

## NEW BOOKS

HEAD-WATERS OF CANADIAN LITERATURE. By Archibald MacMechan. McClelland & Stewart. Toronto. 1924.

There has been in recent years so much discussion, wise and otherwise, of "Canadian Literature" throughout the Dominion that it might seem an opportunity was offered for some such scepticism as that of Betsy Prig in regard to the too-often-quoted Mrs. Harris. If such an unbeliever exists, he may well be referred to the volume before us. Dr. MacMechan is thoroughly familiar with his subject-matter, and is restrained and moderate in dealing with its implications. He carefully avoids exaggeration in his estimate of the intellectual progress which Canada has already made, while he recognizes that even in a day of small things we can gather the seed-corn from which later an abundant harvest may spring. He gives a clear view of the principal sources of literary interest and activity, and presents an illuminating picture of the conditions, social, educational and racial, which have helped to determine the force and direction of these literary currents. His criticism of particular poets is usually both sympathetic and discriminating. Of Lampman's verse he writes with warm appreciation, and of Marjorie Pickthall's with enthusiasm. He also recognizes fully the lyrical beauty of Bliss Carman's earlier work, and he says truly of Roberts's poem commemorative of Shelley that "it is probably the best poem *de longue haleine* ever written by a Canadian." His quotations from these poets are well chosen. On the other hand, he is commendably frank in pointing out the weakness and futility of much that goes by the name of poetry in this country. "Canadian verse shows its amateurishness in the defective technique, the forced rhyme, the otiose epithet, the cloudy syntax, the lack of rule and proportion, the inability to handle a chosen metre consistently."

His judgments on prose matters are sometimes scarcely so convincing. We gasp a little on reading that Sara Jeannette Duncan (Mrs. Cotes) is "a social satirist of the Jane Austen type." Indeed Dr. MacMechan's judgment on this lady's novels seems to lean a good deal to mercy's side. On the other hand, he is perhaps a little too severe in his condemnation of Gilbert Parker's fiction. Haliburton he overpraises, as is usual in Nova Scotia; *Sam Slick* is read in the present day about as much as it deserves,—which is very little indeed.

One implication that seems to run through the book is, in the present writer's opinion, a mistake—namely, that for truly *Canadian* literature the subject written of should be Canadian. Surely Browning was not the less an English poet because he wrote *The Ring and the Book*, or Gibbon less an English man of letters because he was the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Canadian literature will take a long step away from provincialism when the themes chosen are broader and more nearly universal in interest than is the case at present. Too large sacrifices have been made to the fetish of "local colour."

The most satisfactory and valuable part of Dr. MacMechan's interesting book consists of the chapters dealing with French Canadian literature,—a subject with which he is perfectly conversant. It will be a revelation to many of his readers to learn of the beauty and strength of the poetry of such men as Crémazie, Nelligan, Lozeau and Paul Morin. It is no small service to bring to our knowledge this wealth of imaginative verse, coming to us from those who are our own fellow countrymen, although their tongue is not ours. It is time that the gulf which separates the thought and feeling of the two races in Canada should be bridged, so that we may know our French compatriots as they are; since "tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner."

E. R.

HIGHWAYS OF CANADIAN LITERATURE. By J. D. Logan, M. A., Ph. D., Litt. D., Lecturer on Canadian Literature, Acadia University, Wolfville, N. S., and Donald G. French, Honorary President of the Canadian Literature Club, Toronto. McClelland & Stewart. Toronto. 1924.

In reviewing this book *The Montreal Star* remarks that there has long been urgent need of a comprehensive history of the literature of Canada. It adds, "That want is now supplied adequately by a critical history that covers the ground completely from 1760 to the present years." With this opinion all thoughtful readers of this excellently-written, well-printed, valuably-instructive and healthily-interesting book will fully agree. There can be no question with regard to Dr. Logan's special qualifications for his work, or as to his clearness of insight, keen powers of analysis, and extensive knowledge of his subject. Mr. French, his associate in a relatively small portion of the undertaking, also appears to have been well equipped for his part of the joint task.

