THE STATUS OF THE FAMILIAR ESSAY IN CANADIAN LITERATURE

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of McGill University to satisfy requirements for the degree of M.A. in English Language and Literature.

S.R. Norris Hodgins.

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written and said, during the past decade, about Canadian literature. The organization of the Canadian Authors' Association has made our writers self-conscious and has encouraged them to discuss their craft, their mission, their accomplishments, and so on - not always in private, either; the establishment of a Canadian Book Week, with its accompanying radio talks, luncheon addresses and newspaper publicity, has attempted to arouse in our readers an interest in Canadian-made literary wares[#]; handbooks by MacMechan, Logan and French, Pierce and others have essayed to indicate

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[#]The true lover of literature, and of Canada, must sometimes wonder whether the Canadian Authors' Association, as it has developed, is not a vicious influence - whether its supporters are not mistaking a conscious effort to produce art for a genuine artistic development. Literature cannot be produced by the Ford system of massing workers (the Mermaid Tavern tradition of the association of kindred spirits is a totally different thing, as anyone must realize who has attended many of the C.A.A. meetings!), nor can the literary appreciation of a people be awakened by bally-hoo methods: 'book weeks', Kiwanis addresses, and the like. That this is already being appreciated is shown by the following statement by Marcus Adeney, in an article entitled "The Future of Canadian Literature", which appeared in the November, 1928, issue of the Canadian Bookman: "The future of Canadian literature does not depend upon any sort of Canada First movement, nor upon undiscriminating local appreciation. It depends partly upon economic and cultural conditions throughout the country, and partly upon the sort of critical atmosphere we are able to create in the larger cities. To restrict our interest to Canadian publications would be to commit artistic suicide."

the scope and quality of Canada's output of books and magazines. There has not been, however, very much systematic research undertaken so far in the field of Canadian literature[#] - with the notable exception of the very sound piece of work done by Dr. Ray Palmer Baker and published, in 1920, by the Harvard University Press under the title, A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation.

[#]By the term 'Canadian literature' I mean in general 'literary activity in Canada' (see introduction to Chapter II of this thesis), while for the purpose of the present study I am concerned with productions in the English language only.

It would seem, then, that the field is a fertile one for specific studies by those interested in Canada's literary development, and it is a section of this field that I have endeavoured to work as a means of satisfying thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

I have chosen the 'familiar' essay in Canada as the subject of my study, primarily because I have been interested in this literary type for some years now, both as a reader of such essays (whether produced in Canada or elsewhere) and also as a would-be writer of material of this sort. I have been interested, too, in seeing what we have produced in the way of familiar essays, since this type of essay, like the lyric poem, is dependent not so much on subject or on information presented as on treatment, mood and personality of writer - and hence should have something of the timelessness

of a poem. For timelessness is akin to permanence in literature; and the great need of our Canadian literature, it seems to me, is not more books but rather more lasting books.

With this idea of permanence in mind, I have endeavoured to bring together what evidence I could find (in the works of our literary historians) of the situation in general - and then to make a start at building up specific lists of Canadian essays that have been published in book form or in the columns of such reviews as the Queen's Quarterly, the University Magazine and the Dalhousie Review, since such essays have the best chance of being preserved. A number of essays of merit have of course appeared in the columns of our monthly magazines and week-end papers, and, that my thesis might be the more suggestive, I have tried to find out through correspondence how much encouragement is offered by these more ephemeral publications to the essay writer. A systematic search through the files of such periodicals, however, would entail more work than can be afforded at this time, and so must be left for a later study.

Before bringing my introductory remarks to an end, perhaps a word might not be amiss relative to the material which I am including as Appendix B. About half a dozen years ago, I had the honour to address the St. James Literary Society of Montreal on 'The Neglect of the Light Essay in Canadian Literature'. After the address had been delivered, I recast the material into the form of an article, and in this form it was published in the October, 1924, issue of the

Dalhousie Review and reprinted in the Montreal Gazette of November 29th of the same year. Its publication brought forth four interesting statements in support of the stand that I had taken: one from the editor of the Gazette, one from the editor of MacLean's Magazine, one from the editor of Saturday Night, and one from a writer in the Manitoba Free Press who signed himself 'The Bookman'.

I have thought it well to append this essay, with its replies, for two reasons: first, while it is written in popular form and so, perhaps, is unsuitable for embodying in the thesis proper, the statements of these editors, read in conjunction with the article to which they refer, help support one section of my thesis; and second, the presentation of an exhibit of one's writing for publication may not be without point in the case of one who is seeking a degree in English Language and Literature.

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CHAPTER I

The Familiar Essay as a Literary Type

Since literature is a fluid thing, ever moulding itself to the changes and convolutions that accompany the ceaseless developments of human life, human ideas and human aspirations, the task of finding adequate definitions for most literary forms is beset with difficulties. In the case of the essay, these difficulties of definition are multiplied by the fact that a single term is made to cover such divergent forms as the works of Montaigne, Lamb and Beerbohm, on the one hand, and those of Macaulay and the other 'Review' essayists, on the other. For between the works of these two groups there is a great gulf fixed: the former, with their emphasis on personality, mood and introspection, have some claim to kinship with the lyric poem; the latter, with their careful attention to assigned subject, to clear logical statement and to full and 'scientific' treatment, are more nearly related to the treatises of the historian and the scientist. Small wonder, then, if we find dictionary definitions somewhat unhelpful.

Montaigne, in calling his short, informal dissertations Essais, when he sent them out into the world in 1580, apparently used the word to mean 'a trial, attempt, or endeavour,'

contrasting his causeries with the more formal and elaborate treatises that have since sought inclusion in the fold of the essay. Doctor Johnson, in his dictionary, stressed the feature of incompleteness - though the best examples of the essay have a sort of free completeness of their own - when he defined the essay as, "A loose sally of the mind; an irregular, undigested piece; not a regular and orderly performance." The New English Dictionary, endeavouring to meet the needs of modern inclusiveness in the term, calls it "a composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of subject; originally implying want of finish,'an irregular, undigested piece,' but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range," - thus making its application so wide as to include, for example, newspaper features and other compositions that might better be classed as 'articles.'

The definition put forth by Edmund Gosse[1] more nearly meets requirements: "As a form of literature, the essay is a composition of moderate length, usually in prose, which deals in an easy, cursory way with the external conditions of a subject, and, in strictness, with that subject only as it affects the writer;" and he still further limits the use of the term by adding, "It should ... always be the brief and light result of experience and profound meditation." Even this, however, is taken exception to by J.B. Priestley, who writes[2]: "The simplest and safest definition of the essay is that it is the kind of composition produced by an essayist. This does not seem

helpful until we reflect that actually we do know what is meant by an essayist, whereas the term 'essay' is so elastic that it means nothing ... De Quincey once made a famous distinction between what he called the Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power. The true essay belongs to the latter class ... Even Sir Edmund Gosse, whose article on the Essay in the Encyclopedia Britannica should be read by everybody interested in the subject, makes the mistake of referring to such writers as Jeffrey and Macaulay as essayists. But we shall never get any further and might as well banish the term 'essayist' entirely unless we realize that neither of these writers was an essayist. One was a literary critic, the other a literary critic and historian. Their work belongs to the Literature of Knowledge ..."

To these definitions I should like to add yet another - in reality an enlargement of Priestley's compact phrase, though developed independently (see Appendix B). Professor Ker, in attempting to define the Ballad, says[3]: "In spite of Socrates and his logic, we may venture to say, in answer to the question 'What is a ballad?' - 'A Ballad is The Milldams of Binnorie and Sir Patrick Spens and The Douglas Tragedy and Lord Randal and Childe Maurice, and things of that sort.'" And in like manner, I suggest as a definition of the essay: 'The Essay is Montaigne's Of Coaches and Lamb's Old China and Stevenson's Crabbed Age and Youth and Lynd's Eggs - an Easter Homily and Beerbohm's Going Out for a Walk, and things of that sort.' These essays very definitely belong to one family - and they

have no more in common with the political, historical and social treatises that are published as 'essays' in our reviews than the lyric has with the epic poem.

Its History and Usual Divisions

Of no other literary type may we speak with such security of the time and circumstances of its birth as we can of the essay. "The Essay, as a species of literature," says Gosse[1], "was invented by Montaigne ... in the month of March, 1571 ... in the second story of the old tower of the castle of Montaigne;" for it was in this month that, 'with all his faculties still alert,' the first genuine essayist 'yielded himself to the care of the learned maidens,' his books, and made a start on the essays that have so endeared him to the world. There are, of course, some who, like Bacon, endeavour to discount Montaigne's claims to priority in essay-writing - 'The word is late, though the thing is ancient' - and who put forth the Epistles of Seneca, the Book of Ecclesiastics, and various brief pieces by Cicero and others as earlier essays. But Montaigne it was who invented a name for what was to become a real literary type, and in his hands the new form achieved self-consciousness and character - as did the novel in the hands of Fielding in the eighteenth century, and the short story in those of Poe in the nineteenth.

Montaigne's Essais, then, published in 1580, may be taken as the first examples of a new form of literature; and it was

many years before writers were found to carry on his tradition, either in France or in England. Bacon did not do it - though he is often called 'the father of the English essay.' His first ten 'essays', published in 1597, read like chapters from the Book of Proverbs: they give no indication of personality - and it is this latter quality that distinguishes preeminently the essays of Montaigne from other prose types. "It is my selfe I pourtray," wrote Montaigne (according to Florio's translation[4]) in his introduction to his 'well-meaning Booke' - and, again "my selfe am the groundworke of my booke." And, although the 'essays' sent forth by Bacon in 1612 and 1625, after he had had an opportunity of studying Montaigne in the translation made for the English public by John Florio in 1603, were somewhat freer, "he never reached," as Gosse points out[1], "or but seldom, the freedom and ease, the seeming formlessness held in by an invisable chain, which are the glory of Montaigne, and distinguish the typical essayist." I am inclined to agree with Gosse that it is to the seventeenth century that we must look for first examples of the genuine essay in England. "The name of Bacon inspires one," says this authority, "but it is really not he, but Cowley, who is the father of the English essay." For in the Several Discourses by way of Essays, published by Abraham Cowley in 1668, we find our earliest English examples of the personal essay - and none more typically Montaignesque than the essay 'Of Myself.'

From these early beginnings, the English essay has had an interesting development. Cowley was not the only worker in this field in the seventeenth century. Sir William Temple's Miscellanea contains essays of note, and the Religio Medici of Sir Thomas Browne, because of the personal note, must be considered. Character studies, too, were popular - though they may be difficult to fit into Gosse's definition of the essay; and Dryden gave us our first examples of the critical literary essay which was to assume such importance with the rise of the reviews in the nineteenth century.

The eighteenth century saw the essay dominant in English literature - as the novel was dominant in the nineteenth. The divorsement of the drama and of poetry from the lives of the people at this time, and the establishment, early in the century, of periodical literature, gave the essay its opportunity; and Addison, Steele, Chesterfield, Johnson and Goldsmith - all essayists - are the names that stand out with especial clearness in any list of literary celebrities that may be compiled for the century. Yet it cannot be said that the eighteenth century saw the production of much in the way of the personal essay. Addison, Steele and Goldsmith wrote charmingly, and in a familiar style - but usually with the desire to instruct. Didacticism, the attempt to improve society, even to laugh folk out of their follies, these considerations make for a loss of the personal note in literature. They are at variance with the idea of the first essayist[4]:

"I have proposed unto my selfe no other than a familiar and private end: I have no respect or consideration at all, either to thy service, or to my glory." So, charming as are the essays produced in the Spectator, we find little written in this form during the eighteenth century that is as personal, as free from the urge towards uplift, as the lyric poem has always been - and it is as a relative through blood of the lyric poem and of the familiar conversation that I like to consider the true essay.

With the publication of the Essays of Elia, by Lamb, and of the works of his worthy contemporary, Hazlitt, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the English essay finally swung into the main current of the stream which had its source in the great Montaigne; and for a century now the personal, familiar essay has occupied a considerable place in English literature. Concurrently, the rise of the reviews, like the Edinburgh, the Quarterly, Blackwoods Magazine, encouraged the production of the more formal treatises, literary, critical, historical, biographical, by such men as Jeffrey, Coleridge, Macaulay, Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, Huxley, which, classed as essays, have fathered, not only the modern review 'essays' but also the modern newspaper 'articles' - but I am inclined to agree with Dr. Fuess, when he says[5], "it is when bestowed on ... the Familiar Essay ... that the term 'essay' is most accurately used." It is difficult, in short, to make these treatises conform to Gosse's definition of the essay; it is

doubly difficult to see much affinity between them and the exquisite personal productions of Montaigne and Lamb.

But it is with the familiar essay that I am particularly concerned in this study - and what a wealth of material of this type has been produced in England, and to a lesser extent in the United States, during the past century![#]

[#] Suggestive, in showing the inclusiveness of the familiar essay, is the following classification, used by Tanner in his introduction to Essays and Essay-Writing (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1917): 1. Personal experiences, confessions, and self-analyses; 2. Reflections and comments on life, human nature, customs, and experience; 3. Observations and discoveries in the familiar and commonplace; 4. Nature essays; 5. General Observations, comments, and opinions of the author.

English essayists of the nineteenth century who followed in the Montaigne-Lamb-Hazlitt tradition were: Leigh Hunt, John Wilson ('Christopher North'), DeQuincey, Thackery and Stevenson; while Irving, Curtis and Holmes brought America forward as a new contender for essay honours. Nor did the tradition die with Stevenson. In fact, a good case might be made for the assertion that the past thirty or forty years constitute a 'Golden Age' for the English essay. What a delight, to the lover of the essay, even to call the roll of contemporary familiar essayists! - in England: Augustine Birrell, A.C.Benson, Austin Dobson, Edmund Gosse, John Galsworthy, Maurice Hewlett, Alice Meynell, Max Beerbohm, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, E.V. Lucas, A.A. Milne, A.P. Herbert, A.G. Gardiner, H.M. Tomlinson and Robert Lynd, to name no others; and in America: Agnes Repplier, Samuel McCord Crothers, Simeon Strunsky, Christopher

Morley, Robert Cortes Halliday and Heywood Broun. Does not this list, incomplete as it is, suggest something in the way of a modern renaissance of the 'familiar essay'? And it is with the purpose of trying to discover the part that Canadian writers have had in this renaissance of the familiar essay that I have undertaken the present study.

