

is still determined to be of it, and whose mind is set on demonstrating to his coevals, and to their juniors, what old age can be made and what services it may perform.

"Senescence" is, on the whole, somewhat easier to compass than "Adolescence" was. It is in one volume instead of two; looking backward, instead of forward, it has a less definite structure and trend to be followed and mastered; still more than its predecessor it is in the nature of a compilation, and this phase is emphasized by an extended questionnaire in which many elders of capacity and distinction express themselves (however partially and cautiously) on a dozen points germane to the general inquiry. Thus, in several of the chapters one is free to select and summarize for oneself.

Mr. Hall's encyclopedic ransacking of the centuries begins with classical antiquity: Aristotle has his say, and Cicero his. Aristotle in particular makes the ancients (meaning the ancients among the ancients) most pathetic. And, indeed, they had their drawbacks and deprivations: teeth without dentists, eyes without spectacles, ears without ear-trumpets, bones without rocking-chairs, cold without "central heating," leisure without electric lights, magazines, and golf-links, general deterioration without transplantation of glands, and little or nothing in the way of asylums, old-age pensions, and Sunset Clubs. Surely the lot of the modern ancient (in regard to the things that today considers essential) is less bleak, chill, and stony.

Mr. Hall early blazes a trail through the domain of old age and its history; and, as I have implied, a reader may pick and choose from the author's illustrations along the way. If he prefers to pass over Cicero's Cato, he may pause upon the prodigies which Luigi Cornaro performed on himself in the days of the Venetian Renaissance. Or he may fly to a later England and listen to the sentiments and aphorisms of Bacon or Burton or Swift. In any event, with whatever acceptances and declinations, he will be well served and satisfied.

The same with regard to the succeeding chapter, Literature on and by the Aged. Here the choice is even wider; from Emerson to Walt Mason, and from Cardinal Gibbons to Richard Le Gallienne. There is a quaintly curt résumé of Howells's "Eighty Years and After," and also an extended survey of Shaw's "Back to Methuselah." Again the choice is wide and varied—one need not read all. So also with a later chapter on medical views and treatment. If you do not care for Charcot, you may move on to Sir James Crichton-Brown. If you prefer Sir Dyce Duckworth to the untitled Ewald of Germany, your choice is untrammelled. To review *all* the medical authorities, *seriatim*, might indeed depress.

Shaw's "Back to Methuselah," whatever other views may be taken of that eminent farceur, seems to have made a real impression on Mr. Hall. He, also, feels that life is now too short to prepare for life. But with the span of life limited as it is, let the old help out the younger. Old age has its services to perform—here is the author's "main thesis." Old age may be, and ought to be, "an Indian summer of increased clarity and efficiency in intellectual work." A central trait of old age is disillusionment: "It sees through the shams and vanities of life." The very basis of our civilization is now in danger for want of the "aloofness, impartiality, and power of generalization that age can best supply." Age should not devote itself to rest and rust, nor to amusements, travel, or indulgence of personal tastes, but should address itself to the newer tasks that wait in such abundance, realizing that it owes a debt to the world which it now really wants to pay. Never such a "crying need of Nestors and Merlins" as in these post-bellum days, when the objectivity, impartiality, breadth, and perspective that age alone can supply are more needed than ever before. The world requires freedom from the vanity and shallowness of narrow partisanship and jingoism, and clearness of vision to see through "the social shams that often veil corruption and the insanity of the money-hunt that monopolizes most of the energy of our entire civilization," and to perceive that "with all our vaunted progress man still remains essentially

juvenile—much as he was before history began." What the world needs, Mr. Hall maintains, continuing, is a higher criticism of life. The function of competent old age should be to sum up, keep perspective, draw lessons. It should be the keeper of the standards of right and wrong and mete out justice with the impartiality and aloofness that befit it, even "supplanting the technicalities of law by equity and giving ethics its rights in verdicts." There is even a suggestion for a National Senescent League, with committees, publications, and all the other apparatus of organization. The wisdom of the old, as exhibited through the past ten years, is unlikely enough (as most of us have been made to feel) to commend itself to the younger generation and Mr. Hall is prepared to recognize this fact. "The World War was not primarily a young man's war, for most of the soldiers were sent by their elders and met their death that the influence of the latter might be augmented. Men may be made senile by their years without growing wise. Thus the world is without true leaders in this hour of its greatest need till we wonder whether a few score funerals of those now in power would not be our greatest boon. A psychological senility that neither learns nor forgets is always a menace and a check instead of being, as true old age should be, a guide in emergencies."