Dr. Logan's aim, as stated in his preface, is to promote more earnest and sympathetic study of Canadian literature. He was solely responsible for the conception of the work, and its method of treatment. Mr. French is to be credited with the revision and enlargement of Dr. Logan's three original chapters on Canadian novelists and short-story writers. The method of the work is philosophical. A critic, if disposed to find carping fault, might remark that its terminology is sometimes rather excessively so. Dr. Logan views Canadian literature in relationship with the whole of English literature. He holds that Canadian literature, apart from its merits in comparison with other literatures, has spiritual and aesthetic contents peculiar to itself, and which make special appeal to Canadians. Moved by this idea, he enquires how Canadian literary culture began, and to what extent this culture is to be attributed respectively to British, to New England—Puritan or Loyalist—and to Canadian influences. He traces the gradual infiltration of native Canadian ideals into the country's literature, and shows how it came to embody a Canadian spirit and express Canadian nature. The comprehension of these things is what Dr.

Logan means by his phrase, "the higher study" of Canadian literature. His attitude towards that literature, which he necessarily recognizes is not, at least in considerable part, of the highest artistic quality, is neither patronizing nor intolerant. He understands that whatever may be the comparative merits of a literature with regard to other literatures, it represents the culture and, to a certain extent, is an expression of the spirit of the people to whom it owes its origin, and is of much import to them. Dr. Logan is to be complimented on the stress which he lays on this significant and important fact.

The book deals critically with every important species of Canadian writings, from the earliest to the latest. The chapters are noticeably unequal in length, owing to the varying character of the subjects with which they have to deal. The one, for example, on the Drama, which is in its very infancy, is naturally shorter than that on Elegiac Monodies. The chapters on the Poets of the Systematic School are of a much more lengthy and weighty character. They afford a really fine illustration of valuably instructive and constructive criticism, of which we have heretofore had so little. Whether one does or does not agree with Dr. Logan's criticisms, is of small consequence in comparison with the fact that he has submitted such systematic and independent criticism in so important a matter. The most elaborate chapters of the book are those on Haliburton and Joseph Howe. In the author's opinion, Howe and Haliburton heralded the era of independent literary journalism in Canada.

Though not itself above criticism in all respects, *Highways of Canadian Literature* is on the whole, and in most of its details, a highly praiseworthy production. Its brilliant author richly deserves the gratitude of the Canadian public both for what he has attempted and for what he has accomplished. His work should teach the people of the Dominion to respect their own literature, and to manifest their respect by properly familiarizing themselves with it. Dr. Logan's book will show them by what right our native literature is entitled to sympathetic and systematic study in our homes as well as in our high-schools, colleges and universities. It may not be a *great* literature; but the best of it, in prose and verse, is certainly *good* literature. Dr. Logan's latest contribution to it may be confidently classified in the latter category.

W. E. M.

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GETTING A LAUGH, AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Charles Grandgent.  
Harvard University Press. 1924.

Professor Grandgent is best known in scholarly circles as a student and interpreter of Dante. In the seven essays here published he discourses at his ease on varied topics. "Getting a Laugh"—the eponymous essay—examines, but does not obtrude upon the reader, the philosophy of its subject. The statement of the case is serious enough:

Most of the time, in these days clouded by original sin, hilarity is inhibited by pain, by care, by thought. For us, then, laughter means release from the usual inhibitions, a release oftenest accomplished by surprise.

This comment is that of a shrewd and humorous observer:

When a person who enjoys an established reputation for humour opens his mouth, we are all ready to snigger; and from his lips we greet with quick responsive peals a remark that uttered by another would not awaken a smile. . . . The artist playing opposite you says something about being a better man; whereupon you exclaim "Gunga Din," and the house shakes with laughter—although I am ready to swear that nine-tenths of the people could not tell, to save their necks, whether Gunga Din is a cigarette or an automobile.

The prime requisite of ready speech, according to Professor Grandgent, is confidence, and he declares confidence to be ensured by the possession of a loud voice, preferably second bass, whose resonance suggests that the speaker is always right. Orators and politicians, we are reminded, have voices and mouths alike big. The small-mouthed must rely on brains, unless they are very rich.

