

tent which has never been surpassed. In a society taught to read paintings sentimentally, such as ours, Jan Van Eyck's uncompromising objectivity forces us to arrive at new esthetic concepts before we can come into contact with his meaning. With extraordinary skill Jan focuses our attention on all things at one time, thus improving and intensifying our vision, creating awe and wonder in us.

In Baldass's research, restricted largely to the development of stylistic characteristics which he feels lead to the inner significance of the paintings, a thorough investigation is made. The book includes 170 plates, 100 of which are large-size detail reproductions from the Ghent altarpiece, and eight color plates. It is written in a scholarly style, brilliantly, as in the summaries. He sympathetically presents the intellectual aspect of the painter's art. Within this frame of reference there is little to criticize. But one wonders whether the art of Jan Van Eyck is allowed really to emerge from behind the curtain of technical problems which seek to establish a stylistic development. Too often, form and content are divorced for convenience's sake to establish proof, confirm attribution, or assert authenticity. The writer on art and artists should strive to bring the reader into full contact with the work of art. If the intention is not to deal with art *sui generis*, but art as history, the portrayal is incomplete without a discussion of the concepts of the time, their significance and causative relations, the sociological and spiritual conditions which influenced the artist's development as a painter.

This activity called scholarship often obscures the artist and his work. Obviously in authenticating a painting, stylistic parallels and influences achieve importance, but in art history they often lead to belaboring the obvious with factual descriptions in the presentation of a man's art. From this point of view many *ex cathedra* judgments are made. One might be led to believe that, because the historian reads intellectual significance into a work of art, the artist, too, formulates a sequence of ideas and then proceeds to copy them on canvas. Nothing could be more foreign to the creative artist.

The achievement of Jan Van Eyck is yet to be fully appreciated or understood. After all his symbols are comprehended there still remains the problem of you and the picture. Its meaning exists not through interpretation but as a communion between you and the picture. The writer's function is to make this possible.

Man & Painter

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS AN AMERICAN. Ben Shahn: A Biography with Pictures. By Selden Rodman. New York: Harper & Bros. 180 pp. with illus. \$6.50.

By NESTA ANDERSON

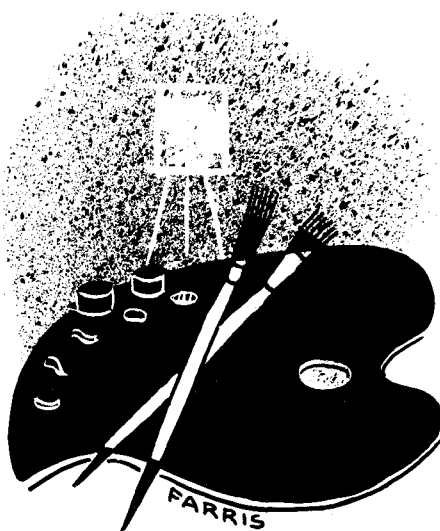
BEN SHAHN'S versatile biographer explains in his introduction that he came to his subject through an interest in the problem of communication. In the Haitian folk artists whose mural painting he had supervised, Mr. Rodman discovered direct and moving portrayals of a civilization. Despite the sophistication of Shahn's work, the author was struck by its many similarities to the painting of the unschooled muralists and these analogies led him to ask how the knowing modernist could "achieve the primitive's rapport with his own environment." In order to uncover the sources of Shahn's communicative art and understand how its universal meanings are related to his environment, he has sought to "know everything that can be known about that artist from his dreams to the jokes he tells and the kind of clothes he wears."

Rodman brings the reader into immediate contact with the forceful personality of his subject through an eyewitness account of an evening spent with the Shahn family. No one who has heard the artist speak can forget his powerful presence and extraordinary articulateness. The reader will be particularly grateful for the faithful recording of Shahn's eloquent and often paradoxical statements about himself. The words of the mature man draw the main outlines of the portrait which are echoed and given substance in the succeeding chapters. Moving back through the years to Shahn's boyhood among the Jewish immi-

grants on New York's East Side, Rodman discusses his political activities, traces the steps in the development of his mature style, and notes the triumphs, discouragements, and disasters of his personal life.