However, a full mortuary coloring is reserved for the closing pages. But even here, "general information" and "literature" continue, as before, and soften the final shock. One may dwell, with our author himself, on Thanatopsis and Crossing the Bar; or one may adopt a more independent line of thought, posing, with an intent and stiffened fortitude and with a secular disregard of earlier teachings, the alert and gallant query: "What next?"

HENRY B. FULLER

## A Political Sir Bedivere

*Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.* By Oscar Douglas Skelton. The Century Company. 2 vols. \$8.

N O genuine lover of democracy, Canadian or other, can complete the reading of these two volumes without experiencing a profound sense of depression. For what Mr. Skelton has succeeded in making of them, whether intentionally or unintentionally matters little, is not so much the mere life story of Canada's foremost Liberal statesman as the record of the constitutional and political background amidst which the happenings of that story were enacted. And the record is indeed a shameful one. True, the period covered was a time of material expansion and of seeming national success. It witnessed the development of a half-dozen weakling, jealous colonies, slightly practiced in their tardily won and much begrudged right of self-government, into a powerfully influential and virtually coordinate partnership in the British commonwealth of nations, the trebling of their populations, an addition to their domestic industry and foreign trade that has raised their financial rating from a few millions of dollars to comfortable billions, an extension of their railway system from a paltry thousand miles of length to the inclusion of a triple transcontinental service, and their attainment of a stature in military efficiency capable of sustaining with signal effectiveness a by no means minor part in the World War. Yet it was a period, too, that saw the natural rivalries and antagonisms inherent in the Canadian heritage of racial dichotomy, obliteration and reconciliation of which was everywhere recognized as of paramount importance in the creation of a stable federation of states, magnified by religious and economic distrust and hatred to a degree of sectional animosity that threatens to retard indefinitely the achievement of a permanent solidarity in Canadian nationalism. It was a period which saw the degeneration of public morality in Canada from a level at which Dominion school children could be taught, in all good conscience, to thank God that they did not belong to a citizenry such as that of their unspeakable neighbors on the south to a depth of political prostitution that has bettered its south-

ern instruction in every trick of graft and bribery derived from however iniquitous a source. This is instanced alike in the perhaps unprecedented effrontery of the pillaging of government funds and holdings that took place throughout the expansion era of Canada's railway building, and in the astounding amount of defiant war-time profiteering, both in place-getting and production, that tarnished with ignominy an otherwise honorable episode in Canadian history. More deplorable, though, than either the increase in bitterness of feeling between French and English Canada or the decay in civic virtue in each part of the country was the fact that the one personality in public life who both by principle and example set himself steadfastly to resist the drift toward either eventuality always encountered vehement opposition as a party leader and finally met with unmistakable repudiation.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, at least as presented through the medium of his official biography, falls somewhat short of the rank of the truly great, whether judged by his deeds or by his spoken or written word. He was a politician of an old school, a self-confessed Victorian Whig, who lived on into an age when something more than a doctrinaire liberalism was demanded of him. Without a far-sighted plan of constructive statesmanship he was subject to the compulsion of shaping his course by a day-to-day advance from one position to another. As a consequence he found himself at the close of his career considerably removed from his early desire for Canadian independence, on the one hand calmly acquiescent in a movement that headed straight toward an assumption on the part of the colonies of a growing number of Imperial privileges and responsibilities, on the other quietly opposing any tendency that might show itself in the direction of a closer Empire organization, and apparently altogether indifferent about crossing the bridge of determining whither his paradox of policies must sooner or later lead. Equally unplotted was the path he pursued in deciding upon his own, and his party's, stand on such varied matters as the tariff, reciprocity with the United States, the denominational schools question, and a program of national railway construction. Yet with all the contradictions and readjustments in the planking of political platforms inevitably accompanying so devious a progression, he was preeminently the man the needs of his time required. For however much of an opportunist Sir Wilfrid Laurier may have been in respect to the means employed in reaching his wished-for ends as leader of a parliamentary opposition or as the first minister of his land, he was none, as his biographer is at pains to point out on more than one occasion, in respect to his morality. Two features of his life-long party service stand out with unquestionable consistency: his fundamental honesty and his devotion to the cause of Canadian race harmony. With what tenacity of moral courage he maintained himself in the situation in which these, his most conspicuous personal characteristic and his most compelling political purpose, placed him is revealed in the necessity he was frequently under of repelling single-handed the combined attacks of Orange fanaticism in Ontario and the bigotry of Ultramontanist in Quebec. One would think that the accident of his French-Canadian birth, coupled with the enforced associations of his years of party management with English-speaking colleagues, might have made him an irresistible influence in the realization of the dream to which he dedicated himself when entering the arena of Canadian politics: "I have taken the work of Confederation where I found it . . . and determined to give it my life." But in the end they defeated him, and he went to his grave with the rancors of the conscription issue menacing the last vestiges of whatever had been accomplished in the healing of inter-racial conflict during a half century's experiment in colonial union. Too English for his fellow French-Canadians, too French for his countrymen of British extraction, too Catholic for the Protestants, too Protestant for the Papists, he fought in what was bound to be for him a losing contest. The fifteen years of his premiership, a longer continuous reign of power than that of any other