Its Characteristics

Before proceeding with a search for the familiar essay in Canadian literature, it may be useful to examine a few statements that have been made by writers and lovers of the essay on the art and characteristics of this form. In this way we shall be able to supplement our definitions in building up standards by which we may pass judgment on what we may find in the way of Canadian productions.

Of Montaigne's emphasis upon the personal note I have already spoken. This point Benson elaborates in his essay on 'The Art of the Essayist'[6]: "The charm of Montaigne is the charm of personality - frankness, gusto, acute observation, lively acquaintance with men and manners. He is ashamed of recording nothing that interested him; and a certain discreet shamelessness must always be the characteristic of the essayist, for the essence of his art is to say what has pleased him without too prudently considering whether it is worthy of the attention of the well-informed mind ... The essayist must not have a castle, or if he does, both the grounds and the living

rooms must be open to the public." Dr. Fuess, too, stresses this point, when he observes[5], "Like the familiar letter, to which it is closely related, it is essentially 'a direct exposure of the man behind the book.' In this narrower meaning the essay is subjective, personal, and discursive, full of casual gossip and intimate self-revelation."

"All literature," says Benson[6], "answers to something in life, some habitual form of human expression. The stage imitates life, calling in the services of the eye and the ear; there is the narrative of the teller of tales or the minstrel; the song, the letter, the talk - all forms of human expression and communication have their antitypes in literature. The essay is the reverie, the frame of mind in which a man says, in the words of the old song, 'Says I to myself, says I.'".

Another characteristic of the true essay is the relative lack of importance of subject or title. "The point of the essay is not the subject," says the writer quoted in the foregoing paragraph, and an essayist of the charm of A.C.Benson must be considered an authority, - "for any subject will suffice, but the charm of personality." One need only consider Lamb's Old China to realize the truth of this. And in the same strain is this statement by Fuess[5]: "To the familiar essayist ... the assigned title is not always of supreme importance. Montaigne discourses on cannibals, Hazlitt upon sundials, and Stevenson upon gas-lamps; yet each persists in talking mainly of himself, and each deals with his subject in terms of his

own unique individuality." Mood, rather than title, is the force that holds the essay together, in the opinion of Alexander Smith, author of Dreamthorp: "The essay, as a literary form, resembled the lyric, in so far as it is moulded by some central mood - whimsical, serious or satirical. Give the mood, and the essay, from the first sentence to the last, grows around it as the cocoon grows around the silk-worm... A quick eye and ear, an ability to discern the infinite suggestiveness of common things, a brooding meditative spirit, are all that the essayist requires to start business with... Beyond the vital hint, the first step, his discourses are not beholden to their titles[7]."

Before we get too far away from Montaigne, we should consider his retirement - after having first made the acquaintance of men and manners whilst 'enduring the servitude of law courts and public offices' - to his tower library to read, meditate and write. This attitude of retirement[#], at least in

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[#] It is pleasant to remember that our most charming modern essayist, Max Beerbohm, out-Montaigned Montaigne in this. Montaigne retired to write at the age of 38; Beerbohm published his Works at the age of 25 and retired even from writing, making the following declaration in his 'Diminuendo': "I shall write no more. Already I feel myself to be a trifle outmoded. I belong to the Beardsley period. Younger men, with months of activity before them, with fresher schemes and notions, with newer enthusiasm, have pressed forward since then. Cedo junioribus. Indeed I stand aside with no regret." Then, from his 'retirement', he sent out, in 1899 (He had retired in 1895.), a fresh lot of essays in a book appropriately named More, in 1909 another volume, Yet Again, and, in 1921, And Even Now - the 'works' on which his fame as a writer is likely to rest.

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some degree, is a characteristic of the attitude of many of our

best essayists. Essays are not ordinarily written in the market place. Benson, himself an essayist of great charm, states[6] as his conviction that, "the writer (of essays) must not be too much interested in the action and conduct of life. If he is a politician, or a soldier, or an emperor, or a plough-boy, or a thief, and is absorbed in what he is doing, with a vital anxiety to make profit or position or influence out of it; if he hates his opponents and rewards his friends; if he condemns, despises, disapproves, he at once forfeits sympathy and largeness of view... The eminent banker, the social reformer, the forensic pleader, the fanatic, the crank, the puritan - these are not the stuff out of which the essayist is made." And in the same vein we find Priestley writing[2]: "... The essay does not by its nature entirely exclude controversy and debate, but it does not encourage them. The debating mood is not the mood in which great essays are written." In short, what is found in the best of our essayists is urbanity.

The true essay, too, must have a literary aim: its object is not to instruct, but to stimulate and delight. It is a delicate form of prose, as Pocock has said[8], "for in the essay a certain lightness or subtlety of wit is essential. The epigram must seem to run easily from the pen; not arrive, as it were, in a pantechnicon." A characteristic of many of our best essayists has been their fondness of allusion and anecdote. "They have loved to point an argument with an anecdote," says

Fuess[5], "and to press home a doctrine with a simile. But the knowledge displayed is never obtrusive or pedantic." Our essayists, too, have been masters of prose.

Finally, there is the matter of humour. Not all humourists have been essayists, nor, conversely, all essayists humourists; but the familiar essay has a tradition for wit, whimsicality, fun, and even apparent absurdity. "It has... a good deal in common with the art of the lyric poet and the writer of sonnets," remarks Benson[6], "but it has all the freedom of prose, its more extended range, its use of less strictly poetical effects, such as humour in particular. Humour is alien to poetical effect, because poetry demands a certain sacredness and solemnity of mood... It is quite true that the essayist has a full right to such a mood if he chooses... But the essayist may have a larger range."

Summing up, then, the characteristics of the familiar essay include: 1. A distinctly personal note - something of the reverie; 2. Emphasis on mood, rather than title, as a cementing force; 3. Urbanity - a suggestion of retirement from the forum; 4. Literary quality and style; 5. Usually some measure, at least, of wit and humour.

Is not this a worthy list of qualities in a literary form? and are they not qualities of which we have need in the literary productions of this country?

CHAPTER II

The Familiar Essay in Canadian Literature (General)

In the opening paragraphs of my first chapter I endeavoured to explain just what I mean by the term 'familiar essay'; it would perhaps be well for me to indicate at this point the sense in which I employ the term 'Canadian literature', since at least two different usages would appear to be current. On the one hand, we have such writers as B.K. Sandwell and W.A. Deacon seeking to confine its use, at least to some extent, to works that are distinctively Canadian in subject matter, treatment and mood; on the other, such authorities as Sir Andrew Macphail, Stephen Leacock and Archibald MacMechan using it to indicate our contributions in general to the larger 'English' literature, as opposed to 'the wilful attempt at national exclusiveness'.

The stand taken by Mr. Sandwell is seen in an account printed in the Montreal Gazette of February 13, 1929, of an address given before the McGill University library students. "Only a small part of the work of Canadian writers can be called Canadian literature," Mr. Sandwell is reported as saying, "because the author ceases to express the ideas of his people when he turns his mind on the Old Country and the United States, where he may get a better remuneration for his work ... While there is no strong differentiation in the

character of Canadian literature from English or United States literature," continues the report, "Mr. Sandwell felt that there does exist a Canadian literature which can be discussed as a literature in itself ..." - and reference is made to the rise of "a characteristic school of Canadian poetry" and to the fact that "Canadian writers have led in the animal story" of the type produced by Ernest Thompson Seton, Charles G.D. Roberts, et al.

Presuming that Mr. Sandwell was correctly reported, we have a definition that is bound to prove embarrassing. The best of our writers would have to be omitted from the roll-call of producers of Canadian literature, for the best of them are finding their greatest reading public in the countries that this definition rules 'out of bounds'. And this is bound to be still more true in the future, when Canadians have won for themselves a place in the ranks of the producers of 'English' literature. Middleton Murray, in his Pencillings[9], quotes Goethe as telling Eckermann that the writer who did not write in the expectation of a million readers had missed his vocation, and an exception cannot be made for Canadians. Just as we see today the best known English writers looking to the United States for their best market (without necessarily becoming American writers), so we must expect Canadian writers of importance to seek their reading public in the Old Country or in the United States or in China or wherever men and women are willing to

purchase and read literary material. Even Bliss Carman, who is cited by Mr. Sandwell as an example of this distinctively Canadian type of writer, cannot be said to have been uninfluenced by the United States market - and, I fear, if we were to remove from our literary productions everything produced by writers who have had their eyes on the larger market, the 'Canadian literature' remaining would consist of only the poorest parts of a literary production that is none too good at best.

Similarly fallacious, it seems to me, is the view expressed by W.A. Deacon in his section on Canadian literature in Poteen[10]: "The true test of the nationality of a literature is whether it could have originated elsewhere ... To take an example from the books of today, the epic of the Icelandic migrations to the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and the happy fusion of the Icelanders into the national life, as told by Laura Goodman Salverson in The Viking Heart, is as distinctive a Canadian product as a beaver pelt or a basket of saskatoon berries." But is it? Might not a Japanese or a Russian or a Fiji Islander have studied the situation treated by Miss Salverson and then written the story in his own language for his own people? If scene of plot is to determine the nationality of a piece of literature, what shall we say of "Hamlet", of "Othello", of "The Merchant of Venice"? Must we cease to speak of these as pieces of English Literature? Is George Eliot's Romola a fragment of Italian literature? Forster's A Passage to

India a bit of Indian literature? and to what literature shall we assign Mr. Wells' Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island?

A saner view is taken by Stephen Leacock, when he says[11]: "... There are not, in my opinion, any Canadian poems or Canadian movies or Canadian books that are inevitably, obviously and necessarily Canadian except perhaps the Statistical Year Book of Canada published at Ottawa by the King's Printer... This, however, in no way circumscribes our efforts and our aims... If our thought must run in the common mould of all who must use the English language, that does not in any way impede a gifted child of Canada. He need not try to write a Canadian play; let him just write one like those of Shakespeare. He needn't write a Canadian work; anyone as good as Dickens' will do nicely. It seems to me, in short, that the attempt to mark off Canada as a little area all its own, listening to no one but itself, is as silly as it is ineffective... The conception of the republic of letters is a nobler idea than the wilful attempt at national exclusiveness." And Dr. Leacock might say today, as Sir Andrew Macphail said twenty years ago[12], "... the movement for the creation of a Canadian literature as apart from the literature of the world never came to much."

The term Canadian literature, then,as used in this thesis has a wider meaning than that included in the Sandwell-Deacon definition: it has the Leacock-Macphail

connotation. Its best paraphrase is found in one of Dr. MacMechan's paragraphs, where he says "... even if Canada be denied a literature, she must be credited with a certain amount of literary activity." What I am interested in is the part played by the familiar essay in the 'literary activity' of Canada.

"First Catch Your Hare"

When one turns from a consideration of the characteristics and qualities of the familiar essay with the idea of applying one's standards to the works of those essayists who have contributed to this 'literary activity' of Canada, one is reminded of a celebrated recipe for jugged hare, which begins: "First catch your hare." Before we can pass judgment on Canada's familiar essays, however broad or narrow our definition of 'Canadian literature', we must first find these essays - a thing that is somewhat difficult of accomplishment.

This is especially true of the situation as it obtained in the early days. In fact, it is only since the beginning of the present century that the essay as a literary form has held a place of any importance amongst the literary productions of Canada.

To make such a promouncement authoritative, of course, would normally require a thorough search, on the part of the worker, not only for books of essays that might have been produced in the early days, but also for individual specimens that might have found their way into the columns

of the many periodicals of literary aim that had their birth, struggled, and died, in Canada, during the nineteenth century - for the natural home of the essay has always been the literary periodical. And such a search would entail more work, I fear, than could be justified in the present study, particularly in view of the fact that many of these short-lived periodicals are not easy of access. Fortunately, however, the field of early Canadiana has been fairly well worked by a number of historians of our literature, the findings of some of whom are sufficiently authoritative to serve as trustworthy evidence of the status of the familiar essay during that period.

Of the treatises available, I have chosen three works, which I think are considered sound, as representative of what our historians have found in the productions of the early days: Baker's History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation[13], Burpee's section on Canadian literature in the Encyclopedia Britannica[14], and Marquis' pronouncement on English-Canadian literature in Canada and its Provinces[15]; while to round out this section, based on authorities, I have taken the outlines of Canadian literature of MacMechan[16] and of Logan and French[17] as representing what has been said in the various handbooks that have been produced since the organization of the Canadian Authors' Association.

The Evidence of the Historians

The most authoritative work on early Canadian literature is undoubtedly that done by Dr. Baker, whose History[13] is based on a careful study of all available books and periodicals produced in Canada during the early years. A careful perusal of this work, however, fails to reveal anything of the nature of the familiar essay in the material studied by this scholar. The name of Haliburton stands out as the most important force in the period 'to the Confederation', and perhaps in Canadian literature to the present - but Haliburton was a humourist, not an essayist. Nor can we include Joseph Howe amongst our essayists, however enjoyable those speeches of his that were afterwards published as 'essays': Howe was an orator, and the fact that some of his addresses are still readable can by no means be taken as proof of the existence of the essay as a literary form in early Canadiana. Mrs. Moodie's Roughing it in the Bush and Mrs. Trail's Pearls and Pebbles have some claim for regard as familiar essays, but only that possessed by Janey Canuck's Seeds of Pine - which is to say, not very much. All of these are of interest mainly as descriptive pieces on various phases of pioneer life in Canada, and so are not in the main stream of the familiar essay.

Some mention is made by Baker of occasional essays that appeared in the columns of the Literary Garland, a magazine published in the 'Forties', but a brief glance through

a few volumes will show that not much of value in the essay form was used - save for the pieces that were reproduced from the pages of British and American periodicals. Some sketches of Canadian life and scenery were printed and a few nature studies, but in general the original contributions were not very robust.

In short, Baker finds little of belles-lettres in Canada in the period covered in his work. "The writers had little time for anything beyond the daily routine essential to existense," he remarks. "Surveying, the construction of wagon roads, and the clearing of the farms do not tend towards belles-lettres." The true essay is a product of a cultivated community, and, as Baker points out, apart from the educated community that was to be found in Nova Scotia in the years immediately following the coming of the Loyalists, who had brought their culture with them, conditions in Canada in the early days were not such as would encourage the production or the reading of essays.

