Won't you come, come to me in Canada?

Across the broad Atlantic, on Canada's domain,
A colonist was working for the lass he longed to gain.
Inside his little cabin he pictured day by day
The image of his sweetheart and with longing he would say: Won't you come, come to me in

Canada, in Canada in Canada won't you come, come to me in

Canada far away across the foam, with the church bells ringing on our wedding day
We'll drive away upon our sleigh so if you'll be my wife we'll be

happy for life in my cosy Canadian home.

From the singing of Walter Pardon. Transcribed by Fred Weiks.

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A colonist was working for the lass he longed to gain.
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The image of his sweetheart and with longing he would say:

Chorus:
Won't you come, come, come to me in Canada,
In Canada, in Canada?
Won't you come, come, come to me in Canada,
Far away across the foam?
With the church bells ringing on our wedding day,
We'll drive away upon our sleigh.
So if you'll be my wife, we'll be happy for life,
In my cosy Canadian home.

The lass at home was waiting to be his cherished wife;
To share his little cabin and to cling to him through life.
She knew that he would claim her when with fortune he was blessed
And often she would fancy he was calling from the west:

The colonist succeeded and the lass became his own
And now their little cabin to a larger one has grown.
And as they sit together, beneath the maple tree,
He tells her how he called her long ago across that sea:
For sons of mother England who are not afraid of toil,
There’s health upon the prairies, there’s fortune in the soil.
You’ll lead a life of freedom, win friendship warm and true,
And soon you’ll send this message to the lass who waits for you:

Canada Folk Bulletin is very grateful to Mike Yates, the noted British collector, for sending to us a tape and transcript of this song. The singer, Walter Pardon, learned the song from a cousin in the early ’thirties. The cousin had himself learned it to sing at one of the yearly Parish Teas, held each New Year in that part of Norfolk up to the beginning of World War I. He had picked it up from a local singer and player who used it as a signature tune, and who was thereby known as “Canada.”

Efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to trace the song’s origins have not met, so far, with success. Its theme of encouraging emigration to the western prairies suggests a connection to Donald Sifton, the highly successful Immigration Minister of the period. It was the prospect of free land, painted in glowing terms on posters and handbills (and in songs such as this), coupled with the unemployment of the final years of the ‘Great Depression’ (1872-96), which brought thousands of people to ride west on the colonist cars of the CPR to the ‘life of freedom.’

Jon Bartlett

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