In recording the events of the artist's fifty-odd years, he seldom pauses to draw a detailed analysis of the significance of Shahn's political or artistic endeavors, but documents them carefully and occasionally offers critical comments. The fact that the artist has devoted so much of his time to communal projects and has often been an aggressive propagandist leads his biographer to believe that Shahn has felt a need to identify himself with a cause. He even suggests that his feeling of usefulness and participation in a far-reaching social struggle are responsible for the greatness of his wartime painting. Succeeding chapters are devoted to the artist's life and work between 1924 and 1942. The dramatic despairs and triumphs of his work for governmental agencies and with Rivera as a muralist are examined. Here the text is amplified with a wealth of illustrations of the projects and the inclusion of several of his finest photographs, taken for the Farm Security Administration. The latter reveal the artist's stature as a photographer and indicate one important source for the subject matter and composition of his paintings.

The closing sections of the book, dealing with his childhood, as well as the first chapter, are the most revealing. Unfortunately, the full impact of Shahn's imposing figure is rarely felt in the intervening pages. Can it be that the biographer's desire to "know everything that can be known" about his subject has led him to introduce extraneous material in a loosely organized fashion and to include data about Shahn's personal life which bear little relation to his art and might well have been left unsaid at this time? Rodman's primary interest is, clearly, to reveal Shahn as a human being and he is to be congratulated on avoiding the pitfalls of easy generalization. Nevertheless, the study would be more valuable had he devoted greater space to a discussion of Shahn's working methods and to a more thorough analysis of his artistic development. The author has subtitled the volume "A Biography with Pictures." It is to be hoped that in a further study he will draw the biography and pictures into a more telling critical relationship.



CANADA: BOOM UNLIMITED

(Continued from page 14)

strong link between two great countries.

The economic bond between Canada and the United States is unique, but it is not exclusive. Canadian markets circle the globe. As the world's third greatest foreign trading nation (after the United States and Great Britain), Canada earns one out of every three dollars of her national income from foreign trade with over 100 lands. Exports are her very life blood. This great stake in foreign trade has set Canada on the road to world-leadership in the battle for freer trade—a fight which we seem about to repudiate though we carry the scars of a twenty-year struggle in its behalf.

Our adoption of the Reciprocal Trade Agreement Program and espousal of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have been landmarks in this respect. But there has always been tremendous opposition to these programs and today there is a real danger that it may gain the upper hand. The limitations on dairy imports voted in 1950 as an amendment to the Defense Production Act, the spate of petitions to the Tariff

Commission to raise duties under the "escape-clause" provision of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, the opposition to measures designed to ease imports through customs simplification—these and many similar developments are signs of America's return to a new protectionism. Particularly in a period when the economic well-being of so much of the world depends upon its ability to sell the output of its farms and factories in the United States, these developments have serious repercussions upon American prestige and dangerously shake the confidence which our allies place in us.

By contrast, Canada's record is particularly bright. Although hundreds of new industries which could have profited from tariff protection have grown up since the war, no steps have been taken to raise duties. Recently, when Canadian producers of textiles and appliances raised, with some justification, the cry of American dumping, Ottawa refused to invoke anti-dumping clauses. The Government has been particularly careful not to countenance or abet any restrictive trade practices which would impede the flow

of international trade. This record is bound to raise Canada's stature in the eyes of the world while our own is lowered. In the long run it will contribute inestimably to the development and growth of Canada's trade with the world.

It would not be fair to describe the Canadian economy only in terms of strength. There are some weaknesses which should be noted. First, is the continuing imbalance of trade with the United States. In 1951, Canadian purchases in the United States exceeded her sales to us by \$500 million, though the tremendous flow of American capital into Canada more than compensated on the over-all account.

A large part of these difficulties flow from the fact that Canada's traditional trade patterns were basically disrupted by the events following World War II. In prewar days, Britain was Canada's greatest market. By selling to the United Kingdom more than she bought, Canada earned the exchange necessary both to pay for her excess imports from the United States and to remit the interest and dividends she owed to foreign investors. It does not look as though this classic pattern can be re-established. Even if Britain is successful in overcoming her present economic difficulties, she will certainly never return

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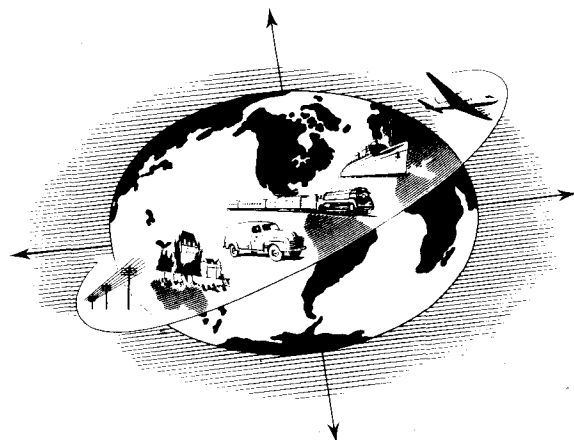
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to her status as the pivotal nation in world trade. Canada, therefore, is faced with the problem of exploring new markets throughout the world and of finding new sources of supply for some of the products she now buys from the United States. Ironically, this problem is exacerbated by the tremendous inflow of investment and speculative capital, because Canada must not merely achieve equality of imports and exports, but must actually export more in order to pay dividends and interest to foreign investors.