Burpee, bringing the story of Canadian literature up to the present century[14], has much the same to say. "In belles-lettres," he remarks, "very little has been accomplished, unless we count Goldwin Smith as a Canadian." But however else we classify him, we cannot call Goldwin Smith a familiar essayist. At the same time, some of his pronouncements have a bearing on our subject as showing the condition of periodical literature in Canada in the early days

of Confederation. "Experience has proved the difficulty of maintaining a Canadian magazine in the face of the competition to which it is exposed both from the side of England and from that of the United States," wrote Goldwin Smith in the first issue of the Bystander, in 1880. And in its last issue, ten years later, we read: "The effort to give Canadian intellect an organ in the shape of a magazine or a literary paper has been arduous and costly... The struggle against the literary journalism of the Mother Country, and still more against that of the United States, is almost desperate." Such statements, taken in conjunction with his confession: "My Oxford dreams of literary achievement never were or could be fulfilled in Canada," while not dealing specifically with my subject, at least suggest a state of affairs from which we should indeed be optimistic to expect much in the way of familiar essays.

Nor does Marquis, the third of my historians, have much to say of this type of literature in Canada - despite the fact that his study[15] covers the period from the early days to the end of the first decade of the present century. Out of 100 pages devoted to the subject, this writer gives 32 to fiction, 24 to poetry, 11 to history, 9 to travels and exploration, 6 to biography and 14 to general literature (the remainder being taken up with introductory remarks), including periodicals, scientific works, etc. The only mention made of essays, however, lies in a single sentence

in the latter division, where he refers to the work of Sir Andrew Macphail.

Mr. Marquis believes that our finest literary productions to date are to be found in the fields of poetry, nature studies of the Roberts-Thompson Seton type, humour, biography and history, with fiction making some struggles during the past quarter century. "Nearly all the noteworthy literature of Canada is of recent origin," he says; and again "... if we except such isolated writers as Richardson, Haliburton and Sangster, we shall find very little Canadian literature worthy of consideration that is not the product of the last 50 years."

From the More Recent Handbooks

Representative of many outlines of Canadian Literature that have appeared during the past ten or fifteen years is MacMechan's "Headwaters of Canadian Literature"[16], published in 1924. In this, Professor MacMechan reviews Canada's literary productions in five chapters, each based on one literary movement. The first deals with the early literary activity in Nova Scotia, centering around Howe and Haliburton; the second with a French movement in Quebec; the third with early Ontario literary work (largely done by English settlers who brought their own ideas and culture with them); the fourth with another French movement, this time in Montreal; and the fifth with the nation-wide interest in literary production that has been with us since the early days of the present century.

It is only this last period, according to this writer, that has produced anything of importance in the field of the essay.

"In a young country," says Professor MacMechan, "it is only natural that imaginative writing should take precedence over reflective. The essay is almost a virgin field, and the Canadian essayists can be counted on the fingers of one hand." Sir Andrew Macphail, W.H.Blake, Sir William Peterson, Archibald MacMechan, Arnold Haultain and Stephen Leacock are the only names that he believes can be enrolled on the list of Canadian essayists - and for my purpose Sir William Peterson's must be removed, since his work could scarcely be classed as familiar essays. "This completes the list of Canadian essayists," remarks Professor MacMechan, "a scant half dozen. Short as the list is, it is still too long for the public patience. In Canada, essays are tolerated but not read."

The findings of Messrs. Logan and French in their "Highways of Canadian Literature"[17], published the same year as the outline of Professor MacMechan, are similar. "Canadian essays, familiar studies of life and manners, or essays in belles lettres, are too meagre in quantity and too ephemeral or slight in aesthetic substance as yet to be significant," says this book. It is noteworthy, however, that a chapter is devoted to essays and essayists by these writers - and also that most of the works considered worthy of mention

are products of the past two decades. And the final view taken in this book is somewhat more encouraging: "A pragmatic people, as are the Canadians, have little or no taste for the whimsical essay. The matter of the whimsical essay counts for nothing. Its appeal is altogether by way of piquancy in what has been said... It must be clever - and nothing more. Canadians are beginning to turn more and more to this form of essay."

With such unanimity of opinion on the part of the authorities, we can take it that the familiar essay has not had, in general, a very large place in the literary activity of Canada, and more particularly in that of the early days#.

#This is, of course, what might be expected. Canada is as yet a young country; and the essay is distinctly a product of an adult culture. It belongs to the reflective, philosophic mood - a mood that is not usually found in the stress of pioneering. Macaulay, in his essay on Milton, points out that nations, like individuals, 'first perceive and then abstract,' that they advance 'from particular images to general terms,' - hence the literature of a young country is likely to be richer in poetic images than in philosophic generalizations.

The task that I have set myself, then, in the present study, is to discover what has been done specifically: first, in the production of familiar essays by Canadians - with special reference to those published in book form, as having a greater chance of longevity; and second, in the encouragement of this production on the part of the periodicals of Canada, since the essay, like the short story, is largely dependent on the periodical market.

In my search, the results of which appear in the following chapters, I have looked for books of Canadian essays

without reference to date of publication; while my work with the periodicals has been confined to the magazines of the present century - in short, to those of the only period in which, according to these authorities, one is likely to find enough material of essay type to repay one for the trouble entailed in such a search.

CHAPTER III

Canadian Familiar Essays in Book Form (Specific)

Since the familiar essay in Canada is definitely a product of the present century - and more especially of the past two decades - one's first difficulty lies in securing lists of books of Canadian essays for study. This I discovered for myself when, in 1922, I endeavoured to explore the field of the light essay in Canada for the St. James Literary Society of Montreal (see Appendix B). Booksellers, when approached, could suggest Leacock, McArthur and MacMechan - but their helpfulness ended there; and that of a number of librarians who were asked for suggestions is represented by the following letter from one of the best known of them: "We have done little or nothing with the essay. In such an age as this the essay finds a place among the older civilizations - such as New England in the U.S.A. Even so, it is with us, and it is in Nova Scotia with such a man as Archibald MacMechan, Professor of English in Dalhousie, that we find the light, pleasant but literary essay flourishing. Just at the present writing, his is the only name that occurs to me."

In 1924, however, a new flock of outlines of Canadian literature began making their appearance, and in these, it is significant to note, more and more space is being given

to the essay as time goes on. In other words, at long last the essay is taking a definite place among the literary productions of this country.

MacMechan, writing in that year, mentions[16] half a dozen Canadian essayists (despite his affirmation that they can be counted on the fingers of one hand) - Sir Andrew Macphail, W.H.Blake, Sir William Peterson, Archibald MacMechan, Arnold Haultain and Stephen Leacock. Logan and French, in their book[17] of the same year, list the following: Bliss Carman, Archibald MacMechan, W.H.Blake, W.A. Deacon, Katherine Hale, Thomas O'Hagan, L.J.Burpee and Stephen Leacock - and, amongst the humourists working in the essay field: Stephen Leacock, Peter Donovan, Norris Hodgins, Peter McArthur and Newton MacTavish. Deacon, in 1926, cites[10] MacMechan, Emily F. Murphy (Janey Canuck), W.H.Blake, Sir Andrew Macphail and Peter McArthur as essayists, while Leacock, Donovan and McArthur are included as humourists. Finally, Pierce, whose Outlines[18] is our most recent reference, has the fullest list published so far: Bliss Carman, Blake, MacMechan, Macphail, O'Hagan, Frederick Philip Grove, Deacon, Emily F. Murphy, James Cappon and W.J. Alexander (though the latter two are not credited with any books) - and then, oddly enough, he adds the names of Baker, Logan and Pelham Edgar in virtue of their published outlines of Canadian literature, which are anything but essays.

From these works and from the results of my own search

for Canadian essays, I have drawn up what I believe to be a fairly complete list of our more important familiar essayists who have published their works in book form; and in doing this, I have tried to keep in mind Priestley's definition of the essay[2]: "The kind of composition produced by an essayist."

Whether rightly or not, I have decided against including Sir Andrew Macphail, for example, in my list of familiar essayists in Canada. Macphail's name appears in all lists of Canadian essayists, and perhaps no Canadian writer has a better natural endowment for essay-writing (scholarly tastes, a well-stored mind, a flair for apt quotations, and a happy style of arresting expression) - but he has not written 'familiar' essays. Sir Andrew Macphail, judged from what he has published, is primarily a controversialist, not an essayist in the sense in which I am employing the term. His papers remind one somewhat of Shaw, of Mencken, of Chesterton when the latter is least the essayist. Politics is his pet field. But even in his Essays in Fallacy, the nearest approach he makes to the familiar type of essay, he is primarily the controversialist (one of his so-called essays in this work running to 150 pages). Indeed, with so many problems of empire and of society crying for solution, I doubt whether Sir Andrew would care to be labelled a 'familiar' essayist!

Maurice Hutton, too, has been left off the list. His

Many Minds is a collection of delightful literary studies (some of them addresses which now appear in printed form, others papers reprinted from the columns of The University Magazine) - but I cannot consider them personal or 'familiar'. I may be wrong in my judgment, but to my mind these belong to the literature of knowledge. And this applies with even greater force to the essays of Sir William Peterson and of L.J. Burpee, which have likewise been omitted from my list.

Nor have I included books of travel sketches. Katherine Hale has a number of these, of which the best known is her Canadian Cities of Romance. There are many such books on Old Quebec, the Laurentians, etc. I have left them out. They do not belong in the same class with Lamb, Belloc, Beerbohm, Lynd - to take only two letters of the alphabet. And if exception has apparently been made in the case of W.H. Blake, a closer study will show that Blake's things are more than descriptions, just as The Compleat Angler is more than a fishing manual.

My Reference List

(Arranged roughly in order of importance)

Leacock, Stephen - Essays and Literary Studies, My Discovery of England, etc.

MacMechan, Archibald - A Porter of Bagdad, The Life of a Little College, etc.

McArthur, Peter - Around Home, The Red Cow, Friendly Acres, etc.

Haultain, Arnold - Of Walks and Walking Tours, etc.

Blake, W.H. - Brown Waters, In a Fishing Country, etc.

Burrell, Hon. Martin - Betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Deacon, W.A. - Pens and Pirates, Poteen, etc.

MacTavish, Newton - Thrown In.

Donovan, Peter - Imperfectly Proper, etc.

Hodgins, Norris - Why Don't You Get Married?, etc.

O'Hagan, Thomas - Essays on Catholic Life (?)#

Grove, Frederick Philip - Over Prairie Trails (?)#

'The Khan' - The Tattleton Papers (?) #

Carman, Bliss - The Kinship of Nature, etc.

#The three titles after which I have placed a question mark are those of books which have been mentioned in reviews as belonging, at least in a measure, to this class, but which I have not been able to secure for examination. Under the circumstances, the placing of these has been done haphazardly.

In addition to these, there are a few, notably C.F. Lloyd, B.K.Sandwell and 'Janey Canuck', who have done something in the essay line but whose published works do not as yet claim for them a place in the ranks of Canadian familiar essayists. Lloyd is perhaps the most promising of these, but it is too early to make pronouncement on the value of his works; Sandwell is not without his admirers, but, to my mind, as a humourist he lacks spontaneity, while as a familiar essayist he lacks urbanity; and 'Janey Canuck', though classed as an essayist

by one or two authorities, has so far worked mostly in the 'travel and description' field.

An Attempt at Evaluation

It will be noted that in the drawing up of my reference list, I have attempted to arrange the writers in what, in my judgment, appears to be their approximate order of importance as producers of familiar essays. This, of course, is only approximate. For example, it is difficult to place Hon. Martin Burrell since he is a new worker in this field in so far as book publication is concerned, yet the work he has published is of a quality that demands attention. In the case of a few other writers whose names are given, I have had to guess at their relative importance from fugitive references to their work - I have not had an opportunity, as yet, of examining it myself.

The list as it stands, moreover, gives rather meagre details of the productions of our essayists in the way of books, and in the paragraphs which follow in this chapter I propose to deal at somewhat greater length with the contributions made to this section of Canadian literature by the more important of these writers.

Stephen Leacock.

No one can make a close study of Canada's contribution to the familiar essay section of English literature without being impressed with the overwhelming importance of the works of three men - Leacock, MacMechan and McArthur. It is

by virtue of the writings of these three that we can claim a rightful place in the wider field of the English essay, and to the winning of this place the essays of Leacock have made a very special contribution. Equipped with an exuberant sense of humour, with a love for books and for self-expression, with that 'discreet shamelessness' that Mr. Benson mentions as one of the characteristics of Montaigne, with a keen eye for latent absurdities in men and customs, and, above all, with the ability to lay aside the cap and gown of the don and 'to let himself go', Leacock, more than any other Canadian essayist, has succeeded in writing not only of trivial but also frequently of weighty things in a manner that will make his essays enjoyed when the works of many of our more serious contenders for literary immortality will have lost their interest for any but the most rabid collectors of old and rare editions.

Thousands of people, in many countries where English is read, have enjoyed Leacock's books - without worrying, as Marquis does[15], about Sainte-Beuve's lofty standard: "The point is not whether we enjoy, but whether we are right in enjoying, this work." But even if it come to a serious evaluation of Leacock's works and their place in Canadian literature, his admirers need not apologize for their taste#. Leacock is one of

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#One of the most curious phenomena of Canada's literary life is the 'sniffy' attitude adopted by so many of our lady *litterateurs* (both male and female) whenever one mentions

Leacock's hilarious sketches in a mixed gathering. Ladies (again both male and female) who have published, usually at their own expense, one or more 'slim volumes' of poetry or prose, affect a certain condescension toward Leacock's works: "Some of them are really rather good, you know - especially his earlier things, before he became popular!" How shall we account for such an attitude toward Canada's greatest literary worker? For one thing, a great many people on this side of the water are taken in by a serious (or even a vacant) face and a closed mouth. "Still waters run deep," murmur this copy-book squad, as they bow before such an one (or elect him President of the United States), forgetting that still waters may not run at all - they may simply be stagnant. Again, many people, having observed the unanimity with which the best critics have damned the works of such 'popular' writers as Harold Bell Wright and Edgar Guest, have decided that 'popular' is synonymous with 'bad taste' - and hence distrust anything that has a wide appeal. Leacock is popular; his sketches are read with loud explosions of mirth: ergo, he must be in bad taste. And by the same standard Shakespeare and Bunyan and Fielding and Dickens and Shaw and Conrad must be in bad taste. No! If we are to have such rule-of-thumb standards, let us rather distrust all 'slim volumes' of 'poignant beauty' which are published at the author's expense! Far better to miss many thousands of these than not to have experienced Leacock's laughs.