Canadian premier, may appear to deny this, but the often repeated "I have lived too long" of his later days shows how really empty was his seeming triumph. The time came when his once successful electioneering slogan, "Follow my white plume," phrased in reference to his silvering locks, proved a vain appeal even in his own Quebec. It meant that the sterling qualities of a gallant knight "sans peur et sans reproche," the grail of whose unceasing quest was the vision of a national unity based on racial and religious tolerance, could move the Canadian electorate no more. Therein lay not only the personal tragedy of Sir Wilfrid Laurier but that of his country as well.

Mr. Skelton's work is obviously that of a partisan admirer of its subject, with the resultant effect that it suffers slightly from lack of frankness in criticism and convincingness of defense. Certain aspects of Laurier's public life call for rather more explanation of procedure and motive than this account of them affords, notably his disinclination to correct the weaknesses of his government's railway policy, the tardiness of his concern over the peculations and derelictions of his cabinet associates, his advocacy of the original clauses of the Northwest province bills, the failure to prepare his followers for the announcement of the reciprocity proposals of 1911, his unwillingness to support Sir Robert Borden's advance along the pathway he himself had blazed toward the goal of utmost colonial autonomy compatible with Imperial sovereignty, and his unreasoning suspicion of the imperialistic designs of the London *Round Table* group. From the point of view of an American reader, Mr. Skelton's work suffers also from an occasional obscurity of allusion to the little-known participants in provincial politics. Less frequently there is obscurity of statement and careless proofreading. Upon the whole the impression which this book creates remains that of an inviting task graciously undertaken and competently performed. Undoubtedly it will take the place it rightfully deserves, among the greater Canadian biographies. V. L. O. CHITTICK

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# International Relations Section

## Mexico's Land

THE latest Mexican law regulating the expropriation and distribution of agricultural lands was signed by President Obregon on April 10 and printed in the *Diario Oficial* on April 18. The new law revises and corrects, on the basis of more than a year of experience, the earlier land law passed by the present Government which was published in the International Relations Section of *The Nation* on February 9, 1921.

I, Alvaro Obregon, constitutional President of the United States of Mexico, in virtue of the powers granted me in Section 1 of Article 89 of the general constitution of the Republic, and Article 3 of the law passed by the Congress of the Union, November 22, 1921, and in accordance with the bases established by that law, have decided to issue the following

### AGRARIAN REGULATION

ARTICLE 1. Lands may be requested and obtained in connection with the transfer and allotment of lands throughout the Republic by:

- (a) Villages;
- (b) Hamlets;
- (c) Fraternal societies;
- (d) Cooperative colonies;
- (e) Community groups;
- (f) Groups living on estates which have been abandoned by their owners and who have had to cultivate the surrounding lands in order to keep alive; and
- (g) The cities and towns whose population has fallen off considerably or which have lost the main source of their wealth and are no longer industrial, commercial, or mining centers.

