

A Letter from Canada

By WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON

AMERICANS interested in Canada's cultural development may get a bird's-eye view of the whole situation in the first annual volume of "Yearbook of the Arts in Canada" (Macmillan). Added to the social and industrial revolution which is disturbing creative artists everywhere, the artist in Canada—whether writer, sculptor, or composer—is faced by the difficulty of a changing center of consciousness within. From geography to religion Canadians have been a disparate people. Quebec, the province longest settled, has produced a racial-regional culture; but before the English-speaking provinces have developed strong sectional individualities, they have been profoundly moved by a healthy, vital desire for national unity. This lacks, as yet, clear definition and aim; and the present position of the arts is therefore even more transitional and chaotic than in most other countries of the European tradition.

Bertram Brooker, as editor, wisely allowed the symposium to reflect the true state of affairs. No contributor was told what the others were saying; and there are almost as many viewpoints as there are critical expositors. Thus one chronicler of the drama, painting, or architecture views with alarm, or jeers, while the next, travers-

ing the same ground, feels that all is well. As it fell to my lot to sum up the achievements of the first hundred years in literature, I know how much easier it is to use the material to argue a case than to weigh it judiciously; and I am satisfied that the chief value and interest of the book lies in the heterogeneous nature of its contents. For interest there is. Canadians are anxious to learn if the souls of their creative countrymen are keeping pace with the amazing increase in foreign trade; and the "Yearbook" has consequently roused more discussion than any other recent publication.

Besides the "critical" section, with its miscellaneous verdicts of a dozen good men and true, there is an "original" section containing essays, poems, and short stories, followed by fifty full-page plates of specimens of Canadian art from abstract line drawings to ornamental iron doors. Whether this activity is wisely directed or not, its variety and extent are arresting, since readers are reminded that the work is no catalogue, but a forum for the discussion of tendencies, using representative works as illustrations.

The national movement has been undoubtedly stimulated by the rapid penetration of the North (recently known to novelists as

"the great open spaces") as a result of the mining operations begun from the Yukon to Labrador during the last three years. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who first directed the eyes of Canadians to the region, and was laughed at for his pains, has consequently been raised from the status of a mad dreamer to that of a prophet, whose visions have materialized in substantial and profitable form. One effect has been the preparation of a comprehensive biography of the explorer by D. M. Le Bourdais, which will be published in the late spring.

It happens to be his first book; but as editor, writer for magazines, lecturer and a former aide to Stefansson, Le Bourdais is well equipped. A native of French-Canadian and Irish-Canadian parentage, he was much amused, when heading an expedition into the Arctic with an American crew, that the black cook from Jamaica insisted on fraternizing with him because "we are the only two Englishmen aboard."

This biography serves dual ends. Stefansson has been a voluminous author. His travels have been recorded by himself in a whole series of books, which include personal adventure, propaganda, geographical and other scientific data, and things in general—often in mixed doses. It was most desirable that all this be sifted, checked with diary entries and other original documents, and confirmed by outside evidence, to yield a chronological narrative of estab-

lished fact. This Le Bourdais has done, often reducing to a chapter what Stefansson had expanded to a whole book; and yet saving the condensation from unnecessary loss of the picturesque.

On the side of character interpretation the author's problem was more delicate, and from the historical standpoint more important. Any one could later find out what Stefansson has done; only an observant contemporary can know what he is. His career has been dotted with misunderstandings that have alienated friends, and have impeded his progress. The major thesis of Le Bourdais's "life" is that the root of all difficulties has been temperamental; that Stefansson is essentially the artist rather than the scientist, and Le Bourdais shows how, in the various disputes that have raged around Stefansson, the poet in the man's soul has always guided his course, and has frequently led to trouble and the distrust which ordinary people usually feel towards genius and its ways. The book is sure both to increase the number of Stefansson's admirers and to reawaken old prejudices.

E. J. Pratt will probably be known for the rest of his life as the author of "The Roosevelt and the Antioch." This is a narrative poem of dramatic intensity for which the *Roosevelt's* deed of daring, endurance, and self-sacrifice has supplied the perfect stimulus. Hard, and at times jerky with the impact of the waves, under the strain of wind, the poem fights on through those five days and nights in which Captain Freed struggled to effect the all but impossible rescue. One lives through the nineteen hours when the *Roosevelt* had lost the *Antioch*, and picked her up sixty-miles away without radio, and in a snowstorm so bad the officer on the bridge could not see the prow of his own ship. And the technical terms, the modern words, packed into that severe, classical form, illustrate the super-reality art can give to the raw material of life.

Romance in Canada is found oftener in fact than in fiction. No sane novelist would dare perpetrate any such extravaganzas as the actual life of Father Lacombe, recorded by Katherine Hughes under the title "Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur" (McClelland & Stewart). This pioneer missionary's parish extended from the Red River, due north of Minneapolis, to the Rockies. The sixty-four years of his public activity began with buffalo hunts and Indian wars and ended with the bumper crop of 1916, while in mid-career he greeted the first railway train. Compact of energy and courage, and possessing a magnificent sense of humor, he is identified with nearly every phase of the opening of the West, and was universally loved. He built the first bridge and set up the first flour mill on the prairies, and opened the first school, besides founding two or three towns and building churches galore. His methods of warfare remain a shining example of armament reduction, since he won two set battles without a gun, and single-handed, and likewise without weapons, he once raised a siege of Edmonton.

