

Introduction

To a Next-Door Neighbor

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

CANADA: TOMORROW'S GIANT, by Bruce Hutchison. Knopf. \$5.

THE PATH OF DESTINY, by Thomas H. Raddall. (Volume Three of "The Canadian History Series," edited by Thomas B. Costain.) Doubleday. \$5.

To explain one country to another must be a trying task. Anyone who reads Alistair Cooke, official interpreter of Americans to Englishmen, is likely after a time to have the feeling that everything is a trifle out of focus. In the course of being explained to Englishmen, the folk rites at a political convention, the affection for the now ex-Brooklyn Dodgers, and other American foibles somehow get to seem more important than they are. The Dodgers' departure will not affect Mayor Wagner's career—like Elvis Presley, they will simply be forgotten. Convention shenanigans cut no particular ice; they are sustained by a conspiracy between the mass-communications industry and the politicians, both of whom must contend with the appalling fact that the real business could be transacted in a few hours but must be made to last a week.

For many years Canada's acknowledged interpreter to the

United States has been Bruce Hutchison, a distinguished newspaperman who lives in British Columbia. For a long time his must have been a rather unrewarding task: It used to be a tenet of the book-publishing business that no one was ever interested enough to buy a book about Canada. Now things are very different. The voice of Canada is being heard with increasing authority on international affairs; Canada has emerged as one of the world's premier trading nations; the Canadian dollar is regularly above par; and any number of people seem to think that Canada is a place where the big money can still be made in the bad old way. Mr. Hutchison's day has come.

THIS VOLUME is a highly civilized account of a journey by the author and his wife from Newfoundland on the far east to British Columbia on the Pacific. Much history, geography, and politics are worked into the account. Moreover, Mr. Hutchison makes a major effort to get under the surface—he is almost painfully concerned to tell why the people of, say, Nova Scotia are as

they are. This, coupled with great language felicity and a figurative skill that at times gets dangerously out of control, makes everything, including the Canadians, almost too complicated. I was born and brought up in Canada, and I finished the book with the feeling that I had had a fairly narrow escape. But one also finishes with a mild sense of regret. Mr. Hutchison is a skillful and perceptive writer. He knows his subject as few men do. If he were to control his gifts and confine himself to description and background history, he might write the best of all books on Canada. He simply puts too much spinach on the giant's brow.

War Whoops and Opportunists

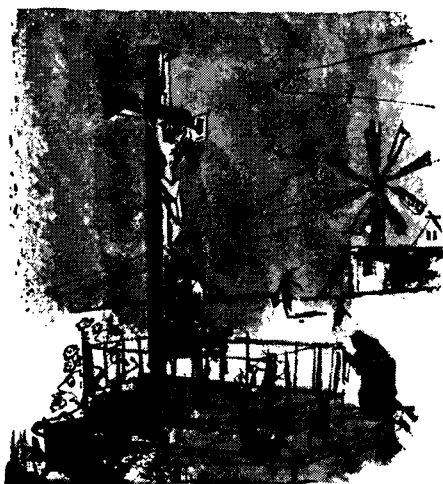
"The Canadian History Series" is an enterprise not of academic historians but of Canadian or ex-Canadian journalists and novelists. Their avowed purpose was to write history less in terms of the great names and the great battles and more in terms of the *habitant* and the backwoods settler. An unavowed purpose was to provide a more readable product. It seems to be one of those enterprises that have worked. The first volume, by the prodigious Thomas B. Costain (*The White and the Gold*, Doubleday, 1954, \$5), dealt with the French régime in Canada. The second, by the late Joseph Lister Rutledge (*Century of Conflict*, Doubleday, 1956, \$5), covered the years of turmoil that ended when Wolfe defeated Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham and finished not only France's hopes of dominating the continent but, in effect, those of England as well.

Mr. Raddall's book now carries the story to 1850. These, too, were years of turmoil—first the perilous eruption over the border, then the War of 1812, and finally a miniature internal revolution that brought home rule and paved the way for full self-government. In contrast with Mr. Hutchison's rich involvement, Mr. Raddall is dry, detached, and on occasion sardonic. He has also learned from Churchill that a historian can obtrude his own preferences without being thrown out of the club.

On the whole he does not find little men rewarding copy. So, the intentions of the series notwithstanding,

this book is mostly about the great ones—including those who were merely fantastic. A substantial part is devoted to the War of 1812, a war which, mercifully, has been mostly dropped from the American memory. It still looms much larger in Canadian history, and at least until well along in the present century Canadian juveniles studied its singularly eccentric campaigns in respectful detail. Mr. Raddall makes it clear that it might be just as well if it were forgotten by both sides. Of courageous men there were many. But the elderly and incompetent generals like Hull—who surrendered Detroit in response to a few war whoops—had their imperial counterparts. Sir George Prevost's march down Lake Champlain was an epoch of personal anxiety, and after making a series of damaging errors he seized on the first opportunity to retire.