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the most important literary forces that Canada has yet produced. To thousands of readers in other countries, he is Canadian literature. To many first rate critics he is today's most important humourist. And it is significant that MacMechan, in trying to prophesy what out of Canada's literary productions so far will live the century out, mentions Leacock as one of the small group of men and women (so small that one can count them on one's fingers) whose works have a chance of surviving.

I have on my desk as I write a number of text-books - anthologies of essays, designed for college use. (These have

not been specially selected; they simply represent the generosity of hopeful publishers.) And it is suggestive that so many of these non-Canadian collections include Leacock's name in their tables of contents. His 'Homer and Humbug' is in Modern Essays (McMillan, 1919), in Literary Contrasts (Ginn, 1925), and in Challenging Essays in Modern Thought (Century, 1928). The latter collection also has his 'Oxford As I See It', which appears as well in Essays Toward Truth (Holt, 1924), and in Adventures in Essay Reading (Harcourt, Brace, 1927). Further Adventures in Essay Reading (1928) has 'The Devil and the Deep Sea', while Modern Essays (Harcourt, Brace, 1921) has 'The Decline of the Drama'. And in all these, only one other Canadian essay appears. It is 'The Student Life', by Sir William Osler, which is printed in Modern Essays.

It is true that not all of Leacock's sketches measure up to the standard that his best things set. Driven by the exactions of the syndicate system of marketing - a hard taskmaster#, but one that less successful writers would

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#"The truth is that humour as a lucrative profession is a purely modern device, and one that is much to be deplored. The older humourists knew the value of light and shade. Their fun was precious in proportion to its parsimony. The essence of humour is that it should be unexpected, that it should embody an element of surprise, that it should startle us out of that reasonable gravity which, after all, must be our habitual frame of mind. But the professional humourist cannot afford to be unexpected. The exigencies of his vocation compel him to be relentlessly droll from his first page to his last, and this accumulated drollery weighs like lead. Compared to it, sermons are as thistle-down, and political economy gay."

- Agnes Repplier, in "The Mission of Humour."

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gladly serve - his pieces sometimes show too great a striving after a laugh, too severe a cudgelling of the wits, too much obviousness. Fortunately, however, I am considering Leacock as a familiar essayist, rather than as a straight humourist, and in this field he has not been so driven. He has apparently taken his time with his essays - and with what delightful results!

It is perhaps needless to point out that not all Leacock's writings have taken essay form. Burlesques, satires, humorous skits and sketches are much more numerous than essays in his works, while College Days includes in its pages many bits of humorous verse. The best of his genuine essays are to be found in his Essays and Literary Studies and My Discovery of England. These books contain only essays, but they by no means exhaust Leacock's contribution to this division of our literature. 'Homer and Humbug', for instance, is published in Behind the Beyond, 'The Children's Corner' and 'A Christmas Examination' in College Days, while Literary Lapses, Further Foolishness, Frenzied Fiction, Over the Footlights, The Garden of Folly, Winnowed Wisdom, and Short Circuits all contain some genuinely humorous pieces of true essay form. Many of the best of the longer essays, especially those appearing in Essays and Literary Studies and other books of that period, first appeared in the University Magazine (and did much to make it the highly entertaining quarterly it was), while his shorter pieces have found their way into many periodicals - Toronto Saturday Night,

Punch, Harpers, etc., etc.

Archibald MacMechan

Of a very different type, but equally delightful as familiar essays, are the things of Archibald MacMechan, a fellow contributor with Leaccck to the columns of the University Magazine. MacMechan, with his classical bias, his genuine love of bóoks and men and ships and Nova Scotia, his mellow mood, his aloofness from current problems and pish-posh, and, above all, his polished style, is one of the best influences that we could have for the good of our Canadian literature. He is all the things that most Canadian writers are not; and the lover of the true essay will take delight in the sketches and fantasies of A Porter of Bagdad, in the longer and more literary (but always personal) papers of The Life of a Little College, and in the musings of a wayfarer in The Book of Ultima Thule.

There is a great difference in length between the short pieces which go to make up his first book, A Porter of Bagdad, and the other two mentioned above#. These shorter things are

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#Incidentally, the effect of medium of publication on length, is nowhere more clearly seen than in a comparison of the books of essays by Peter McArthur with The Life of a Little College, by MacMechan. McArthur's essays, first printed in the columns of newspapers, notably the Toronto Globe, rarely run to more than 800 or 1,000 words each. MacMechan's, in the foregoing book, reprinted from the columns of The University Magazine, run to many pages each.

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more in line with the English tradition of the essay. But, after all, essays are usually written for periodical publication - and where are our representatives of the English

literary weeklies that have provided English essayists with a ready market for the thousand word sketch?

MacMechan was a regular, and valued, contributor to the columns of the University Magazine, and, since its foundation, has written much for the Dalhousie Review. That he has not found essay writing in Canada too profitable, however, is indicated in a single statement in his Headwaters of Canadian Literature[16]: "In Canada, essays are tolerated but not read." And it is significant that his last two books have been tales of the old days in the Maritimes, rather than essays. Apparently a 'practical' people, as we in Canada like to consider ourselves, may read what smacks of history and of general information without loss of self-respect, while we mistrust the writer who toys with ideas and fancies!

It is to be hoped that MacMechan will give us much more of his charming personality in the form of essays. This branch of Canadian literature needs, more than anything else, just the sort of work that MacMechan is capable of doing.

Peter McArthur

Next after Leacock, Peter McArthur has probably been the Canadian essayist who has achieved most success in the marketing of his wares. The story of how in early life he went to New York, after a youth spent on his home farm with the poets, there to engage in free-lancing and in editorial work on Truth (where he helped bring to the fore many of our best present-day Canadian writers); of how he travelled to London, there to become a contributor to Punch (an honour shared by but few

Canadians); and of how he finally settled down on his ancestral farm at Ekfrid, Ontario, to write regularly of his farm experiences for the Toronto Globe and other Canadian periodicals has already been told by W.A. Deacon, in his book on McArthur in the "Makers of Canadian Literature" series#. I recommend

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#I neglected to mention, when dealing with Leacock, that a good biography of the latter, with a fairly representative anthology of his sketches, is available in the same series - written by Peter McArthur.

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this work to lovers of McArthur, of whom there are many thousands, especially amongst the rural people of Ontario.

It was during the latter stage of his career that Peter McArthur made his greatest contribution to Canadian letters. Associated particularly with the Toronto Globe, the Farmer's Advocate and the Toronto Saturday Night, McArthur sent out regularly from the farm he loved so well weekly, and even semi-weekly, pieces of a reflective, personal, sometimes descriptive, and always joyous nature, that must be reckoned as amongst our most important contributions to the light essay field. His was a nature that found:

> "Tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
> Sermons in stones ..."

He used his farm, not as means of livelihood simply, but rather as a field for discovery - or, as he himself facetiously put it: "I write for a living, and farm for the amusement of my neighbours."

Many of the best of these little essays have been preserved for us in such reprinted collections as <u>The Red Cow</u>#

#When The Red Cow was published, in 1919, I wrote the following review of it, which was printed in Farm and Dairy in a column that I was contributing at that time over the pen name of "Sam Ray". I include it here as a sample of the enthusiastic appreciation one can write when one is not reading hundreds of essays against time in connection with a thesis project:

The Red Cow and Her Friends
A new book by Peter McArthur

"Innocent Smith, one of the delightful characters created by C.K.Chesterton, once started out from his home in England and journeyed right around the world for the joy of rediscovering that home. For he had lived in it so long that he had almost forgotten it was there.

"Would that we might do something as sensible and as revolutionary. We who live on farms are apt to take for granted the miracles, the tragedies and the irresistable comedies enacted every day under our very noses. We are like people in the front row of a movie show - too close to the pictures to see them properly.

"It has been reserved for Peter McArthur, in his homely, hilarious and intensely human production, The Red Cow, to anoint our eyes that we may see and appreciate that most wonderful part of a wonderful world - our own homestead. Peter has learned to look upon the animals of his own farmyard as he would if he had paid to see them for the first time in a circus, and to appreciate the green of the fields at hand, even if he has to wear green spectacles or to look at them through the wrong end of a telescope to make them appear attractively distant to him.

"For Peter, all the farm is a stage. And everything alive thereon, from the wobbly-legged calf to the fan-tailed turkey gobbler, is there to stagger and strut before the footlights for his entertainment. He 'sics' Sheppy onto the calves to keep them from sucking each others' ears after they've been fed, and the sight of them scampering away suggests to him a plan for preventing people from blocking the traffic by lingering over their coffee and 'sinkers' in the quick lunches of the city. He doses a sick cow with a vile concoction of Epsom salts and red-hot liniment and conjectures on the vehemence and extent of her expectoration if she could spit like a cat. In short, he has achieved the faculty of seeing the unusual in the usual.

"I recommend this book. You will enjoy cultivating the acquaintance of the Red Cow, of Sheppy the dog, and of the porker Beatrice. You cannot read this delightful grist of 75 tales from the farm without relaxing into a soul-soothing spasm of enjoyment. And some day when you are worried and cross and the old sow carries out a flank attack on you and makes you spill the two pails of swill you are carrying, you will immediately remember what Peter said about some such episode, and your evil vapours will evaporate. Instead of

kicking the poor brute in one of her expensive Wiltshire sides as was your original intention, you will merely fetch her a humane wollop on the snout with a fence rail.

"Peter taps a vein of humour first thing, when he dedicates his book 'to all city men who feel sure they could farm at a profit,' adding, "if each one buys a copy, I can afford to keep on farming.' And, like water from a living spring, this refreshing humour permeates all of its pages and will drip over at the end into the life of him who reads it."

Friendly Acres, and Around Home. These are all good. They constitute a genuine contribution to our small but growing supply of familiar essays. Deacon speaks still more highly of The Affable Stranger, probably because the papers in it were written with a "purpose" - the one qualification that familiar essays distinctly should not possess.

Arnold Haultain

Arnold Haultain, one of the half dozen Canadian essayists appearing in MacMechan's list, I know only as the author of Of Walks and Walking Tours, but the 28 essays that go to make up this book are of such quality as admits him at once to the company of our more important familiar essayists. MacMechan tells us[16] that Haultain was born in India, but educated in Toronto, and that he was secretary to, and literary executor of, Goldwin Smith. This close association with the famous Oxford professor had no doubt much influence on his style: indeed many of the short, personal things appearing in Of Walks and Walking Tours might have been written by Holbrook Jackson. Of this collection, one had already appeared in the Nineteenth Century, one in Blackwood's, one in the Atlantic Monthly, and two in the Canadian Magazine - so that Haultain

is another of our essayists whose work has gone abroad, at least to some extent.

Besides this work, Haultain has published Hints for Lovers and The Mystery of Golf. The latter MacMechan classes[16] as "the wittiest and at the same time the most practical book on the subject." It has not been my good fortune to come across either of these latter works, but I can recommend Of Walks and Walking Tours to the reader of essays. The nature lover, in especial, will be charmed with those quiet sketches with their literary flavour.

W.H.Blake

To many people W.H.Blake is merely the translator of Louis Hemon's classic on pioneer life in Quebec, Marie Chapdelaine. An increasing group of appreciative readers, however, recognize in him an essayist of great charm. All of his books, Brown Waters, In A Fishing Country, A Fisherman's Creed, breathe of the love of nature and of the sportsman's keen delight in the Waltonian pastime. All exhibit the 'gusto' of which Mr. Benson speaks[6]. True, one finds in them many beautiful descriptive bits on Laurentian scenery,many sympathetic sketches of French Canadian life, many useful pieces of advice on how to capture the wary trout and so on. If they stopped with description and with information on angling, we should not have to consider them here, but they are so rich in mellow reflections as well that they must be classed amongst our more interesting Canadian essays of the familiar

form - even if somewhat specialized as to type.

Hon. Martin Burrell.

The Hon. Martin Burrell is an Englishman by birth, but for many years has been actively associated with Canadian public life, first as Minister of Agriculture in the Laurier Government, and later as parliamentary librarian. This latter position, which he still fills, is peculiarly suited, with its intimate association with books and its comparative removal from the hurly-burly of life, to the production of literary essays of the familiar type - and that is what Mr. Burrell has given us in Betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

In such essays as "The Sense of Smell", "The Philosophy of Tears", "Concerning Golf", "On Chain Letters", "Christmas Reveries" and "Life in the Stars" we have familiar dissertations in the best tradition; while even the literary studies, of which there are many, are familiar in form in that they are written for the book lover rather than the pedant. Mr. Burrell, in writing regularly for the readers of the Ottawa Evening Journal, conforms with a practice that Priestley finds well nigh universal in the history of the English essay[2]. It is only to be regretted that more of essayists have not found it possible to be associated with a definite audience in this way.

W.A. Deacon.

Of W.A. Deacon as a familiar essayist I cannot personally speak with much authority. I have read his Poteen, the essays

in which, while in some cases exhibiting the personality and love of books typical of the familiar form, are mostly longer and more didactic studies, for example, "The Bogey of Annexation" and the section on Canadian literature. His Pens and Pirates, which Logan and French cite[17] as a good example of the whimsical type of essays, I have not had an opportunity of examining#.

#In making this study, I have constantly been faced with lack of access to the works of Canadian essayists. Pens and Pirates, like a number of other books that I wished to examine, was not available at the McGill Library, the Fraser Institute or the Ottawa Parliamentary Library - all of which I made use of in my work.

"The essays in this volume," state these authorities, "have novelty of theme, over which plays precisely the light of a 'whimsical' fancy and humor. They are informed, however with the strictly literary color of allusion and quotation from the poets and prosemen of all ages to the present, but in such an incidental and light way that there is no show of pedantry. The allusion and quotation are natural to Mr. Deacon's professional office as a reviewer of contemporary literature. His style is journalistic in the French sense - 'style coupe' as regards sentence length. But he adds a piquancy to it which makes it somewhat 'winged' and which thus pleasantly engages the sensibility." That this high opinion of Pens and Pirates is not held universally, however, is indicated by the following extract from a letter sent in by a Canadian librarian, commenting on my list: "I would not include Pens and Pirates,

by Deacon, among essays of the first importance; indeed, I think it is a poor affair."