In "Prejudices and Hills" hills are mentioned, and some prejudices, but the title does not greatly matter. The writer refers to a village in the south-west where the people have forgotten how to speak dialect, or else had never been properly taught. "Harvard and Yale professors have a much better command of slang." Once, in his boyhood, Professor Grandgent overheard some little girls making derogatory remarks about himself, and stole away, invisible, behind the fence. "To this episode," he says, "I owe the gift of seeing myself as others see me—a cursed gift." In the Preparedness Procession at Cambridge, before the United States entered the war, there was much delay and tedium. "The people of Cambridge don't know what their City Council is doin' for 'em," wearily shouted one. "Naw! But they suspect it," retorted another. Something, says Professor Grandgent, makes him think of Moses, his white cat. At the first dinner party in his household, just as the guests were seated at table, the cook's stentorian voice was heard from the kitchen: "Moses, ye dirty beast, take yer head out o' the soup."

"The Why and the How of Speech" is a pleasant and non-technical discussion of the nature of language, by a man who knows what language is—so far as any of us can know:

Man is a far more versatile machinist than the spider. . . . He can talk a good deal more than a parrot; and as long as he keeps out of politics, he can talk better. . . . He can adapt himself to circumstances, whereas the beaver, if confined in a third-story room in a city house, will immediately proceed industriously to gnaw the legs off the chairs in order to construct a dam across the floor—just as a Republican Congress immediately proceeds to erect a high tariff. . . . If we limit our consideration to man as we know him, we are forced to conclude either that speech precedes reason, or that reason and speech—like Tigris and Euphrates—issue simultaneously from the same spring.

"Toussier et Cracher" owes the title to a phrase in *Les Femmes Savantes*. The thesis of this essay is that in imitation we tend to copy the objectionable. Fashions in speech have a fascination for Professor Grandgent, and he suspects that religious dogma may be born largely of literal interpretation of metaphors. The opening lines of the *Psalm of Life*, with the reference to "mournful numbers", made him think as a boy of a long doleful file, a delegation of undertakers, in top hats, black gloves, and black frock coats, waiting on the poet to inform him that life is but an empty dream! His discussion of educational topics is pithy. Lectures, he declares, are a cheap substitute for education;

and a thesis, in order to prove its originality, must abound in bibliographical data. Professor Grandgent raises the question which is the most beautiful language, and decides in favour of Italian. It would be interesting, he says, to find out which language would be judged most beautiful by "a jury of its peers." Such evidence as he can find on this problem points in the direction of "American English," though he suspects that no one has properly urged the claims of Danish, Dutch, or Arabic.

There are amusing things about manners. Much is to be said, our author thinks, for the view that the most satisfactory of all social functions is a funeral, where one may look just as one feels. A stag banquet might be delectable, but for the "postprandial offering of speakers and hearers on the altar of boredom." Smoking comes in for some pleasant humour. The municipal workman, we are told, must have some pastime to occupy the interval between one blow of the pick and the next. What more interesting stop-gap than lighting and relighting? Or take four or five college students, sitting behind books to which they give such attention as is not needed to keep their pipes alight. "The spectacle leads to the conclusion that if pipes were excluded, the college course would automatically reduce itself from four years to one." What about business and baseball? "Profits," said Professor Grandgent, "are a byproduct of business, and business is the great American sport." Perhaps the hypothetical objector will say that the great American sport is baseball. But that is where the hypothetical objector is wrong, as indeed he always is. He exists for no other purpose. "No, baseball is not an American sport; it is the American religion."

*Getting a Laugh* is good throughout. There is not a dull page. It is the sort of book we would all write if we could, for it fulfills the proper function of a book of essays. It gives genuine and hearty pleasure.

E. W. NICHOLS.

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A HISTORY OF FRANCE FROM THE DEATH OF LOUIS XI. By John S. C. Bridge. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1924.

This volume is the second of a series which, if continued with the same skill and detail, will give us our best history of France in the English language. The first volume covered the first ten years of the reign of Charles VIII, during the regency of his sister, Anne of Beaujeu. It is here followed by an account of the personal rule of the same king from 1493 to 1498.