However, there is no reason to suppose that this cannot eventually be achieved out of the phenomenal expansion of the Canadian economy. In the first place, great as foreign investment has been, Canadian investment has been relatively greater. Not many years ago, fully half of her investment was financed by foreign capitalists. Today, she is financing 85 per cent of her own developments. Furthermore, as her industrial plant expands, Can-

ada will be less dependent upon foreign countries for manufactured goods. Also, as her economy expands, payments to foreign investors will represent an increasingly smaller proportion of her total output. Indeed, there has already been phenomenal growth in this direction. In 1930 returns to investors amounted to 20 per cent of Canadian exports, while today they represent only 2 per cent.

Paradoxically, the new strength of the Canadian dollar also contains elements of weakness. The dollar's striking rise to a premium of almost 2 per cent over the American dollar has been balm to Canadian pride, but it carries with it certain penalties. Canadian products are now relatively more expensive in terms of American dollars. This means that exports to the United States are made more difficult. At the same time the imports have gained a new price advantage in relation to Canadian-produced goods. In addition, the tourist trade which has

already been hit by the high cost of living will suffer another blow this summer when American tourists discover how much they must pay for a visit to Canada. In fact the grumbings are already so loud that leading hotels and shops are accepting U.S. dollars at par in the interests of amity and expanded tourist business.

Perhaps the greatest handicap Canada faces is the proximity of the United States. Perhaps the greatest barrier it must still cross is compounded by this fact. With a wealth of virtually every vital resource, it lacks the most important one: people. It lacks them in number, and it suffers that lack with particular intensity where skills are involved. For years the pattern has been that a substantial proportion of those educated in Canada emigrate for their success to the United States. As the Canadian promise becomes more immediate, that flow diminishes slightly but nevertheless continues to drain Canada of its great vital investment.

The reason is obvious: the Canadian standard of living is lower than that of its neighbor. Prices on virtually every manufactured article available in both the United States and Canada are lower in the United States. Only in the case of whiskey is this notably untrue, and it's doubtful that this favorable disparity is the one Canada would most wish. Canadian salaries are lower than ours, the earnings of its executives far less impressive, but—and it is here that the American investor looks with longing eyes—income taxes are slightly less and there is no capital gains tax. Even the immigrant attracted to Canada by the sheer fact of open arms is retained in Canada by modest coercion. He must wait a year after his entry before emigration to the United States is permissible. These difficulties are real and important, but though they may hamper, they will not drastically interrupt Canada's steady growth and progress. A strong, free, prosperous nation is emerging along our northern border which will continue to be a staunch ally.

We must not make the mistake, however, of assuming that Canada will tie her destiny to our own. She is an independent nation and will not be content with the secondary role in any situation, will, perhaps even be overly assertive in some situations where she feels her weakness relative to us. America must recognize that Canada is fully ready to stand on her own feet, to make her own decisions, and to carry the responsibility for her own future. She will resent any effort to impose our pattern on her society, policies, or programs.

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CANADA & THE WORLD

(Continued from page 12)

of the Canadian Parliament at all; the "colonial" theory of the indivisibility of the Crown meant that all the King's territories were at war when the United Kingdom was at war. In World War II, Canada went to war by a vote in the Canadian Parliament from which no member dissented, but the French Canadian assent was only secured by the most binding pledges against conscription by all the major parties, pledges which had difficult consequences later in the war. In both wars the prolonged neutrality of the United States greatly strengthened the French Canadian feeling that neutrality was the correct position for a North American country. There are still vestiges of this feeling in connection with NATO, but they are much mitigated by the facts that in NATO the United States has been from the beginning a leading participant and that the potential enemy is an avowed and bitter enemy of the Vatican.

It is important to add that there is no element of doctrinaire pacifism in the French Canadian attitude. There is no objection to participation in war as such; the objection is to participating in war at the orders of a non-French majority, which the French Canadian is apt to think of as considerably less "Canadian" than himself and even to describe as "*les Anglais*" in contradistinction to "*les Canadiens*." It is an objection which draws considerable support from the utterances of that type of isolationism in the United States which ascribes everything it dislikes in American policies to the machinations of the perfidious British.