Newton MacTavish.

The claims of Newton MacTavish for inclusion in the ranks of Canadian essayists rest upon a very delightful series of papers, originally published in the Canadian Magazine during the days of Mr. MacTavish's editorship, and later printed in book form under the title Thrown In. These are really recollections - studies in humorous, genial mood, of men and events and places in the Canadian country and village life of the author's boyhood days. "The Good Old Days", "The Two Albums", "The Almanac", "The Red Schoolhouse", "The Revival", "The Fall Fair" - such titles give one some indication of the scope and mood of the book.

Peter Donovan.

The light essays and sketches of "P.O'D". (Peter Donovan), which appeared regularly for many years in the Toronto Saturday Night, have given delight to many readers. Some of the best of these have been reprinted in Imperfectly Proper, and Over 'Ere and Back Home. In subject matter, these treat of everything under the sun, as familiar essays should, but they are spoilt a bit by over-exaggeration and by the continual use of the editorial 'we', which in time becomes monotonous.

Norris Hodgins.

Lacking the sang froid which enables Prof. MacMechan to evaluate his own works for publication, I turned to the review

of my work by Logan & French: "Norris Hodgins works much within the same range as Donovan - Why Don't You Get Married? and is not often quite so hilariously funny, but he comes closer to the daily experiences of every man and every woman, and there is just a bit more solidity to his underlaying structure of everyday philosophy." Unless I am mistaken, this opinion is 'lifted' from the paper wrapper of the book itself but this is not unique in literary reviewing in Canada!

Thomas O'Hagan, Frederick Philip Grove, 'The Khan'.

As indicated in my reference list, I have not examined O'Hagan's Essays on Catholic Life, nor Grove's Over Prairie Trails, nor The Khan's The Tattleton Papers. All of these are favourably mentioned by one writer or another, but whether or not they are of the true familiar essay type I cannot say.

Bliss Carman.

The titles of the papers in Bliss Carman's The Kinship of Nature - "On Being Strenuous", "The Crime of Ugliness", "Subconscious Art" - are good, but the essays are over serious; they lack fire, whimsy, chattiness. The Making of Personality is devoted to the Uplift; it makes one feel that Canada's crying need is for essays by sinful fellows. I hesitate to call Leacock sinful, but it seems to me that he pleases us because he does not ask us to join him in the heavenly choir. Few things are more depressing than inspirational writings - and Carman's are inspirational.

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We have seen that, traditionally, the essayist has revealed his personality through his work. A condition of this, of course, is that he must have personality to reveal. It is this factor more than any other that sets apart in the Canadian field the essays produced by Leacock, MacMechan, McArthur, Blake and Burrell; whithout it, third rate work only is produced - for essays are only written by essayists.

CHAPTER IV

The Familiar Essay in Canadian Periodicals (Specific).

"The history of the essay," says J.B. Priestley[2], himself a worker of importance in the field of the familiar essay, "is inextricably entwined with the history of the periodical. Since there have been papers and magazines to write for, all our chief essayists have been 'periodical writers'. To anyone with any knowledge of literary history, there is nothing more amusing than the not infrequent complaints of critics and reviewers, who imagine that they are standing for the dignity of letters, against the practice of collecting contributions to the Press, essays or critical articles, and making books of them. We are always led to infer that this is a new and reprehensible practice, a mark of a degenerate age. The truth is, of course, that practically all the best essays in the language have first seen light in the periodical press. Nearly all the essays in this volume, and certainly the best of them, were written in the first place for newspapers or magazines. From Steele to Mr. Chesterton, from Addison to Mr. Robert Lynd, our essayists have written steadily for the Press.

"There is not space here to examine this connection between the periodical and the essay, to determine exactly what influence the periodical had upon the essay, but it is

easy to see that the coming of the periodical, which offered a ready market for his contributions, not only smoothed the financial path of the essayist but also offered an inducement to the professional man of letters to turn his attention to this kind of work. The economic influence is easy to understand. What is not so easy to understand is the influence this periodical work has had upon the essayist's attitude of mind, and there is not space here to give it the attention it really deserves. Putting it shortly, however, we can say that the periodical, though it frequently restricted the essayist in both subject matter and his treatment of his subjects, really gave him a certain confidence and freedom he would not otherwise have had. When a man is writing regularly in one place for one set of readers (and nearly all the essayists were regular contributors to the Press, appearing in the same periodical at regular intervals), he tends to lose a certain stiffness, formality, self-consciousness, that would inevitably make its appearance if he were writing a whole book at once. He comes to feel that he is among friends and can afford, as it were, to let himself go, and the secret of writing a good essay is to let oneself go."

There is much matter for reflection, to anyone interested in the Canadian situation, in this pronouncement of Mr. Priestley. Indisputably, the greatest drawback to the production of essays in Canada has been the lack of periodical media for their publication. The size of our offering of essays in book

form, small as it is, becomes a matter for wonder when one visualizes the scant encouragement that has,until comparatively recently, been given to the writers of essays by the publishers of our magazines and newspapers. And to me, personally, it is gratifying to find a recognized authority taking this strong stand, since, two years before Mr. Priestley's book appeared, I ventured to say, in an address on the light essay in Canada (see Appendix B, 1): "Our book publishers are friendly towards it (i.e. the familiar essay), but essays are not usually written in bookfuls. They are more often produced singly for magazine publication, and afterwards collected; and how many magazines in Canada, or users of magazine material, offer anything to the essayist?"

But generalizations are not enough. It is necessary to survey the field of our Canadian periodicals, to see what they are carrying of the essay type, before one can issue an authoritative statement on the matter in hand. In such a survey, of course, it is not necessary to go through the complete files of all of our current publications, however valuable such a piece of work would be in building up a complete list of Canadian essays of the familiar type. I have thought it worth while, however, to make a start at such a study (for the benefit of future workers) by working over the complete files (to date) of our three university quarterlies - the Queen's Quarterly, The University Magazine and the Dalhousie Review (see Appendix A). I have likewise looked somewhat closely into

the files of the Canadian Forum and Willison's Monthly, whilst in the case of the more popular monthlies and weeklies I have supplemented my own casual impressions with statements from their editors, secured through correspondence.

Our Literary Quarterlies

Under ordinary circumstances, a seeker after essays of the familiar form would not approach the field of the literary quarterly with much hope - particularly that of the Canadian quarterly, since the periodicals found in it have no special department for shorter contributions, such as we find in American literary monthlies like the Atlantic, Harper's and Scribners. As it happens, however, our Canadian quarterlies, more especially the University Magazine and the Dalhousie Review, have played a notable part in the encouragement of the essay. Established at a time when a few Canadians were turning their attention to the personal, chatty type of paper, and before such periodicals as the Canadian Forum and Willison's Monthly had made their bow to the public, the University Magazine opened hospitable columns to these contributors - and the Dalhousie Review has followed, at least to some extent, this gracious tradition.

One curious result of the publication of essays in such widely diverging media as the quarterly, on one hand, and the dailies on the other, is to be seen in the dissimilarity in length and treatment of collections of essays reprinted from these different sources during the first few decades of the

present century. Peter McArthur's books, made up of contributions to the Toronto Globe, are somewhat more choppy than most books of essays; Archibald MacMechan's The Life of a Little College, containing none but 'Review' essays, would be notable, if compared with the average book of familiar essays published in England, for the length of its papers.

Queen's Quarterly.

First of our university quarterlies chronologically, but last in importance in so far as the familiar essay is concerned, comes Queen's Quarterly. Established in the early 'Nineties, when perhaps there were not many workers in the familiar form of essay in Canada, it early struck a note of high seriousness - "Life is real, life is earnest!" - and to this note its tune has been pitched for thirty-five years. Many weighty articles have appeared in its columns on history, politics, economics, religion and social questions. Many literary studies of world interest and of genuine charm, by such men as Alexander, Cappon and Macnaughton, have likewise been published. But to the personal essay scant attention has been paid.

In a search through the thirty-five volumes of this magazine that have appeared to date, I found but fifteen papers with any claims to consideration on the basis of their 'familiar' appeal (see Appendix A,1), and of these, three are reprinted from Old Country periodicals and four are of the informative type, sugar coated. Under the circumstances, it

is safe to say that the Queen's Quarterly has not done much to encourage the production of the type of essay with which this thesis is concerned - especially when it is remembered that contributors to this periodical receive no compensation for their work.

The University Magazine.

Established in 1902 as the McGill University Magazine, published half yearly, and changed in 1907 to a quarterly which, under its new name, was to represent the thought of McGill, Toronto and Dalhousie Universities, the University Magazine stands as the finest literary effort in periodical form so far produced in Canada. Under the editorship of Sir Andrew Macphail, himself an able writer and a man of discriminating taste, this magazine gave real encouragement to good literary work - and especially, in comparison with other Canadian periodicals of its day, to the familiar type of essay.

"That was a red letter day in the literary annals of Canada," wrote MacMechan[16], "when Andrew Macphail, physician, essayist, professor, and amateur farmer, declared before the Canadian Society of Authors, at their session in Toronto, 'I would not have anything to do with a magazine that depended on charity. If a magazine cannot pay its contributors, it is simply prolonging a useless existence.' Upon this impregnable rock, the new Canadian quarterly review was founded." Nor did the passage of years bring a change in the editor's attitude. Financial encouragement, which is as important a consideration

to the artist as it was in the days of Leonardo da Vinci and of Benvenuto Cellini, was offered to the producers of good work right up to the day when it ceased publication; and in the last issue we find Sir Andrew Macphail writing: "To 'encourage Canadian literature' has been in every mouth. The only way to 'encourage' writers is to read, and pay for, what they write."

The files of the University Magazine serve as a repositary for some of the best essays of the familiar type that have been produced so far. Stephen Leacock, Archibald MacMechan, W.H.Blake, and many others of our Canadian essayists were regular contributors (for a complete alphabetical list of University Magazine writers in the familiar style see Appendix A, 2). It is perhaps not too much to say that this periodical, by its encouragement, was to a large extent responsible for the interest that is now becoming apparent in the familiar essay in Canada.

The Dalhousie Review.

The Dalhousie Review was established in 1921, after the University Magazine had ceased publication. Escaping thus the hysteria of war years#, and guided by an editorial board of undoubted ability, the 'Review' has maintained a high standard

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#I neglected to mention, while speaking of the University Magazine, the comparative dearth of urbane essays of the type I am dealing with in the volumes published during the years of the Great War. To one making a study of the complete files of this magazine, this dearth is a very striking phenomenon - but one on which comment is needless.

in its contribution. It has not carried such a large proportion of familiar essays as did the University Magazine, but a fair number of creditable papers of this genre have been published (see Appendix A,3). Outstanding have been the essays of MacMechan, while the quiet descriptive papers of E.W.Nichols are also worthy of note.

Incidentally, while this periodical has not been able to pay very much for its contributions, its writers have always received some honorarium for their work.

Canadian Monthlies - Literary and Popular

We cannot, however, expect the familiar essay to become very popular, or to be produced in any numbers, if it is confined to the quarterlies. In England, it is closer to the lives of the people in that it makes its home in the literary weeklies and even in the columns of some of the dailies. The weekly, however, has not proved popular on this side of the water, and in the United States we find the producers of the personal essay writing for the special departments devoted to their work in the Atlantic, Harper's, Scribner's and the Century. But what of Canada? Here we have the same lack of literary weeklies - plus a lack of good literary monthlies, although the establishment of the Canadian Forum and Willison's Monthly has done something to improve the chances of the essayist. Both of these last-mentioned belong to the third decade of this century; before that time, the Canadian magazine field offered little to the producer of reflective material.

Canadian Forum

The Canadian Forum was established in 1920, and since that time it has carried some amazingly good material - especially in the fields of the essay, the poem and the woodcut - when one realizes that it has not been the policy of this periodical to pay for its contributions. Familiar essayists have evidently found the Forum attractive - pay or no pay - for many things of merit are to be found in its columns. The Gargoyle produced some good stuff in the early days of the magazine; several of W.D. Woodhead's things are excellent; 'Jack Horner' and Douglas Bush have both contributed material of worth in the familiar field; while many nature pictures have been carried from time to time.

Willison's Monthly

Still more interesting, from the standpoint of the producer of the familiar essay, is Willison's Monthly, now in its fourth year of publication. I have not had access to a complete file of this magazine#, but from the past dozen

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#One of the drawbacks of a thesis subject such as mine is the difficulty of securing the material with which one desires to work. Willison's Monthly, for example, is not on file in the McGill Library, nor yet in the Fraser Institute.

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issues I believe it to offer something to the Canadian essayist. Almost every number during the past year has had at least one essay of the familiar form - some have had three or four. C.F. Lloyd, a comparatively new writer in this field, has been the most constant contributor of light essays, and of heavier

literary essays as well, during the past year, but John Gray, Nan Moulton and others have also appeared regularly. This, according to Priestley[2], is what we must have - the regular appearance of the same writers in the same periodicals - if the essay is to flourish. Nor may we overlook the work of the columnists, so closely akin to that of the essayists, - "On The Side" of J.E. Middleton, and "Feminisms" of Jean Graham.

Personally, I object to the practice followed in this magazine of placing the advertising matter here and there throughout the magazine, holding no pages sacred to editorial purposes, but this is a small matter. If Willison's pays for its contributions, as I presume it does, it would look to be an encouraging sign of a new and better day for the Canadian producer of light essays.

Canadian Bookman

The Canadian Bookman in its early days, under the editorship of B.K. Sandwell, carried a number of contributions of the type I am dealing with. Then for a time, in its shrunken form, it busied itself with propaganda for the Canadian Literature movement to the exclusion of most things of interest to the general reader. The past year or so, however, has seen C.F.Lloyd contributing regularly to its columns essay material of charm.