Although only five years of French history are treated, these are years of the greatest significance, not only for France, but for Europe. Indeed if this volume were not one of a series, its title might well be changed to that of a history of the expedition of Charles VIII into Italy. That expedition brought nothing but loss to France, while for Italy it meant "the destruction of her wealth, death to her liberty, and the abrupt eclipse of all her hopes." It marked the close of one great period of Italian history, and the beginning of more than three centuries of decay and humiliation. In 1494 that country was in



advance of the rest of Europe in civilization and material prosperity. Her richly cultivated fields and terraced hillsides were admired by every traveller. Her ships traded with every port in Europe and the Levant; her workshops turned out goods that sold in every market; her bankers lent money to kings and princes; her churches and her palaces were filled with the glories of Renaissance art.

But Italy had two weaknesses. She was not a nation, but a group of quarrelling States, hating one another with a bitterness that no foreign danger could assuage. They lacked not only union, but also military strength. Instead of possessing a citizen soldiery, Italy trusted her defence to mercenary generals and mercenary armies. So long as her wars were between Italian States, the real weakness of this system did not appear. But on invasion by Charles VIII and his French army the sham was revealed.

In 1494 the world knew that Italy was rich. After the French expedition the world knew that she was also weak. It became simply a question which foreign people should seize the spoil. Italy becomes that "geographical expression" which she was to remain until the time of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel. Mr. Bridge's account of the French king's attempt to conquer the kingdom of Naples is admirably clear, although the addition of a map would add to the reader's convenience. The story is almost equally divided between diplomacy and military history. Although Ludovico il Moro fills the centre of the diplomatic stage, the most successful player is Ferdinand of Spain. It was not for nothing that many attributed Guicciardini's skill in cold and unscrupulous diplomacy to his experience at the Spanish court. Treachery, fraud and murder, the assumption that all actions arise from the worst of motives, were but the accepted principles on which the game was played. Machiavelli could not improve upon the practice of his time.

As the reader closes Mr. Bridge's book, he is likely to recall the desolating judgment of Gibbon that history is no more than the story of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind. Certainly there are enough crimes, follies and misfortunes recorded in this volume to satisfy the most exacting.

G. E. WILSON.

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CATULLUS. Translated by Sir William Morris. With the Latin Text. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1924.

With the renewed interest which is now being taken in the immortal deeds and words of the people of ancient Greece and Rome, a cordial welcome will no doubt be extended to this dainty booklet which has come to us from the Toronto branch of the Oxford University Press, and which bears upon its cover the name of Catullus.

The little volume, which is beautifully printed in small but very clear type, and which is in compass small enough to be easily accommodated even in a waistcoat pocket, contains on the left-hand page the verses of the Latin poet, while the opposite page contains a translation in English verse by Sir William Morris. Those who in their earlier years gained some intimacy with the writings of Catullus will naturally turn at once to some of their old favourites to see how these have fared

at the hands of the latest translator. They will look for such pieces as the *Sirmio*, the one in honour of the friend "who stood above three hundred thousand of his friends," the one in honour of his yacht, those upon the sparrow of Lesbia, and those upon Lesbia herself—whether in the way of adoration or of execration. It is safe to say that such readers will find here much to commend. Others, hitherto uninitiated, will find this a delightful way of making the acquaintance of the handsome, high-spirited and brilliant young provincial who at the age of three-and-twenty left his father's home at Verona and came to Rome, plunged wholeheartedly into the vortex of the swift social life which prevailed in that gay capital at the time when the republic was fast tottering to its end; the young man who had the audacity to make love to the first lady of the land, and to lampoon Julius Caesar himself, who had just been so sensitive to an affront placed upon the grandfather of his father-in-law that he had to wipe it out in the blood of more than a quarter of a million human beings—and it was his third father-in-law at that!

The story of the young poet's chequered experiences after his arrival in the metropolis, during the brief span of seven years that yet remained to him, is set forth in his poems with a naïveté and a frankness which have never been outdone. There, among many other matters of interest, is to be found the record of his falling before the fascinations of the fair and false Lesbia, the raptures and the ruptures and the reconciliations that followed, the wavering between love and hate, the final renunciation and the ensuing enmity as fierce and as unreserved as the love that had preceded it. If one wishes to find words that came "flamingly from the heart," they are in the pages of this most outspoken of men.