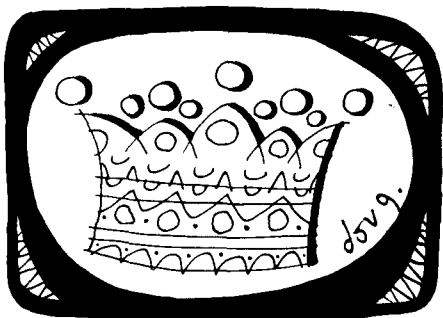
The frantic efforts of the Canadian Communists to make some capital out of this special brand of isolationism in French Canada have been a complete failure. The French Canadian is used to thinking of himself as being dragged into war by the British and by the still colonial-minded (as he thinks) Canadians of British descent, and the present party line, which asks

him to think of himself as being dragged into war by the bloody-minded American imperialists and their tools, Messrs. St. Laurent and Pearson, involves too much of a change of orientation.

PERSONS of British racial origin still constitute nearly one-half of the total population, though diminishing in their proportion with each successive census; thus leaving about one-fifth for persons of non-British origin other than French. These are not so heterogeneous as is sometimes supposed. Half of them are made up of four races, all easily assimilable—German, Ukrainian, Scandinavian, and Dutch. The ancestors of many of these have been on the continent, either in Canada or in the United States, for two or three generations, and are pretty completely North-Americanized. Only about 6 per cent of the population was born outside of Canada, the British countries, and the United States.

The assimilation of newcomers, in the sense of their conversion into a conscious Canadian allegiance, has become definitely easier with the rise of the concept of Canada's full nationhood and the diminishing of the accent on the imperial connection, which used to be rather heavily pressed in the English-language schools and textbooks. Canadians are "British subjects," but that is a secondary matter compared with their being also "Canadian citizens"; a certificate of Canadian citizenship can now be procured from Ottawa for a nominal fee, but is not, of course, necessary to the citizenship, which either results automatically from Canadian birth or a period of domicile plus British birth, or is acquired by naturalization. It is obviously much easier to interest a newcomer in becoming a citizen of Canada, a country which he knows and in which he has cast his lot, than it was in becoming a subject of the British Crown, which he was apt to think of as belonging to a European country four or five thousand miles away. Moreover, a prolonged period of virtually full employment and marked agricultural prosperity has rapidly improved the economic status of the recent immigrants (mostly of the wage-earning class) and made them more accessible to education and readier to adopt the North American way of life.

Canada is thus in all respects a less divided country than it has ever been



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since the beginning of the wave of European immigration about the turn of the century. Nevertheless it is still a long way from solidarity. Its two main elements have not yet been able to decide on the terms on which they will be willing to live together. True, they have been living together for nearly two centuries, but it has been on terms imposed by an outside authority. They have been a colony; they are now a nation, but they have not quite grown up to that status. One of the first tasks of a nation is to make itself a constitution, which is in essence the terms on which its citizens are willing to live together. Canada has not yet faced that task; she is rubbing along with the constitution which she received from the mother country, and she cannot decide on the way to make herself a new one, or even to make any changes (except those about which there is virtually no dispute) in the old one. There is, for example, no power in the national Parliament to make laws for the fulfilling of a treaty in so far as such laws would invade the sphere of property and civil rights, which belongs to the provinces; but there is also no procedure by which the Canadian people could confer such a power on Parliament even if they wanted to, except with the unanimous consent of the provinces whose powers would be diminished. Such are some of the difficulties which face a colony in the process of converting itself into a nation without going through the formality of a revolution.

Incomplete emergence from colonialism is also the reason for a decidedly indeterminate attitude in all external affairs. Prior to 1914 Canada

had no attitude in external affairs, other than those relating to her own trade, except that of feeling that Great Britain ought to be backed up—though in the interests of Canadian unity she should not be backed up energetically enough or expensively enough to annoy the French Canadians. Moreover, so long as the question of what to do about backing Great Britain up could be postponed, it was postponed. In 1911 the two major parties disagreed on how Great Britain should be backed up in naval matters, the Liberals desiring a Canadian Navy and the Conservatives a contribution to the British Navy. The Liberals passed their Bill, and were then thrown out by the voters (on another issue). The Conservatives then passed their Bill, but it was rejected by the Senate, which still had a Liberal majority. The Conservatives dropped the matter, and in 1914 there was very little naval assistance available from Canada. In 1938 and 1939 Prime Minister King's watchword was "Parliament will decide," and he saw to it that Parliament was never asked to decide anything about the obviously approaching war with Germany until it had broken out.