Canadian Magazine

One of the oldest of our present day popular magazines is the Canadian. In its day, this magazine has seen many changes, and not always for the better, if I am any judge. To go through

the complete files of this periodical would take more time than I can spare at present, but such a search would reveal at least some examples of the familiar essay. The "Thrown In" papers of Newton MacTavish, for instance, were published in the Canadian Magazine before they were brought out in book form. Of the more recent use of the essay by the Canadian, the present editor has this to say: "I am afraid that we could hardly claim to run very much in the essay style, though I have on hand a few minor items in the essay form written by J.E. Middleton and B.K. Sandwell. I am afraid, however, that the essay form in Canadian magazines of popular appeal is almost non-existent."

It is easy, of course, to tell other people how to run their businesses, but it seems to me that it was a mistake to change this magazine from its old form to one aiming to compete with MacLean's. Apparently there is still some popular demand in Canada for a magazine carrying essays and stories of some pretensions to literary merit. Figures compiled by the Audit Bureau of Circulations show that the Atlantic Monthly has a Canadian circulation of over 4,000, Harper's of 700 by mail (the dealers' importaions are not included in the statement I have at hand), Scribner's of over 1,000, and the Century of 400 - and all of these have special provision for the prpducer of familiar essays.

MacLean's Magazine

MacLean's Magazine has little to offer the writer of essays. "We do not use many light essays of a general nature in MacLean's,"

writes the editor, "most of our articles being 'fact' articles, but now and again we do use them, and our chief contributor in this regard is B.K. Sandwell."

With this stand I have no quarrel; what they will use is a matter for the editors to decide for themselves. I do object, however, to the statements made from time to time by MacLean's to the effect that it is doing real service in the development of Canadian literature. 'Fact' articles are short lived; so are the short stories that ordinarily appear in popular magazines of this type. The true essay has something of timelessness in it - nor need it lack in 'popular' appeal, as anyone must admit who considers Leacock's productions. One could wish that even MacLean's might carry a few things worth cutting out and pasting in one's scrap-book for reading a few years hence.

Our Weeklies and Dailies

Theoretically, the best market for the light, familiar type of essay in Canada should be found in our week-end papers, or in some of our larger dailies. It is papers of this sort that have been most successful financially in this country. A study of the situation, however, will show that, with the exception of the Toronto Saturday Night, few of these periodicals offer much to the essay writer in Canada. Their "magazine sections" contain numerous features approaching the light essay in form, but in most cases these 'features' are the products of American or of English writers, syndicated and distributed

at low cost to Canadian papers.

I have discussed this question of syndicate material with the managers of a couple of the more important distributing bureaus and have been informed that it is practically impossible to sell Canadian features to the editors of our week end papers, for the simple reason that the American syndicates can supply their material in matrix form at prices that, in many cases, are below the cost of the type setting alone - even if no payment were required for the 'copy'. This wholesale importation of syndicate material not only closes a potential market to Canadian workers in the lighter form of essay (unless, like Leacock, they become so famous that they can market their wares through American syndicates, and so achieve Canadian publication indirectly), but also results occasionally in rather a humorous situation. For example, the 'Confederation Number' of the Montreal Standard, July 1st, 1927, carried a colored comic supplement in which most of the features, in anticipation of the fourth of July, glorified the exploits of our southern neighbors in the American Revolutionary War!

Toronto Saturday Night.

The Toronto Saturday Night has done much, in its day, for the encouragement of Canadian essayists. It carried much of the earlier work of McArthur, Macphail and Leacock, and for many years had as a regular feature the humorous sketches and essays of P.O'D. (Peter Donovan), while occasional essays were published as well by P.W. Luce and others. Of its present

use of essays, the literary editor writes as follows:

"'Saturday Night' does not use in its columns very many essays of the type referred to in your letter. B.K. Sandwell and Principal Hutton have contributed occasional articles.

"There have been several promising young people who have written the odd essay and book review for our literary section: Raymond Knister, who recently brought out an anthology of Canadian short stories and whose novel, White Narcissus, is to be published in the spring; Vernal B. House, a young Toronto poet who writes an urbane and well-informed literary essay, and Miss Margaret Lawrence, a recent graduate in history from the University of Toronto, who is displaying considerable talent for the essay form, possessing an original style and bringing a serenity of temperament to bear in her discussion."

Toronto Star Weekly.

One of the most prosperous and progressive of our Sunday papers is the Toronto Star Weekly. Unlike our Montreal Standard, this periodical carries a large number of Canadian features, specially contributed to its columns. Of the essay the editor writes: "... We use very few articles which might be classed as light essays. Mr. R. E. Knowles and Mr. Gregory Clark are the only two writers who contribute features of this type to us ..."

Manitoba Free Press

Material of the essay form is a definite feature of the Manitoba Free Press, one of Canada's better edited papers. Aside from the daily literary causerie on the editorial page signed by "The Bookman" (Mrs. Elizabeth Parker), three or four

articles of essay type are carried each week on the editorial page. Most of these, it should be mentioned, are written by members of the editorial staff - T.B. Robertson, D.B.MacRae and Miss Kenneth M. Haig - and signed with the initials of the writers. They have proved quite popular with Western readers.

Vancouver Province

Following is a letter from the Sunday editor of the Vancouver Province, the most important paper in the Far West:

"The Vancouver Daily Province is the most Anglophile of the big Canadian dailies, since a large proportion of its readers are Anglo-Canadians of the first or second generation. For that reason, its reading material, both as to style and subject matter is a compromise between what is popular in the Old Country and what is done across the line.

"We frequently have used, both in our daily and Sunday editions, articles by Chesterton, Arnold Bennett and Bernard Shaw themselves. Sometimes they have contributed through syndicates; sometimes we have copied their epigrams from English periodicals, at length or in brief.

"Similar essays are also sent us by special contributors of the Province, such as Hector Bolitho of Windsor Castle and George Godwin, who interpellates his pen portraits of English statesmen with an occasional short essay of the type you suggest.

"Province columnists who branch occasionally into articles are P.W. Luce, James Butterfield and P.C. Rawling. Contributors are Kathleen Redmond Strange, Grace Luckhart and many others.

"None of these writers, however, depend on their essay writing for livelihood. Where they live on what their typewriters bring forth, their greatest production is in the so-called human interest articles about people and localities and events..."

Our Dailies

Essays have sometimes been carried as regular features in one or two of the dailies of Canada. Peter McArthur, for example, wrote regularly, during his later years, for the Toronto Globe. The essays that make up Burrell's Betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross were first printed in the Ottawa Evening Journal. The Montreal Star printed light essays in the 'fifth column' of its editorial page for a short period four or five years ago, but evidentally found the 'five dollars a column' rate of payment too great a drain on its finances. At any rate, a column of 'clipped' jokes has taken the place of the former feature, and apparently it does just as well - and costs nothing.

Related in some measure to the work of the familiar essayist is that of the 'Columnist'; indeed in the United States not a few of the best known columnists have been essayists of note as well - Christopher Morley, Heywood Broun, Don Marquis, for example. Canadian journalism has produced a few columnists - notably J.E. Middleton, H.F. Badsby and The Khan of the Toronto papers of yesterday, or George H. Maitland, who runs "A Little of Everything" in the Toronto

Star of today; and D.B. MacRae, Knox McGee and Robert Purvis of the Winnipeg papers[#] - but only a few. Most publishers of Canadian dailies have found paste cheaper than brains.

[#]A list of some of our better known columnists was given in the Canadian Bookman, April, 1919, in an article by Ben Deacon. The ten years that have passed since this article was written have not seen the coming of many new men whose names need be added to Mr. Deacon's list.

Agricultural Journals

To anyone acquainted with the history of the familiar essay in the older civilizations, it would seem a futile task to look for reflective material of this non-practical type in farm papers. The essay is a product of an urbane community, and the very derivation of 'urbane' should rule out the rural districts. Paradoxically enough, many of our older farming communities in Canada are farther removed from pioneering days than are most of our rapidly growing cities - and it is interesting to recall that Peter McArthur found one of his best essay markets in the columns of the Farmer's Advocate. The latter periodical has carried for years a regular weekly feature of reflective type contributed by 'Sandy Fraser'; the Family Herald and Weekly Star has its weekly column by "The Observer"; Farm and Dairy publishes regularly the random reflections of "Sam Browne"; and the Journal of Agriculture carries monthly contributions of a semi-philosophical character by "H.H."

My personal experience as a contributor to various

periodicals in Canada leads me to believe that in no other field is there a greater appreciation for essay material of the familiar sort than amongst the publishers and readers of farm papers. While the Montreal Star, a few years back, was paying for its essays at the same rate per column that it allowed for news, one farm paper with which I was closely in touch was paying five times its ordinary line rate for contributions of this special type.

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We see then that the familiar essay has had some place in the columns of Canadian periodicals - the University Magazine and the Dalhousie Review, amongst the quarterlies, the Canadian Forum and Willison's Monthly, amongst the monthlies, Saturday Night and a few of our agricultural journals, amongst the weeklies, have all been friendly. But these do not offer a very large market. The University Magazine ceased publication some years ago; the Dalhousie cannot use many pieces of this type in a year, and is not a wealthy publication; the Forum pays nothing, unless its policy has been changed recently; Saturday Night, as its literary editor points out, carries but little of this kind of thing after all; and the farm paper field is pretty well filled with its regular contributors. Only in Willison's do we find the lighter type of essay appearing in numbers. And so long as our dailies and Sunday papers import their feature

material, Canadian essayists who desire to produce in volume must look abroad for their markets.

CHAPTER V

Canadians as Essay Readers

From what has been said in earlier chapters, it will appear that the familiar essay has not been produced in large numbers in Canada, as compared with our production in other fields such as poetry, history, biography, nature studies, travel and exploration, and fiction. The essays we have are in most cases the product of the present century - and more particularly of the second and third decades of it.

We do find, however, an important, and growing, group of workers who have shown that they are capable of doing good work in this form. But production is only one side of the economic triangle: unless we have a demand for a commodity, and adequate machinery for its distribution, we may expect to see production languish - and this is as true of literature as it is of any other field of human endeavour. It seems useful, therefore, to canvass the familiar essay situation in Canada with a view to discovering whether there exists in this country a reading public that might appreciate work of the sort with which we are dealing.

The Evidence of Literary Historians

Historians of the literature of Canada in the early days

are somewhat silent on the subject of reader demand, but we can take it that it was not great. Our ancestors were faced with many stern realities of a sort that do not pave the way for the bookseller, and more particularly for the purveyor of works of a reflective character#. The necessity

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#Nor do we, on the whole, differ so greatly from our more strictly pioneering ancestors in this regard. We still have our pressing problems; the pioneer spirit, even amongst those of our people who have achieved a fair degree of wealth and position, is still strong. Only in a few communities, perhaps in some of the older of our cities, perhaps in some of the older rural districts, have we achieved a measure of the contentment, the appreciation, that is the breath of life to the familiar essay.

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of hewing out homes for themselves, of building roads, and, in general, of laying the foundations of a civilization in which their descendants might have their share of the economic, social and educational advantages denied to pioneers - these things do not make for bookishness, and the familiar essay finds its home amongst the bookish.

Even the writers of our more recent outlines of literature have not much to say concerning the reading public in Canada for the essay - and what little they do say is not too encouraging. "In Canada," says MacMechan[16], "essays are tolerated but not read." And in the same vein is the single remark on the Canadian reading public to be found in the essay chapter in Logan and French[17]; "A pragmatic people, as are the Canadians, have little or no taste for the whimsical essay."

Opinions of Canadian Librarians

In collecting evidence on this aspect of my subject, I wrote to the librarians of a number of the more important public libraries throughout Canada - but have been somewhat disappointed at the small amount of information secured in this way. Modern library methods are no doubt efficient, but they do not tend toward the production of bookish operators. In short, one wonders whether the librarian of today has not more of the filing clerk in his make-up than of the bookman.

Of those replying, M. de Crevecoeur, of the Fraser Institute, Montreal, states: "... We lend, continually, many books of essays, English, Canadian, French, and even Italian, Spanish and German, and I think that it is common to do so in all the public libraries." The Mechanics' Institute librarian, also of Montreal, says: "The demand for books of essays compares favourably with that for poetry, plays and other books of that class, particularly if the essayist is a well-known writer such as those you mention in your letter. The demand for the literary essay is not as great, however, as that for books of travel and description, which have a large circulation in this library."

W.J. Sykes, of the Carnegie Public Library, Ottawa, has this to say: "Our system of statistics, while it takes account of the number of volumes lent in the class 'literature' does not subdivide this into poetry, drama, essays, etc., hence

I am unable to give details of relative demand for books of essays. We procure the works of the essayists you mention, and they seem to be fairly well read." Dr. George H. Locke, of the Toronto Public Library replies: "Canadians read as many essays as any youthful nation may be expected to. Essay reading is not an attribute of youth and never will be."

Reita Ovas, of the Winnipeg Public Library, finds that her members take out about sixty-five volumes of essays a month - but gives no comparative figures that would show whether this represents great or small interest in the type. Edgar S. Robinson, Vancouver Public Library, writes: "... Compared to other sections of literature, such as poetry and the drama, the demand for the essay is considerably less. Compared to the novel, many of which might well be classed as literature#, it is still less."

#Query: Are not novels now classed as literature? How must we classify the works of Fielding, Jane Austen, Thackery, Meredith, Hardy?

Comments from Those in The Trade

Perhaps the men who can give the most valuable evidence on the matter are the publishers and booksellers of Canada. With them it is a matter of real interest to know the kind of books that are in demand - and those to whom I wrote, in making my survey, have been most courteous in their response. But even here, it will be noted, there is much conflicting evidence.

On one hand, we have a number of encouraging reports. "In my humble judgment," writes Hugh S. Eayrs, president of the MacMillan Company of Canada, "Canadians are distinctly readers of the essay. Indeed, I find that my own House here can sell a book of essays by a Canadian about as well as, or better than, most novels. One occasionally gets a novel that sells in very large numbers, but for the most part I think it may be said that we can get an adequate response for the essay by Canadian men and women who write. As to the importations of English and American essays, I think what I say is equally true."

In much the same vein is the reply of F.F. Appleton, of the Musson Book Company: "Essays by well-known English literary men have a very good sale in Canada - much better than American essays. Essays by well-known Canadians have a larger sale when the author has any kind of a reading public. For instance our sale of Peter McArthur's works average three thousand a volume, and Principal Maurice Hutton, the author of The Greek Point of View, Many Minds, All The Rivers Run Into The Sea, is read by a great number of university people."