I do not ask any one to believe these things. They are merely so. I could go on and tell of his writing a Cree dictionary and grammar, of his European travels, of his successful fights with the government to obtain better treatment for his "children," as he called the Indians, and of the uncanny shrewdness of this tough little priest in dealing with all types of men. Towards the end, he retired officially five times, always re-emerging after a short rest, ablaze for some new enterprise. Miss Hughes's narrative is commendably ingenious. It would have been a shame to spoil anything as spontaneously combusive as Father Lacombe's life by use of the stop-lighting devices now popular with biographers.

Reaching back a little further into our still verdant past, the reissue of Catharine Parr Trail's "The Backwoods of Canada" (McClelland & Stewart) after a century of obscurity, presents a vivid picture of the first settlements along the north shore of Lake Ontario, in what is now the most populous region of Canada. Mrs. Trail was the wife of a pioneer farmer. One of the famous Strickland sisters of England, she wrote well; and as much of the book is in diary form, it has all the freshness of a contemporary record. The time was that of the shedding of the first and practically the only blood in Canada's struggle for self-government; and, to us, the document is a strangely alien echo of the Tory spirit. This sweet and intelligent woman rejoices frankly over the execution of men whom the nation has since chosen to call martyrs—though admittedly not saints. Her graphic, simple descriptions emphasize the temperamental similarity between her generation and ours, and the radical divergence of views of the two on nearly everything.

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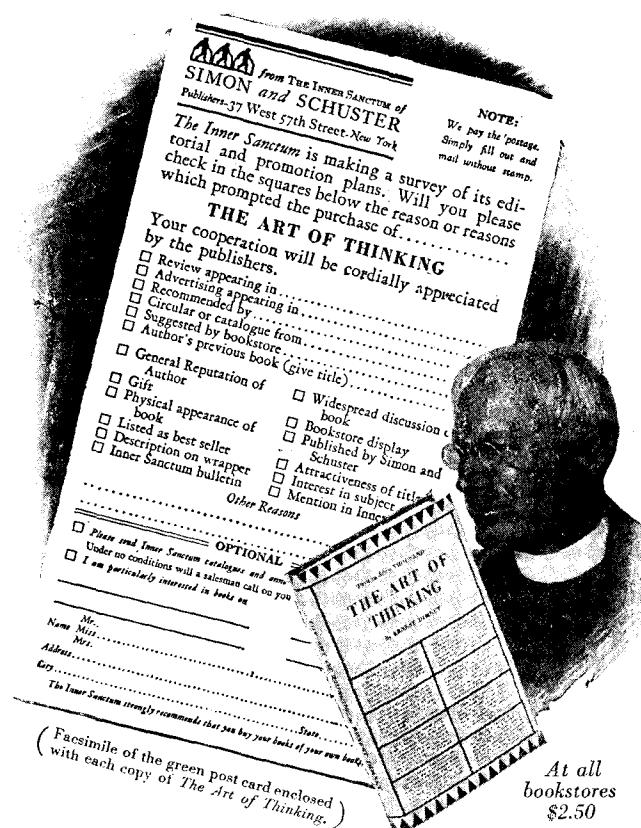
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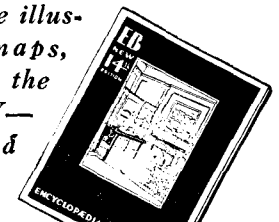
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Points of View

Who Said It?

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

To locate a familiar quotation would seem a simple thing. I am at present in position to deny that simplicity; unless among the many who read the *Review* a pigeon-holed remembrance may produce one quotation I wish to locate but have in a year's search failed to do.

I must premise by saying I had no education, myself, and but a newspaper man's swift and general method of collecting information at need. This quotation apparently was compassed neither by my primary school instruction nor subsequent experience.

Whether the quotation, therefore, would apply to me, I am not sure.

But someone, somewhere, at some time, said, or wrote, or is said to have made or recorded the statement regarding the education of youth: "Give me a child until he is six years old, and you may have him for the rest of his life."

I do not insist on that exact wording, but something very definitely to that effect, and in somewhat near those words.

I wrote first to that compendium of information and requests, the *New York Times*' query column.

The answers I got were diverse and a little vague: Jean Jacques Rousseau, Ignatius Loyola, and "a Jesuit writer."

A subsequent informant, however, stated more definitely that Jean Jacques Rousseau was the author, and that the quotation might be found in his "Emile," edition of 1762.

English translations failed to record it as a part of "Emile." Knowing how faulty translations may be, I referred directly to the 1762 edition, in French. A careful reading from title-page to last fly-leaf failed to find it there.

I had, long before, of course, done Bartlett from "Make Me Again" to "A Wise Father."