It is a far cry from this to the very general acceptance in 1950 and 1951 of the heavy advance commitments involved in NATO, the first commitments of the kind ever entered into by Canada. Canada is generally credited with having had an early and important share in the promotion of that organization, and it must have required considerable courage on the part of its government leaders to accept so novel a responsibility without much knowledge of what the popular

response would be. NATO is, however, more than a mere military alliance; and Canada has been insistent in stressing its potentialities "as a framework within which a closer Atlantic community might be developed." This gives it a strong appeal to the ancestral instincts of both the French and those of British extraction—for the French Canadian is not anti-British in Europe, he is merely on his guard against being expected to be too pro-British in Canada. It also gives Canadians a rather different conception of NATO from that of the Americans, with an accent on the idea of cultural unity which militates against any suggestion of adding Turkey to the membership, or even (in its present political form) Spain, in spite of any short-term military advantages which might accrue. Not that Canadians are optimistic about an early United States of Europe; but they have a stronger historic sense of the underlying cultural unity of Europe as it existed before the rise of the German Empire, and a faith that it might in process of time be revived. (Few Canadians, be it remembered, came out to get away from their ties with Europe.)

So far as any external activity can do, NATO has taken a powerful hold upon the mind of the Canadian people. It completely overshadows that part of the world conflict which is centered in the Pacific, and if it were not for their obligations imposed by the U.N. the interest of Canadians in that theatre would be minimal. Canada has no tradition of interest in the Pacific, in which the United States has taken a leading part for nearly a hundred years. In World War I that theatre was looked after, until the United States came in, by the Japanese. In World War II, when the war in the Pacific was begun by a Japanese attack on the United States and seemed therefore a somewhat American war, Canada made only a small and ill-fated contribution there.

A recent American writer has remarked that in this mid-century the Pacific Ocean has become the Republican ocean and the Atlantic the Democratic one. If Canadians were to divide on that line the Pacific party would be doomed to many generations in opposition. Canadians strongly tend to regard the Far East as an extension of the European situation, and to view its problems from a British standpoint. Their own Pacific coast was not, like the United States one, settled by the last wave of the national westward push of population across the continent; it was settled as an entirely distinct colony of Great Britain, and settled mainly by sea, and it only



—From "Royal Journey."

Queen Elizabeth in Canada—"unifying force."

became part of Canada—after having a narrow shave of not doing so—in 1871, two years after the completion of the first United States transcontinental railway. It was fifteen years later that railway connection on Canadian soil was established between the Pacific and the East.

CANADA is therefore a strongly Europe-looking and Europe-conscious country, with its attitude toward Europe somewhat affected by its political association with Great Britain and the historic association of part of its people with France. It is also a country which has to cut its international policies according to its economic cloth and which is therefore reluctant to take on commitments in too many areas. In proportion to population it has far less accumulated capital than the United States, and the cost of operating its productive equipment is higher. Its population stretches in a very thin line right across the continent at its wider part, so that transportation forms a much larger share of its production costs than in the compact area of the United States; and its high latitude makes fuel costs another heavy burden, and adds substantially to the cost of its structures. Altogether the recent claim that an expenditure on defense of 11 per cent of the national income in Canada represents an equivalent sacrifice to an expenditure of 16 per cent in the United States is not unreasonable.

There is always a certain moderate difference in standard of living between Canada and the United States in favor of the latter for any given class of worker, whether wage-paid or white-collar. But when that difference gets too high, and ceases to be offset by the natural immobility of populations, it sets up a dangerous drift away from Canada. That drift is unfortunately highly selective, taking away those born and educated in Canada, and especially the more skilled and better educated whose prospects in the larger country are best, and leaving the immigrants (who come under the U.S. quotas for their respective native lands) and the less skilled of the Canadians. Any degree of defense effort, therefore, which materially impairs the Canadian standard of living defeats its own ends.