ART. 2. Only those who can be classified in one of the above categories shall be entitled to the rights stated in Article 1. Their classification shall be verified by the report of the governor of the state or territory under whose jurisdiction they reside, which shall show that in the political division of state or territory the group in question comes under one of the categories which could justify their claim. Provisional possession of land will not be granted to such cities and towns as mentioned above without the previous consent of the National Agrarian Commission, based on the claim involved, together with the data accompanying such claim, turned over by the proper local agrarian commission.

ART. 3. The groups living on estates not included in any of the categories under Article 1, and which have been built up in order to provide homes for those who cultivate them shall not be entitled to claim land; but they may request and obtain from the Federal Government national lands for the purpose of founding a colony whenever their claim is authorized by at least twenty-five heads of families or duly qualified persons.

ART. 4. Before the transfer and allotment takes place, the group which makes the claim must legally prove to the proper local agrarian commission that its case is provided for in Section VII of Article 27 of the constitution.

ART. 5. Transfer of land shall not take place in the following cases:

- (a) When the present owner proves that his title to the lands in question is based on the distribution made in virtue of the law of June 25, 1856; and
- (b) When it is proved that the lands claimed by the villages, hamlets, fraternal societies, or community groups do not exceed 50 hectares and have been possessed by right of title under the same name for more than ten years. In case the lands exceed this amount, the surplus shall be distributed.

ART. 6. When, after the distribution of land among the members of a village, hamlet, fraternal society, or community

group has been legally carried out, some form of corruption is discovered, the transfer can only be nullified when two-thirds of the members so desire and demonstrate clearly such irregularity.

ART. 7. When land is to be transferred, its area shall be determined according to the title, and where this is lacking according to the statement turned in by the group which requests its transfer. In any case small holdings of less than 50 hectares, as mentioned in Article 27 of the constitution, shall be respected.

ART. 8. When a transfer is made of land exceeding 50 hectares, which the owner has possessed by right of title for the last ten years, 50 hectares shall be reserved for him.

ART. 9. The area of the land in case of allotment shall be determined by assigning to each head of a family or person over 18 years of age from 3 to 5 hectares of irrigated or well-watered land; 4 to 6 hectares of seasonal land receiving a regular and abundant rainfall; and 6 to 8 hectares of other seasonal land.

ART. 10. The amounts of land referred to in the previous article must be reduced to the minimum amount when they are not less than 8 kilometers away from the large centers of population or from the railroads, and one-half of the maximum amount when at a less distance there are other groups which are also entitled to a part in the transfer and allotment of land, if the surrounding land suitable for cultivation is not sufficient for complete distribution.

ART. 11. In arid or mountainous regions the assignments for each head of a family or person over 18 years of age may be increased up to three times the above-mentioned amounts.

ART. 12. The area of the lands shall always be determined on the basis of a census of the heads of families and of males over 18 years of age living in the village which requests the transfer, which census shall be carried out as provided further on.

ART. 13. When several pieces of property are to be distributed, each one shall be treated according to its size, considering always the quality of the land.

ART. 14. The following forms of property shall be exempt from transfer:

- (a) Property not over 50 hectares in area, in irrigated and moist regions;
- (b) Property not over 250 hectares in seasonal lands in regions with a regular and abundant rainfall;
- (c) Property not over 500 hectares in other seasonal regions;
- (d) Property which by its very nature forms an industrial agricultural unit, and which is being utilized; but in such a case the owner must turn over an equal quantity of good land as near to it as possible.

ART. 15. In all cases in which land is taken for allotment, the owner shall retain title to the amounts stated in Sections (a), (b), and (c) of Article 14, subject to the modifications established by Article 17.

ART. 16. Lands cannot be claimed by sections which may be classed as suburbs, annexed to and dependent politically upon a village, city, or town government.

ART. 17. In case the land surrounding any group entitled to claim land is composed entirely of the forms of property listed under Article 14, the amount of property exempted shall be reduced to one-half.

ART. 18. The following shall not be included in the distribution:

- (a) Buildings of all kinds;
- (b) Orchards or plantations of fruit-trees set out before the promulgation of this law;
- (c) Coffee, cocoa, vanilla, India-rubber, and other such plantations;
- (d) Water-works destined to irrigate lands which lie outside of the transferred section;