In despair I appealed to one who has solved more problems of this sort for querists than any respondent of the time or *Times*, Miss Everett, of Boston. Her courteous reply said: "An answer to this query in the *Boston Transcript* ascribes the quotation to Cardinal Newman; but gives no further identifying clue. My only Newman is on some back bookshelf; but I'll root it out and search it through."

A conscientious respondent from Carthage, Illinois, replied to the query: "I shall try to locate the educator who said many a time before his class in Pedagogy: 'Jean Jacques Rousseau says "Give me a child until he is six, and the world may have him the rest of his life."' I cannot locate the quotation, chapter, page, line, where Rousseau makes such an observation. I have just finished reading an English translation of 'Emile; or a Treatise of Education,' Edinburgh publication, 1763. I have interested a number of my friends, especially a professor of Romance Languages, and hope to locate the quotation soon."

Yet, though these hopes were born in August and September last, and my first inquiry was made through the *Times* in April, 1929, almost a year ago, no one has yet located or proved the verbiage of that quotation. Can any reader of the *Saturday Review* do so?

Was such a statement made by Jean Jacques Rousseau, or by Cardinal Newman, or by Ignatius Loyola? And where can it be found? And what is its true verbiage?

I shall be immensely obliged to anyone who can give me this information.

JOHN BENNETT.

Charleston, S. C.

Rabelais and Americanism

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

I cannot let pass a statement in Mr. Berdan's recent article "Rabelais, Humanist." I refer to the last paragraph where he says, "The Abbey of Theleme, with its motto 'Do What You Will,' was the ideal because he believed in the inherent nobility of the human soul. Consequently Rabelais is curiously modern, curiously American."

Does Mr. Berdan mean that Rabelais is curiously American because we believe in the "inherent nobility of the human soul"? or because the motto "Do What You Will" is a particularly American philosophy?

The "inherent nobility of the human soul" is of course Socratic (and perhaps American) and the "Do What You Will" is no doubt the motto of the present younger generation, yet to call Rabelais curiously American seems to me "curiously" inappropriate. It savors a bit of Mr. Bruce

Barton's book on Jesus, the man nobody but an advertising man could have made an American gogetter.

Rabelais was a Latin first of all with a craze for knowledge and a craze for living. The American is a Puritan who has voted into the constitution the eighteenth amendment, about as un-Rabelaisian an act as I can imagine.

Pantagruelism, as Anatole France called the Rabelaisian philosophy, is the very negation of American Puritanism and also of the present movement in America called inappropriately, I think, Humanism. The "full, brutal Renaissance" as expressed in "Gargantua" is a far cry from the academic Humanism of Mr. Irving Babbitt, who it seems to me is curiously American as François Rabelais was curiously un-American. When Rabelais is curiously American let our motto be "Trine" and "Do What You Will" in the real Rabelaisian sense, and if that occurs, and when, America will have reached the millennium and all our uplift societies, and militant organizations to keep me from doing what I will, will have sunk into the obscurity that should be theirs, and men of honor will sit in the seats of the mighty.

H. FAULKNER WEST.

Dartmouth College.

A Correction

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

The Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., regrets that the article on "Dramatic Criticism," which appears on pages 619 and 620 of Volume 7 of the Fourteenth Edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, was inadvertently attributed in the index of authors to Professor Jules Isaac of the Lycée of Lyons. The author of the article is in fact Mr. Jacob Isaac, M. A. (Oxon), Lecturer in English Literature and Language in the University of London, King's College.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, INC.
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Creative Humanism

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

Harry Hayden Clark, in a letter by Mr. J. T. Shipley in your issue of January 18, is conceived as suggesting a "doting on tradition." This seems to me unjust. Mr. Clark is no blind advocate of the past. Like other humanists (like the Brooks-Mumford school of criticism also), he believes that we must seek to create a usable past, by means of a "purposeful and discriminating interpretation." When a usable past had been created and widely accepted, we may begin to hope for a useful future.

In regard to the present revolt in Germany against an unhumanistic university education, I should like to call attention to the Harvard lectures of Fritz Kellermann, "The Effect of the World War on European Education, with Special Reference to Germany" (Harvard University Press, 1928), particularly page 52.

NORMAN FOERSTER.

Chapel Hill, N. C.

A Practical Joke

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

In "All Our Yesterdays" Mr. Tomlinson has included an incident which he has already published as a separate article in either *Scribner's*, or *Harper's*, telling, as one of the many mysterious occurrences at the front, of the visit of two French officers to a British mess, and their extraordinary conduct and subsequent disappearance. The story is related to the narrator of "All Our Yesterdays" by an officer who was present at the occasion.

Both in the magazine where it originally appeared and in the book Mr. Tomlinson tells it with a portentous gravity. Yet an explanation other than supernatural or mysterious must immediately occur, it seems to me, to American readers who have been at the front.

It is with no desire to detract from the high and noble seriousness of this book that I suggest that Mr. Tomlinson and the officer eyewitness have both been taken in, and that the two French officers were Norton Harjes's ambulance drivers in disguise playing one of the most superb practical jokes in history or literature on our gallant Britannic Allies.

HOWARD SWIGGETT.

New York, N. Y.