He did, however, contribute inadvertently to American blood lines. In a space of twenty-five miles on the return march, some eight hundred of his men, most of them veterans of Wellington's peninsular campaigns, vanished into the woods in response, among other things, to the rumor that jobs at good pay were plentiful thereabouts. On Lake Ontario the admirals saw eye to eye on the undesirability of bloodshed and damage to government property. Brilliantly, considering the size of the lake, they avoided each other for nearly the entire war. Incidentally, the small scale of these skirmishes still comes as a shock. The Battle of Lake Erie in 1813 is one of the remembered feats of American arms. Admiral Perry completely defeated a British



fleet and seized control of this strategic waterway for the duration of the war. ("We have met the enemy and they are ours.") The killed in action on both sides totaled sixty-eight. A single Mercedes-Benz running wild at Le Mans a couple of years ago was more lethal, and the race wasn't stopped.

In the years following the war the Canadian provinces were governed by a succession of Wellington's generals. With some notable exceptions these joined hands with the merchants and traders and, in the name of the Crown and of the Church of England, formed a bastion of privilege and reaction. The settlers and French-Canadian *habitants* sought to break their grip by winning self-government, and in 1837 this agitation culminated in a miniscule rebellion. Especially in Upper Canada this was a civil disturbance of almost incredibly minute proportions. Not entirely by accident, a contemporary pothouse is immured in history as the principal base of revolutionary operations. In the decisive battle only one unfortunate rebel failed to get out of the way of the bullets. But it took only a very small rebellion to remind the British government of 1776, and home rule came as a consequence.

It is in dealing with this period that the author's likes and dislikes come through most clearly. He frankly regards the Canadian Patrick Henrys as a very poor lot who, when faced with the choice between liberty and death, promptly took evasive action. On these and other grounds he is particularly hard on William Lyon Mackenzie, ancestor of W. L. Mackenzie King, and the tribune of the farmers and mechanics of Upper Canada. But agitators surely have a right to be judged by results—results which the author profoundly approves. In any case, these men had more courage than those who strung comfortably along with the Church, the royal establishment, the local elect, and the status quo.

Anyone who hopes to strike it rich in Canada will probably find these volumes as good an investment as any he can make. They will help him understand Canada. He will still have them if he loses his shirt.



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Pessimism About Pianists

ROLAND GELATT

SPEAKING OF PIANISTS, by Abram Chasins. Knopf. \$4.

Because music of any period seldom seems quite as good as it was, an old habit of bewailment infects the annals of music criticism; its practitioners have a long and honorable history of viewing with alarm. Abram Chasins is situated in the mainstream of this critical tradition. Once a highly regarded concert pianist and now music director of New York Times radio station WQXR and an occasional writer, he speaks for a considerable group of connoisseurs who hold that the art of piano playing is presently in sad decline.

To members of this group, the late Josef Hofmann represents a kind of *ne plus ultra*, the most nearly all-encompassing pianist within living memory. *Speaking of Pianists* fittingly opens with a revealing chapter on this great musician (who was both teacher and friend of the author), then proceeds to other worthy if somewhat less Olympian pianists of yesterday and today. Included in the gallery is Leopold Godowsky, whose barbed *mots* at the expense of his fellow artists were the delight and terror of New York musical society a generation ago. "Isn't it frightful, this forgetting?" exclaimed the chess master and pianophile José Capablanca in reference to a certain pianist who had muddled his way through several bad memory lapses at a recent recital. "It wasn't what he forgot," retorted Godowsky, "it's what he remembered that was so frightful!" Not every pianist provides such readable copy, but Chasins's uncommon gift of listening to music with a discriminating analytic ear makes each of his portraits illuminating and valuable. Agree with him or not as you will, he usually has something stimulating to say.

Apropos of an LP reissue of recordings by the late Josef Lhevinne,

Chasins observes that "all but a handful of today's pianists" would on direct comparison "resemble a litter of squealing kittens trying to sound like ferocious tigers." What has brought the art of piano playing to this sorry pass? The time, we are told, is out of joint. "All but the few top artists have been undermined and alienated, their confidence and hope shaken by a generation which has regarded the frank expression of poetic feelings as weakness and which views uncompromising ideals with indifference or overt contempt." The environment compels a fledgling pianist to substitute "the immediate for the absolute, cynicism for faith."

THESE GENERALIZATIONS are clothed with cogent fact when Chasins examines the effects of our concert-management system and recording industry on the artistic development of young musicians. Slowly ripened musical conceptions, a thorough understanding of style, and an engaging interpretative personality can hardly be expected, he says, from pianists who are consigned at the outset of their careers to an exhausting economic treadmill. One need not agree in every particular with Chasins's indictment of present-day piano playing to appreciate the underlying truth of his disturbing commentary.