And Donald G. French, of McClelland and Stewart, writes: "There is a steady, though not large, sale of standard essays - Lamb, Montaigne, Gardiner (Alpha of the Plough) and various collections. It is difficult to strike an average for Canadian stuff. P.O'D's humorous essays sold very well; Grove's Over Prairie Trails went about fifteen hundred. Generally

speaking, though, the essay has a limited appeal. I suppose this is true in almost any country."

On the other hand, we have True Davidson, of J.M.Dent & Sons, writing: "There is a general feeling among publishers that essays do not pay their way, so that unless a book is exceedingly promising, we do not consider it ... We publish a very small and exclusive list of Canadian books, and collections of essays have not been among them, with the exception of Sandwell's The Privacity Agent and McArthur's Familiar Fields, both of which I may say have sold very well." Again, Blanch Hume, of the Ryerson Press, says: "I have frequently heard Dr. Pierce (the editor for Ryerson's) say that the essay is as difficult to sell as poetry, and you probably know that the demand for poetry in Canada is not great. Our wholesale manager says that they can depend upon a certain demand for English essays, not so great a demand for American or Canadian, but they are not among the 'best sellers'." And H.C. Miller, of the Graphic Publishers, Ottawa, writes: "Our experience has been that very few Canadians read or buy essays, no matter of what nature."

I should like to quote, too, from a letter by H.Burton, of Burton's Limited, booksellers of Montreal: "There is a very active and constant demand for books of essays. Such a book has not the popularity of a novel, light biography, or a book of travel, but it is not difficult to think of titles that have almost attained the place of best sellers. C.E.Montague's

Disenchantment had an enormous sale; Max Beerbohm, Edmund Gosse, Maurice Hewlett, H.M. Tomlinson, Christopher Morley, Robert Lynd, all have a wide and constant public; and there are many writers of the light essay, J.B. Priestley for one, who are becoming popular."

Impressions from the Field of Journalism

My own personal observations have been that to many readers the Toronto Saturday Night, a few years back, made its greatest appeal on the good humoured column of light-essay material contributed weekly by P.O'D., and that Peter McArthur's stuff constituted one of the most widely read features that the Toronto Globe has ever carried. John W. Dafoe reports a wide and interested following, throughout the West, of the essays published in the Manitoba Free Press. The Farmer's Advocate would suffer, amongst its readers, were Sandy Fraser's essay-like contributions to be cut off. And, at the risk of being accused of bad form, I quote a reference by the managing director of Farm and Dairy to some work I did in the light essay field, some ten years since: "I do not believe we ever published a series of articles that were read more widely or more favourably commented upon than your 'Letting in The Sun' articles."

.....

Contradictory as this evidence is, I believe I am safe in saying that, with our gradual emergence from pioneer

practices and the ever-widening influences of our universities, we find in Canada a growing constituency that can appreciate the essay of the more reflective and less didactic type. If this contention be just, we should expect to find our largest groups of essay readers in Halifax, Montreal and Toronto - where the influence of the universities has been at work for some years now, and where at least some indication of the appearance of the spirit of "The city", urbanity, should be felt - and in some of the older of our rural districts, where pioneer days have become only a memory. And this is precisely what a survey of the situation shows. Professor MacMechan's success in Nova Scotia, Mr. Burton's remarks anent the tastes of his customers in Montreal, the more regular use of essays in the periodicals of Toronto, and the eagerness with which the readers of some of the older farm journals welcome the work of the essayists - these things are significant.

At least a fair proportion of our book publishers are finding Canadians ready to read books of essays. But publishers and authors alike are at present suffering from the fact that our periodicals, as a whole, have not made the use they might have done of the essay. "Essays by well-known Canadians have a larger sale when the author has any kind of a reading public," remarks Mr. Appleton, of Musson's, instancing the success of Peter McArthur's books - and the only way in

which an author is likely to be made known to the public is through the periodical press. (For support of this, one need only look into the English essay situation.) While editors generally take the stand that they must give the public what it wants, they must remember that it is for them to create the desires, to no small extent, of their readers. Peter McArthur gained a large reading public, not only because his work was charming, but also because the editors of The Globe and the Farmer's Advocate gave their readers an opportunity to learn of this charming work.

It would seem, then, that we have at least a potential reading public in Canada for essays of the familiar type. The one weak link in the chain is our periodical situation - the lack of vehicles for the distribution, in the larger sense, of the potential product to this potential market.

CHAPTER VI

Summary and Conclusion

The familiar essay, then, is a product of an urbane community, of peoples who have at last learned that the greatest good of things lies not in their production but in their use. Belonging to the literature of power, rather than to the literature of knowledge, it makes but little appeal to the pioneer: its emphasis is not on doing, the watchword of America, but on being and enjoying.

As might perhaps be expected, Canadian literature, and more particularly that produced before the beginning of this century, is not rich in such material. Our ancestors were too intently employed in the making of a nation to give their minds very fully to literary work of any kind. More specifically, they lacked the leisure, the education, the bookish atmosphere, the urbane viewpoint, the attitude of mind that takes delight in reverie and reflection, in toying with ideas without considering too carefully their practical application, that form a background for the production of familiar essays.

A general survey of our literary activity will reveal an accentuation of the 'practical' - history, biography, politics, nature studies, travel and exploration - these

fields have been fairly well worked by Canadian writers; while our 'literature of power' has been limited largely to poetry and fiction. Dramatic works have been noticeably rare, and essays have only recently achieved much place. Even in the fields of fiction and poetry, our work has not heretofore been remarkable for its brilliance. "Regarded as a whole," says MacMechan[16], "Canadian fiction is tame"; and one wonders just how much importance to attach to the statement by Marquis[15] that "... in verse alone she (Canada) has had from three to four hundred singers, who have piped their lays in every province from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

The truth is, perhaps, that we are not so very mature - youth always takes itself seriously. Moreover, we on this continent like to consider ourselves a practical people, a people more concerned with facts than with fancies. This point was made two decades ago by Stephen Leacock[19] when he said, in characteristic fashion: "The aspect of primeval nature does not call to our minds the vision of Unseen Powers riding upon the midnight blast. To us the midnight blast represents an enormous quantity of horse-power going to waste; the primeval forest is a first class site for a saw-mill, and the leaping cataract tempts us to erect a red-brick hydro-electric establishment on its banks and make it leap to some purpose."

A closer study, however, shows that we have made a fair beginning, in recent years, with the familiar type of

essay. In Chapter III, I have listed the names of a dozen writers who have produced essays of this type in book form, while at least as many more might be selected from the contributors to the periodicals referred to in Chapter IV. These two dozen writers may seem few when compared with the four hundred poets who have 'piped their lays' in Canada, but one wonders whether Leacock, MacMechan, McArthur, to take but three, have not done more for Canadian literature than have, say, three hundred of these four hundred poetical pipers! In any case, the product of the pens of the writers who have worked the field of the familiar essay during the past twenty years or so is sufficient in quantity and good enough in quality to show that we have now in Canada men and women capable of important work in this literary form.

Nor are we absolutely lacking in potential readers for this product. In our older cities, and in our older rural districts, I am convinced, there is a considerable, and growing,community of people who have emerged from the pioneer attitude of mind, who have inherited something of the comfort, the educational advantages, the tolerance, that characterize the people who make up the essayists market in the Old Country or in the New England States, where the essay has already found its place. Not all of these people are essay readers, it is true; but the fact that the editors of those few papers (including the agricultural journals) that have printed essay-like material find their subscribers appreciative

of it, and that a fair number of our more important book publishers are finding a good demand for books of essays, indicates an encouraging situation.

The one great weakness, in my opinion, in the position of the familiar essay in Canada at present is the lack of interest on the part of our periodicals as a whole. With this literary form, as with few others, the active support, financial and otherwise, of the periodical market is almost a sine qua non of its production. History, biography, travel, science, and even fiction of the longer sort, may flourish independent of the periodical market - though fiction is now closely bound up with the magazine field - and poetry apparently needs no encouragement. But the essay of familiar type, as Priestley has pointed out[2], looks to the newspaper and magazine field for the moral and financial support that is so vital to its production.

Quite apart from the financial aspect (which, however, should not be overlooked), the periodical has an important part to play if familiar essays are to be encouraged. Even in countries where this literary form is already well established, both with writers and with readers, this agency is necessary to bridge the gap between producer and consumer - for essays are rarely written in bookfuls. And in a country like Canada, the need of such a medium for distribution is still greater. In many cases, our potential readers have not access to bookshops; and when they have,

they are not likely to be interested in books of essays unless they have had an opportunity to form a taste for this sort of thing through the offerings of their newspapers or magazines. Peter McArthur's books sold well in Canada because he had 'a reading public', in the words of his publisher - and that reading public was built up through the regular appearance of his sketches in The Globe. In the same way, Leacock and Lynd, Chesterton and Beerbohm, have had the way paved for their books of essays through their successful appearance in periodical literature.

Canadian periodicals have not, heretofore, offered much to the writer of essays. The entertainment needs of our dailies, the most prosperous representatives of our journalistic endeavours and hence the papers that could give greatest financial support to writers of short features, are filled at low cost with imported syndicate material. Our 'popular' magazines, some of which now pay fairly well for their requirements, stick to the topical or 'fact' type of article, outside of their fiction pages, and so achieve the permanence of a glorified daily; for the news article, no matter how lavishly illustrated, is like the grass,'which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven! And while some of our more literary periodicals - Dalhousie, Willison's, the Forum - print familiar essays in fair numbers, it cannot be said that they offer an outlet for a very active production, and the financial support is meagre.

I am firmly convinced, as a result both of my findings in the present study and of my own experience in journalism , that the editor of any paper making its appeal to the older communities of Canada will find a ready response among his readers to anything that he may do in the way of making available to them essays of the familiar type. The Toronto Globe and the Manitoba Free Press, among our city dailies, have found their essay offerings to be popular features. Farm papers have found them to be their most popular features - and surely it would be paradoxical to suppose that our most urbane communities are rural. In short, I believe we have in our older cities men and women who would appreciate the material that our essay writers have already shown to be within their range. And the periodical that puts forth an effort to bring together the writers and the potential readers of this material will benefit writers and readers alike, and will, in addition, do a real service to the cause of Canadian letters. What is at present most conspicuously lacking in the offerings of the average Canadian periodical is permanence, and this factor the familiar type of essay, with its emphasis on mood rather than subject and its aloofness from the vexing questions of the day, possesses in a marked degree.

I am aware that the general editorial attitude towards gratitous advice of this sort is that it is not the task of the newspaper to engage in the Uplift - that in a periodical

run for profit, as most sound newspaper ventures must be, the editor must 'give the public what it wants.' It must be remembered, however, that the editor has in his power the moulding of the tastes to which he caters. If, for instance, he features in his columns sensational stories of 'gun men' and 'love nests', he will not only attract the seeker after the sensational, but also, in too many cases, develop in his general reader a love for this kind of thing. If, on the other hand, he makes a regular feature of the type of thing done by our familiar essayists, as a few of our better periodicals have done, he will probably discover, as they have, a real interest on the part of his readers.

So, in conclusion, I wish to make a plea for a greater place for the familiar essay in Canada. Amongst its characteristics are friendliness, good humour, mellow reflection and speculation and, above all, unawareness of 'pressing problems' - in short, the characteristics of the fire-side chat of good fellows - and these are needed, if not always found, in a strenuous age and country.

We already have in our midst writers who can produce good work in this field - although many of these today, in the absence of periodical markets, are either allowing their pens to rust or are forced to look abroad for an outlet for their product. We have readers who patronize the essay sections of our libraries and book-shops - without, perhaps, finding much in the way of Canadian productions. We have

publishers willing to undertake the sale of books of essays of Canadian writers 'who have found a reading public'. What is needed now is some interest on the part of our producers of periodicals.

I do not plead for a'literature of essays', but I do feel that our general literature will be the poorer for their neglect. 'Fact' articles and books alone cannot make up a worthy national offering in literature; and so little of our fiction has in it the germ of immortality! It is in the best of our essays and the best of our poetry that we find in greatest measure the factor of timelessness, which is akin to permanence, so lacking in Canadian literary productions generally. Articles on the Georgian Bay Canal, on various aspects of the Great War, on the Farmers in Power, are of the type that 'have their day and cease to be'; Leacock's "Homer and Humbug" and "My Financial Career" have for us today the same joyous charm that they had when first written, and may, perhaps, be read with wholesome laughter by our grandchildren.

Finis.

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APPENDIX A

Familiar Essays in our University Reviews

While it is not necessary in establishing the status of the familiar essay in our Canadian periodicals to go through the complete files of these magazines, I have thought it worth while to do this with three of our best known literary publications - the Queen's Quarterly, the University Magazine and the Dalhousie Review. For the purposes of my thesis I have included in my chapter on the periodical essay merely a survey of my findings, as I have done in the case of magazines not so thoroughly covered; for the benefit of anyone who may later wish to make a closer study of the essay in the Canadian periodical field, however, I have thought it well to append a complete list of the familiar essays published in these reviews to date.

1. Queen's Quarterly, Vols. I-XXXV (ending May, 1928)

(Note: I include in my list only those papers which approach the 'familiar' form. Readers interested in the 'Review' type of essay will find many able and readable contributions, by such men as Alexander, Cappon, MacMechan and Macnaughton, that are not listed here.)

Bush, Douglas

x x "A Vanished Race", Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, - a yearning after the Falstaffs, Shandys and Pickwicks of a less sophisticated age - good literary flavour.

Dyde, S.W.
x "A Canadian Summer Camp", Vol. XVI, No. 2, - the art of holidaying in any Canadian woods.

Ferguson, A.S.
"Respectability", Vol. XX, No. 1, - a picture of life in South London, in good mood.

Gray, John
"Man's Visable Works", Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, - farms, factories, towns, seen as pictures - a good, reflective piece, but not Canadian (reproduced from Blackfriars).
"Excursion", Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, - another piece reprinted from Blackfriars.

Hutton, Maurice
"On Schoolmasters", Vol. XIV, No. 2, - a reprinted address, well illustrated with reminiscences, anecdotes and literary references.

Macleod, Fiona
"The Wind, Silence and Love", Vol. XIV, No. 1, - a personal, reflective piece, but not Canadian.