We started with the proposition that Canadian attitudes and policies in external affairs are imperatively conditioned by those of the United States, and we have found ourselves considering those respects in which Canadian attitudes differ from those of the United States. It looks like a contradiction, but it is not one. Canadians are deeply aware that they

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can do nothing independently of the United States, and that the only way in which they can make their attitudes effective in any degree is by influencing the attitudes of Americans. They obviously cannot hope to influence directly the mass opinion of the United States; Americans do not read Canadian newspapers nor listen to Canadian speakers, and there is no great reason why they should. But Canadians can hope to influence in some small degree the minds of those who exercise power in Washington; the history of the last forty years suggests that on occasions they have done so. The type of man who tends to become important in Canadian external affairs is therefore the type of man to whom Washington will on occasions listen, who can convince Washington that Canada is deeply serious about a few ideas in international relations, and that even if they differ slightly from the prevalent American ideas they are not unreasonable ideas for a North American nation. Belief in the historic cultural unity of Western European Christendom, in the continued existence of that unity despite the tragic disputes of the last fifty years, and in its supreme importance for the world situation of today, is the chief of these ideas and probably the foundation of all the rest. The second is the importance of the Commonwealth of Nations, now including several republics as well as the territories which are governed in the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II—an association which is naturally less easy of understanding to Americans who have not had experience of its unifying force than to Canadians who have.

The maintaining of these ideas obviously implies a right on Canada's part to differ from the United States. In theory the existence of that right is probably not disputed, but in practice the exercise of it often occasions some surprise to Americans. Every now and again Canadians, when discussing these matters with their American friends, as in the notable Niagara Falls Conference of 1951, find that they have to issue their own Declaration of Independence, asserting the right of Canada to be just as independent of the United States as both of them are of Great Britain. At that conference it was even suggested that the Statute of Westminster, declaring the sovereign equality of all the nations of the Commonwealth, might well have been accompanied by a Statute of Washington, declaring the sovereign equality of the nations of the North American continent. This was of course a purely humorous suggestion; but it expressed the feeling that a reminder is sometimes needed.

TWO ACCENTS, ONE VOICE

(Continued from page 16)

François Hertel have all produced verse of intellectual and emotional maturity and of great technical skill.

But so far, in attempting to summarize the achievements of the last thirty years, I have stressed the more novel and experimental work. The more traditional types of Canadian literature—romantic love and nature poetry, historical romances, and regional idylls in fiction—have continued, and have found some distinguished exponents. Wilson Macdonald, Audrey Alexandra Brown, and Arthur S. Bourinot have continued the romantic tradition in poetry; Frederick Niven, W. G. Hardy, F. E. D. McDowell, Thomas Raddall, and Will R. Bird have produced good historical romances; and Mazo de la Roche and a regiment of other women have given us regional idylls of varying merit.

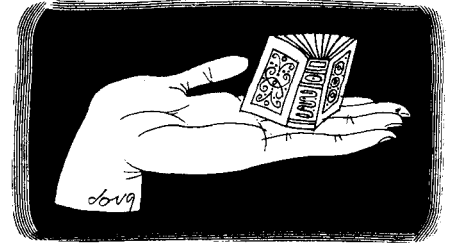
Such, then, are the main names on the literary map of Canada, and their multiplicity at least proves that our writers have not succumbed to despair. None of them are truly great names; even the best of our writers—Haliburton, Lampman, and Carman in the last century, Leacock, Pratt, Grove, Klein, Callaghan, MacLennan, Nelligan, Garneau, Lemelin, Guèvremont, and Roy in this—are but secondary figures on the world's literary stage. But, for a country of fourteen million people which has existed as a nation for less than a century, it is a list surprisingly long and distinguished. Only in drama, because of our scattered population, have we almost nothing to show, and even here there is much promise in the recent work of Robertson Davies and Fridolin, and in the radio plays of Lister Sinclair, Len Peterson, and Joseph Schull.

HAVE the items of this list any common qualities? Is there anything distinctively Canadian about Canadian literature?

The Canadian equivalent of the American Constitution is the British North America Act of 1867. It is typical of Canadian diffidence that little fuss is made of this act, that few if any of its phrases glow in our memories, and that it is usually mentioned as the object of mild scorn. Nevertheless, by analyzing each of the terms in its title we may, I think, come to the heart of this Canadian matter.