Any reader who comes to Sir William Morris's translation expecting that the words of Catullus will be mirrored there as faithfully and as elegantly as the poet's words mirrored his own emotions, is doomed to disappointment. In the first place, the exigencies of metre and rhyme, which the translator has chosen to employ, render close adherence to the words of the original text extremely difficult. One finds, too, occasional departure from the conditions constituting a perfect rhyme, and here and there a slight infelicity of expression, or a failure to bring out in its entirety the real meaning. But despite defects of this nature, it may be said that the general sense and spirit of the original are admirably represented in this English version. Here is a specimen, taken from the poem which Catullus wrote on the occasion of a visit to the tomb of his only brother, who was cut off by a premature death in a distant land:

By many lands and over many a wave  
 I come, my brother, to your piteous grave,  
 To bring you the last offering in death,  
 And o'er dumb dust expend an idle breath;  
 For fate has torn your living self from me,  
 And snatched you, brother, Oh, how cruelly!  
 Yet take these gifts, brought as our fathers bade  
 For sorrow's tribute to the passing shade;  
 A brother's tears have wet them o'er and o'er;  
 And so, my brother, hail, and farewell evermore!

HOWARD MURRAY

MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES. By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.  
With Illustrations. Boston. Little, Brown, & Company.  
1924.

In spite of the idiosyncrasies of the style, which is far from possessing an Isocratean polish, the raciness and the human appeal of this autobiography are sure to hold the attention of the reader from first to last. There is to be discerned throughout a jovial disregard for such small matters as split infinitives, improper uses of grammatical numbers, and—doubtless a mark of the author's Hibernian ancestry and Caledonian unbringing—a perplexing mixture of "shall" and "will," "would" and "should." And yet the narrative runs so brightly and trippingly that one is carried away by it as completely as though he were immersed in the adventures of the immortal "Sherlock" himself, and not in those of his creator.

The work, for all its length, is far from being a complete history of Sir Arthur's life. It is obvious that during the apparently dull years of his boyhood and his early struggles when he was a more or less unsuccessful physician, the idea that he was destined to become one of the earth's great can hardly have occurred to him. He has neglected that important business of keeping a diary and of preserving letters and telegrams, and the narrative of his activities during that period has consequently suffered.

But after all, the mind of this writer is cast in an adventurous mould, and it is doubtless his *penchant* for the thrilling and the marvellous more than anything else that has led him, after perils in the Arctic Ocean and on the African coast, and experiences in Egypt and the Sudan and in the South African and World Wars, to hasten—while still in the flesh—after further adventures in the realm of the Unseen. In respect to this last, it is hardly likely that mankind will ever be disposed to take Sir Arthur as seriously as he has taken himself. In one place he recounts how, in conversation with his brother, he stated impulsively that his real career was destined not to be political or even literary, but religious! At the time, the reply was received with laughter; but of the occurrence he now gravely remarks: "It was a curious example of that unconscious power of prophecy which is latent within us." In the closing chapter of the book the author tells of his psychical mission, in the spring of 1922, to the eastern States of America, "where the Spiritual movement had fallen into a somewhat languishing state," and of his pilgrimage to the great West the following year. "But," he naively concludes, "I am still unsatisfied, for the southern States of the Union have not been touched." His dearest and most pious friends ought all to pray that the good Sir Arthur may not, in course of time, come to conceive of himself as a second Confucius or Mohammed. There are indications in plenty that he is at present walking on a spiritual plane of alarming steepness.

His political experiences have been largely forgotten, in all probability, by everyone but himself. One may detect, I think, a note of chagrin—which is doubtless natural enough—in Sir Arthur's description of his two unsuccessful attempts at gaining a foothold in public life. However, he contested seats notoriously difficult from his party's



point of view, and his defeats were by no means ignominious. It may be safe to assume that had victory attended his efforts, his shrewdness, kindness, honesty, and untiring energy would have carried him far. But quite possibly the gods, in mercy and not in a spirit of envy, drew him back—roughly it may be, but none the less wisely—from the edge of that dangerous whirlpool whither his steps were straying, that he might continue to delight and edify simple-hearted and romantic folk with his stories and war-histories, and even carry the knowledge of things psychical into the dark places of the earth.

