy cloth, stretching from the ankle to the knee but sometimes higher.

128 In this line Robe has struck out the word "taste" and written "state" above it.

172- *Britain's laws / For poverty* Between 1796 and the Poor Law
73 Amendment Act of 1834, the destitute in England and Wales were given assistance under the so-called Speendhamland System, which decreed that wages below the level necessary for subsistence were supplemented by parishes in accordance with the price of bread and the number of dependants involved. During and following the Napoleonic Wars, extensions, abuses, and the increasing expense of the Speendhamland System gave rise to criticism and, eventually, the amendment of 1834 (see "Poor Law" 218). It is possible that Robe wrote the letter signed "Pro-Pauperibus" and containing a lengthy quotation from Thomson's "Winter" that appears in the March 3, 1806 issue of the *Quebec Mercury*.

184- *the written pass, / By magistrate's authority, to beg* In order to
85 solicit alms, the destitute were required to have a certificate of poverty signed by a magistrate or a church minister.

189 *The Gen'ral Hospital and Hotel Dieu* The Hôpital Général, founded in 1692, and the Hôpital l'Hotel-Dieu, founded in 1639, are both in Quebec City and were staffed by nuns. A second Hotel-Dieu was founded in Montreal in 1642.

211 *tommy cods* Several small varieties of fish resembling cod that are found in the eastern coastal waters of North America (see Bentley, "Editorial Notes" in *Abram's Plains* 35 and *The*

Charivari 98-99, and "An Addition to *OED*").

228 *cahos Cahots*: ruts "formed [across the road] after a heavy fall of snow by...sleighs, which gather up and deposit the snow in furrows" (John Lambert qtd. in Bentley, "Editorial Notes" in *The Charivari* 101).

247 *'wildered* Bewildered.

277 *As ship by head sea top'd* Like a ship tilted up vertically or nearly so by oncoming waves or swells.

275- *The frost well set...the murd'rous knife...* See Weld, *Travels*

80 1:395: "in order to avoid the expence of feeding many [domestic animals] through the winter, as soon as the frost sets in they generally kill cattle and poultry sufficient to last them till the return of spring. The carcasses are buried in the ground, and covered with a heap of snow, and as they are wanted they are dug up....The markets in the towns are always supplied best at this season...."