Canada is *British*. No attempt to define her or her literature can ignore this fact. The first substantial body of English-speaking settlers were Loyal-

ists who fled the southern colonies in order to remain under the British flag, and it was the sons of this first generation of Loyalists who laid the foundations of Canadian literature. T. C. Haliburton and Joseph Howe, Charles Sangster and Charles Mair, Bliss Carman and Archibald Lampman—all were of Loyalist stock. William Kirby was a latter-day Loyalist: he fled the United States because he



felt that the Fenian raids presaged an American war against Canada. Even today, the spirit of Loyalism lives on, as witness the spontaneous and sincere tributes paid recently to the present Queen and her husband, the suspicion of American "imperialism" which lurks in almost every Canadian heart, the recent report of the Massey Commission on our culture which stresses the threat of American mass-media and proposes a Canada Council for the arts (obviously modeled on the British Council). This British element in our culture has been kept alive in countless ways, not least by the fact that each year the very cream of our university graduates, especially in the liberal arts, go to Oxford or Cambridge for further study. (Many also go, of course, to the graduate schools of American universities, but the decisive difference is that most of them remain in the U. S., whereas the others return, bringing with them usually a profound admiration for the culture of Great Britain.)

The consequences of the British connection for our literature are far-reaching. Generally speaking, in our search for literary excellence we have looked east across the Atlantic rather than south across the American border. Haliburton may have used American dialect, but it was to eighteenth-century English satirists that he looked for his models; Carman may have been proud of his kinship with Emerson but it was Shelley and Swinburne he chiefly followed. Even today, when there is a much more balanced appreciation of American literature and a greater knowledge of it, our poets are more apt to follow

Auden, Spender, Dylan Thomas, and John Betjeman than Williams, Stevens, Jarrell or Eberhart. But it goes deeper than that: Canadian literature, Canadian culture generally, has something of the restraint, the discipline, the cautiousness if you will of the British tradition. We like to think that it gives us stability, balance, a capacity for taking the long view and avoiding hysteria; we hope that we do not achieve merely dulness.

Now, in all this I may seem to be ignoring the French element in our population, but the exception is more apparent than real. The French-speaking Canadians, of course, are not British; some of them, perhaps many of them, are anti-British; but they are not pro-American. They too look eastward across the Atlantic, to another country with a long history, and they too feel themselves to be a part of an old, deep-rooted cultural tradition.

But we are not merely British—and French—but also *northern*. It is this “northernness” which most emphatically distinguishes our literature. We may feel close to Thoreau and Dreiser, but Poe and Faulkner and Capote are not of our stuff made. It is highly significant that when the paintings of our Group of Seven were exhibited in London and Paris in the Twenties they were compared by the critics to the work of Scandinavian and Russian painters, and that English reviewers of the novels of Grove and De la Roche made similar comparisons. The recurring motif in our literature is a sense of awe provoked by the contrasts of our climate and our geography. Loneliness amid the vast stretches of a northern landscape; fear of the violence which lurks in our forests; exultation in the mighty strength of our rivers and mountains; the fascination of intense cold and searing heat: these are motifs which echo and re-echo through our novels, our poetry, and our essays in both French and English. The landscape is so immense, so compelling, that we have been rather too preoccupied with it; to describe it, somehow to reduce it to form, we have neglected our social institutions, our people; but though we may in time subordinate it, we shall never be able to ignore it. It, too, has restrained us, dwarfed us, made us modest to the point of diffidence, made us, when compared with our southern neighbours, almost inarticulate.

But we are, for all our Britishness and our northernness also American. To the inhabitants of the British isles we seem almost indistinguishable from you: it is not long since J. B. Priestley, visiting us briefly, was moved to exhort us to be ourselves,

to shake off our American trappings. We do not take such urgings too seriously; we have become reconciled to our fate of being damned Yankees in Europe and bloody Englishmen in the United States. Certainly we know that we shall not become ourselves by becoming self-conscious. Nor can we live beside a nation as vigorous, as creative, and as potent as the United States and not be influenced by it. Our language is closer to yours than it is to that of the United Kingdom. How could it fail to be when we see your films, read your books and magazines, and listen to many of your radio programs? And our literature, in spite of British influence and the distinctive features of our climate and geography, is, has been, and probably always will be very similar to yours. Haliburton and Twain, Pratt and Jeffers, Grove and Dreiser, Callaghan and Sherwood Anderson: detailed comparisons could be made between each pair of writers. Our literature, like that of the United States, is vigorous, optimistic.

It is this fresh sense of the future that is the most hopeful augury for the development of Canadian literature. It is this which keeps our writers from getting altogether frustrated by the problems that beset them. Divided by racial, religious, and geographic barriers, beset by imported books and magazines, irked by low rates of pay and bedeviled by overcautious publishers, they go on writing because they feel that Canada's future is certain to be greater than her past, and that to have helped to build that future will some day be accounted no mean honor.