A. D. FRASER.

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THE HOME OF AN EASTERN CLAN. By Mrs. Leslie Milne. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1924.

The authoress of this book is an Anglo-Indian with a wide interest in native races. At the pagodas of Rangoon and Mandalay she falls in with some quaint pilgrims from the hill country, and inquires into their language and customs. By invitation of one of their chiefs she takes up her residence at Namhsan, the capital of Tawngpeng, a Shan state of Upper Burma. The subjects of her study are the Palaungs, whose clans are distributed throughout the Hinterlands of British India and China. Successive migrations of Burmans and Shans have driven them to the hills, where they have remained unmixed and secure, "hardly touched by the waves of battle that surged to and fro in the valleys below." Thus the Palaungs exhibit a culture in the main unaffected by outside influences, each clan an enclave with a dialect and customs peculiar to itself. Such a people is treasure-trove for the ethnologist, and Mrs. Milne makes a fascinating volume about them, deriving facts at first hand from the Palaungs themselves. In her own words, "the East is changing so rapidly, taking on a veneer of European civilization, that the customs of a people off the beaten track and as yet uninfluenced by contact with the West are . . . . worth preserving."

Mrs. Milne's study of this quiet, agricultural folk is exhaustive. Childhood, youth, homelife, law and custom, charms and omens, wise men and oracles, Buddhas, ogres and spirits—all are in the picture. Of special interest are the proverbs and specimens of folk-lore, as well as the translation of Palaung poetry with which the volume abounds. To the reader the total impression is of a mild-eyed people in a land of paddy fields and tea-gardens, where life is tranquil and the end Nirvana.

From the point of view of research, *The Home of an Eastern Clan* is an important contribution in a field in which Frazer's *Golden Bough* stands preminent. For the general reader it may perhaps run a trifle too much to detail; but, as she says herself, Mrs. Milne was advised to omit nothing of ethnological interest. Indeed, it is only such comprehensive records that make comparative sociology possible.

H. F. M.

Dr. MacMechan furnishes references to satisfy the curious or sceptical; and the authenticity of the tale of the *Saladin* I have been able in some particulars to test by lending it to one of Carr's old pupils to read; for Carr, after coming ashore, at some time taught school. This pupil said that the description of Carr agreed with her recollection of him, and that the tale as told by Dr. MacMechan was the same tale which Carr's pupils told each other behind his back fifty years ago. Such confirmation is worth much documentary evidence.

*Old Province Tales* is a good practical exemplification of a very ancient saying which every Bluenose may well lay to heart and which may be adapted as *Spartam nacti sumus; hanc exornemus*.

E. W. NICHOLS.

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JOHNSON'S JOURNEY TO THE WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND,  
AND BOSWELL'S JOURNAL OF A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDIES WITH  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D. Edited by R. W. Chapman.  
Oxford University Press. Humphrey Milford. 1924.

In this edition these two closely related books are presented in a form as convenient and attractive as any reader can desire. The text has been carefully corrected, the notes are ample, and the appendixes contain matter which adds to the interest of the narratives. Moreover it is a real advantage to have the two bound together;—Johnson's carefully composed and somewhat ponderous account of the Journey gains liveliness from Boswell's more intimate story and gives that story substantial support. Both make good reading; nowhere does one find a better description of the life of rural Scotland in the eighteenth century, while the famous lexicographer and his docile and devout disciple present themselves with all their good qualities and all their little foibles in most characteristic fashion. Johnson's prose writing is but little to the taste of the present day, but those who wish to sample it will find in the *Journey* less indigestible fare than in most of his other work. Boswell's *Journal* is, however, much the more entertaining of the two narratives, and even if he had never written his immortal "Life" we should have had in these pages an unforgettable picture of his great though ungainly hero, and a self-revelation as amusing as it was candid.

E. R.