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FICTION

(Continued from page 23)

side Spain and Latin America because none of his mature works have been translated," one would wonder why this minor item should be chosen to introduce the creator of Spanish realism to a foreign public. Galdós is far from unknown in non-Spanish countries, and if translators have heretofore concentrated on earlier novels such as "Dona Perfecta" and "Gloria," it is probably because they considered them the most interesting. There are many excellent qualities in the later "Novelas Españolas Contemporáneas" (which I assume are meant by "mature" works) but among these volumes, the one translated here is not particularly distinguished. This does not mean "La de Bringas" (the original title) does not deserve translation. Although it is not Galdós's masterpiece, it is still an entertaining piece in the nineteenth-century realistic tradition and amply characteristic of its important author.

Galdós took from Balzac his ideas concerning the scope and technique of the novel and the mission of the novelist to serve as scribe to contemporary society. In "The Spendthrifts," Galdós reports on the domestic side of bureaucratic life at the court of Isabella II. With a scrupulousness for documentation superior to Balzac's and worthy of Zola, Galdós inspected the Royal Palace which housed the government parasites, before beginning to write. In the novel we move from one apartment to another: scenes of domestic squabbling, of women gossiping and making over dresses—tenement life in all its manifestations. The main portraits are of Bringas, whose miserliness brings him close to Balzac's Grandet, and his silly wife Rosalía, who thinks only of what she puts on her back. They are drawn in detail with life-like proportions, giving the illusion of flesh and blood density characteristic of the realistic method. No person in the novel is actually worthy of our sympathy, yet the author's condemnation is tempered by the warm humor and irony that we associate with his English master, Charles Dickens. The moralist or psychologist in Galdós, as in Balzac, Zola, and Dickens, is overshadowed by the sociologist. Rosalía's vice is her passion for dress. It brings her to rob her husband and give herself to a man who promises to pay her bills. But her degradation serves Galdós more as an indictment of the rotten society of which she is a part than as a means of showing the anguish and humilia-

tion of a human soul. Never does Galdós break through the exteriority of speech, gesture, and appearance to get to the inner monologue we have now come to expect in the novel. Reading realists like Galdós today is vaguely irritating, like seeing an old film made before the close-up technique was invented.

—LAURENCE LESAGE.

THE FOREST CAVALIER. By Roy Flanagan. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3.50. Bacon's Rebellion has rarely been used for historical romance, and seeing what Roy Flanagan has done with it this is a little hard to understand. As a story "The Forest Cavalier" sticks closely to the conventional pattern of the costume novel. Lance Clayborn comes to the Virginia colony as a strippling in the late seventeenth century. He must avenge the death of his uncle, killed by the sea-merchant Jesus Forke. Quickly Lance learns the ways of the forest in the New World, becomes an intrepid fighter, a skilled hunter. He also falls in love with Easter Walker but the usual misunderstandings keep them apart for three hundred or so pages. In the end he gets her, sees his uncle avenged, his own

honor—under attack because of his participation in Bacon's rebellion—cleared. These trappings are handled with skill. But it is the historical material—the treatment of Bacon's rebellion, of the conflict between Berkeley, governor of the colony, and the people, between the colony and the Indians, between the fur trappers and the farmers—that raises the novel more than a notch above the common level. While keeping his story moving Mr. Flanagan has illumined a chapter of colonial American history. This last of the novels we shall have from him is also his best.

THE ROGUE FROM PADUA. By Jay Williams. Little, Brown. \$3.50. There are a lot of rogues in Mr. Williams's highly diverting re-creation of the period when the Reformation was seething in southern Germany. The most diverting is his hero, Arminius Bosch, who in the end of course turns out not to be a rogue in the old sense of the word so much as one in the more affectionate modern sense. In an event, he starts out as a "con" man in sixteenth-century Swabia and in the process of fleecing some of the more respected citizens of Heilbronn

Take the Moment to the Heart

By Lillian Everts

THE moment left as it came . . .
(Not before it staked a claim
to the heartprint in its name.)
And not a thing remained the same
when the moment came.

Professing that transition of motion
harry it to the dispatch of parting,
in diminishing in haste, it will be no less
than the belly of a pit is less
for its concave injectivity in the contemplated scheme. . . .

Take it then and hold it close
before the inevitable escape
into the cyclorama of time
where — as recompense — it remain
(as virgin bride before the feast)
as essence for furthering the flame
of the Godhead's impeccable fame.

Take the moment to the heart
lest its meaning fall apart;
cradle it into a trance
for the while until perchance
it reveal the custody
of its true identity . . .
Keep the moment in the heart
lest its meaning fall apart.