MacMechan, Archibald
xx "Athenian Days", Vol. XXI, No. 1, - one of his Ultima Thule essays.

Johnson, W.S.
x "Towards Arcady", Vol. XVI, No. 2, - observations and reflections of a sympathetic traveller in one of the French sections of Quebec.

Rogers, R. Vashon
"How to Get Married", Vol. I, No. 1, - Mr. Rogers, I take it, is a lawyer who is interested in digging up odd information on the legal aspects of life, and who has the gift of presenting his information in such a genial, chatty and often humorous way as to merit the attention of the essay reader. The four pieces listed here are put in with hesitation, yet were they omitted I might be taken to task for overlooking them.
"How to Get Divorced", Vol. I, No. 2, - see above.
"Some Notes on Widows", Vol. III, No. 2, - " "
"Jewish Women", Vol. IX, No. 3, - included with even greater hesitation than the above.

Sandwell, B.K.
"The Cityward Bias of Literature", Vol. XXXI, No. 2, - economics, slightly lightened in the central portion by personal confessions - not a genuine familiar essay.

Taylor, R. Bruce
"Digging Up One's Parents", Vol. XXVII, No. 4, - the ethics of putting real people into books, making its appeal to the essay reader through its bookish allusions.

2. University Magazine, Vols. I-XIX (complete)

(Note: It has been more difficult to decide what to include and what to leave out in the case of this magazine than in the case of either of the other two. Many interesting descriptive pieces on far-off places were contributed by such men as G.R.Lomer, Maurice Hutton, Pelham Edgar; I take it that these should be classed as travelogues, rather than familiar essays, and so have left them out. But what of "Alouette", which appeared in Vol. X, Nos. 2 and 3? This piece, by William Wood, is written in a reflective mood. The author sets down his experiences and thoughts as he meanders in his own boat from Quebec to the Saguenay. Yet, since it runs to 52 magazine pages, I feel that it must be classed as a travelogue. To go back to Priestley's definition, this is not "the kind of composition written by an essayist", for the essayists have confined their efforts within smaller compass. I have been puzzled, too, to know what to do with such charming literary studies as Macnaughton's "The Actuality of Homer" and Hutton's "Kipling" - both of which appeared in Vol. XVII, No. 4. These are most readable - yet I cannot feel that they are of the 'familiar' type.)

Blake, W.H.
"Fontinalis", Vol. X, No. 3, - Waltonian discourse of the trout.
"Laurentian National Park", Vol. XI, No. 1, - this might be questioned, rather descriptive.
"A Christmas Jaunt", Vol. XI, No. 4, - a personal view of winter en bas de Quebec.
x "The Wing-Footed or Shining One", Vol.XII, No. 2, - in search of Malbaie trout - Blake at his best.

Broadus, Edmund Kemper
x "An Old Book-Shelf", Vol. IX, No. 1, - a loving turning over of books that have retreated to the garret.

Carter, Henry

××"A Treatment for Insomnia", Vol. XV, No. 3, - delightful fooling, in the best essay tradition.

"Nature's Misfits", Vol. XVI, No. 1, - on the philosophy of being an ass.

"The Making of Poetry", Vol. XVII, No. 1.

Colby, C.W.

"The Attractiveness of History", Vol. II, No. 2, - argumentative, but in good mood - perhaps open to question as a familiar essay.

Coleman, A.P.

"A Day on the Lines", Vol. IX, No. 2, - a nature sketch by a surveyor.

Cook, Margaret Stuart

"Beaupre", Vol. XVII, No. 1, - a sketch of a habitant village - again open to question.

Cox, J.

"The Humour of Examinations", Vol. I, No. 2, - really didactic, but good reading.

Gilbertson, Belfrage

"A Perfect Day", Vol. XI, No. 3, - a short descriptive sketch, slender but good.

Hardinge, E.M.

"The Sons of Mary", Vol. VII, No. 2, - a plea for the dreamer.

Hoare, J.E.

×"Sub Jove", Vol. XI, No. 4, - a discussion of the weather.

Irvin, John S.

"The Bookseller", Vol. XI, No. 1, - an appreciative sketch of a departed book-lover.

Jackson, W.S.

×"Alpinismus", Vol. VIII, No. 1, - a good essay on the disease of mountaineering.

Johnson, Walter S.

"Gloria Mundi", Vol. XIV, No. 2, - a call to worship at Nature's shrine, as a solace in war days.

Leacock, Stephen

x "Children's Corner", Vol. I, No. 1, - delightfully humorous.

"American Humour", Vol. VI, No. 1, - a serious piece, but even a serious piece by Leacock is nearer the ideal of the familiar essayist than the most playful contortions of less gifted writers.

"Literature and Education in America", Vol. VIII, No. 1, - see previous note.

xxx "The Apology of a Professor", Vol. IX, No. 2, - a first rate essay.

xxx "The Devil and the Deep Sea", Vol. IX, No. 4, - an excellent example of the familiar type - exhibiting the personality and the joyous excursions into bypaths of the best traditions of the light essayist.

"University and Business", Vol. XII, No. 4, - didactic, but written with gusto.

x "The First Newspaper", Vol. XIII, No. 2, - a sketch, in humorous vein.

Lomer, G.R.

"Barge Life", Vol. I, No. 1, - a good piece of description but not very personal.

MacMechan, Archibald

xx "Alice in Wonderland", Vol. VII, No. 2, - a 22-page discussion of a book, but so sympathetically done (and concerning such a book) that it becomes a familiar essay.

xxx "The Vanity of Travel", Vol. XI, No. 2, - a good essay, enriched by quotations.

x "A Portrait by Fortuny", Vol. XIV, No. 2, - fair, because personal.

xxx "The Irrelevant Rose", Vol. XVII, No. 1, - personal likings, backed up by literary quotations.

" The Price of Paper", Vol. XVIII, No. 1.

MacMurchy, Marjory

"An Old Woman", Vol. VII, No. 3, - a good character sketch.

"Blue Rooms", Vol. X, No. 4, - as an essay, this is better than the foregoing.

Nicholson, F.C.

"A Modern Sparta", Vol. IX, No. 3, - recollections of life in old Presbyterian Edinburgh - not a representative familiar essay.

Peterson, W.G. (see also 'War-Time Papers' section)
"Athletics - an Oxford Dialogue", Vol. VIII, No. 4, - not really an essay, perhaps, but in good mood.
xxx"Literary Atmosphere", Vol. XV, No. 4, - delicious advice on what to drink, etc., when reading Burns, Dickens, Thackery, et al.

Salviris, Jacob
"The Intellectual Asset", Vol. XV, No. 2, - perhaps a bit difficult to justify as a 'familiar' essay, but good.

Sandwell, B.K.
xx"Why Newspapers are Unreadable", Vol. XI, No. 2, - semi-serious, improving as it goes.
"The Moving Picture Scenario", Vol. XV, No. 1, - only fair.

Sullivan, Alan
xx"The Man of Forty-Five", Vol. XVI, No. 4, - a good reflective piece.

Thompson, Eileen B.
x"East and West", Vol. VIII, No. 2, - a study of Victoria, B.C., but good.
xxx"The Triumph of Fall", Vol. IX, No. 4, - a really beautiful essay of the nature study type.
xxx"Winter", Vol. XII, No. 1, - excellent.
xx"Eben Picken", Vol. XVIII, No. 3, - a beautiful character sketch, with Montreal's most poetic bookseller as subject.

War-Time Papers

(Sketches, more or less familiar, sent in by men who had received their impressions in camp or on the battlefield)

Field, A.F.
"Wounded and Captured", Vol. XVIII, No. 2.

George, Ruggles
"In Billet and Trench", Vol. XIV, No. 4.

Holland J.A.
"Papers from the Front", Vol. XVII, No. 4.
"O-Pip!", Vol. XVIII, No. 1.

Jack, Copporal
"The Metamorphosis", Vol. XVI, No. 4.

Macphail, Andrew
"Val Cartier Camp", Vol. XIII, No. 3.
"An Ambulance in Rest", Vol. XVI, No. 1.

Malloch, Archibald
"Turned Soldier", Vol. XVII, No. 3.

Peterson, W.G.
"The Lost Legion", Vol. XVII, No. 2.
"Paris Leave; Of Newspaper Boys", Vol. XVII, No. 3.
"A Visit to Arras", Vol. XVIII, No. 1.
"The Field Telephone Speaks", Vol. XVIII, No. 2.

Staff Officer
"The Last Days", Vol. XVIII, No. 3.
"The Interpreter", Vol. XVIII, No. 4.

Taylor, R. Bruce
"A Chaplain at the Front", Vol. XV, No. 1.

Anonymous
"One Who Was There", Vol. XV, No. 4.

3. Dalhousie Review, Vols. I-VIII, No. 2 (to July, 1928)

Crockett, A.J.
xx"A Pictonian Looks at his Attic", Vol. V, No. 1, - joyous treasure-troving amongst forgotten books.

Fraser, A.D.
"The Gentle Art of Cursing", Vol. III, No. 4, - a good subject, but handled too impersonally.

Hodgins, Norris
xx"For Value Received", Vol. V, No. 2, - a good-humoured trumping up of the advantages of modern life.

Jordan, Louis H.
xx"From An Oriel Window", Vol. III, No. 2, - a bookman's delight in his books.

MacMechan, Archibald
xxx"Afoot in Ultima Thule", Vol. III, No. 1, - voyaging and reverie in Nova Scotia, in the best manner of our most charming essayists.
xx"Painted Music", Vol. V, No. 3, - personal reactions to pictures seen in a Parisian gallery.

✗✗ "Old Lovers", Vol. VI, No. 1, - reflections on the romances of literary folk.
✗✗ "The Coasts of Ultima Thule", Vol. VI, No. 3, - a companion piece to "Afoot in Ultima Thule", filled with a love of Nova Scotia, the sea and the ships.

MacRae, A.O.
✗ "Scottish Seriousness", Vol. IV, No. 4, - somewhat personal.

Nicholls, A.G.
"Flowers, Fantasies and Folklore", Vol. IV, No. 1, - lacks the personal touch.

Nichols, E.W.
"The Old Farm in the Woods", Vol. V, No. 1,
"The Little White Schoolhouse", Vol. V, No. 3,
✗ "Rockweeding", Vol. VI, No. 2,
✗✗ "Haying on the Old Farm", Vol. VII, No. 1,
"The Unromantic Window", Vol. VII, No. 4, -
These pieces by Nichols are really quiet, descriptive studies, rather than personal essays. Their mellow mood, however, helps make up for their author's self-effacement. "Haying on the Old Farm" is especially beautiful, comparable in mood and treatment to Hilaire Belloc's "The Mowing of a Field".

Russell, Gyrth
✗ "A Visit", Vol. VI, No. 3, - a poetical picture of an artist and his studio, and, above all, of their spiritual effect upon the visitor.

Price, H.B.
"A Valley Farm", Vol. VIII, No. 2, - a quiet nature study of the Nichols type.

Prince, E.E.
✗✗ "The Rose, the Shamrock and the Heather", Vol. VIII, No. 1, - an essay exhibiting the typical love for quotations and something of the gusto of our best workers in this form.

Sandwell, B.K.
"An Experiment in Democracy Improved", Vol. VII, No. 2, - a satire on Proportional Representation, and hence lacking in the urbanity and freedom from didacticism found in the true familiar essay.

Thompson, Eileen B.
"Rus in Urbe", Vol. VIII, No. 1, - a consideration of Canada's literary possibilities, included here for the charm of its writing.

(Note: Since the essays listed in this appendix are not all of the same value as representatives of the 'familiar' form, I have ventured to mark, in red ink, those that, in my judgment, approach most nearly the familiar essay ideal. Thus, the outstanding examples of this type have been given three x's - meaning, if you like, 'strong beer' -; of next importance are those with two x's, and so on.)

APPENDIX B

In January, 1923, in an address delivered before the St. James Literary Society of Montreal, I made a preliminary survey of the ground covered in the present thesis. This address, cast into essay form, was published in the Dalhousie Review of October, 1924, and reprinted, in abstracted form, in the Montreal Gazette of November 29, of the same year. Upon its publication, the editors of two Canadian magazines wrote me, confirming my main thesis, while editorial comments appeared in the Gazette and the Manitoba Free Press. Since these support the conclusions arrived at in my thesis proper, I append herewith both essay and comments:

1. The Essay

"Our Neglect of the Light Essay"

by Norris Hodgins

(Dalhousie Review, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 296-305)

Now that an attempt is being made to develop in Canada a literature distinctively Canadian, it is but natural that we should examine rather critically those writings of Canadians that come our way, to see whether we can find in them the germ of nationality - the stamp of shire. This is not an easy thing to recognize, particularly in the literature of a very young

country that has until recently been largely dependent upon the markets of other countries for an outlet for its literary productions. For such a condition has at least two influences upon the literature of that country at variance with the idea of the development of a national cast in her writings: first, the environment of the writers in their workshops is not likely to stimulate a national consciousness, because, lacking a background of their own literature and surrounded by the works of their confreres in the older established countries, they must inevitably imbibe something of the philosophy and the style of the writers elsewhere[1]: and, second, they are led,

1. I do not mean to suggest for one moment that this state of affairs is unhealthy, or that it makes for less worthy productions from the pens of these workers. The influence of outside reading is decidedly the reverse. But, it must be admitted, this is a factor that is opposed (fortunately, I think) to the fullest development of the ideal of nationality (or provincialism) in the works of a young nation.

consciously or unconsciously, away from the truest delineation of their national characteristics and thought by the demands of their markets.

But to me there is one thing in our writings that is easy of discovery - a trade mark, as it were, of our nationality in the world of letters - and yet an undesirable thing. It is the absence, or the comparative absence, from our Canadian literature of the light essay as such. It is the lack, in our contribution to the thought and entertainment of the world, of those delightful little chats on something or on anything, of those charming bits of philosophy on subjects grave and gay, that have filled

such an important place in the literature of France, England, and other civilized nations since the days of Montaigne. These , I contend, we have neglected - and to our own impoverishment - in our efforts to build up a Canadian literature. But, to uphold my contention, I must, in the words of the stage villain, "produce my proofs"; and it is to do this thing that I have set out in the present essay.

Perhaps it would be as well to clear ground somewhat by answering, at the outset, two questions that have been put to me by several persons with whom I have discussed this subject of the light essay and its place in our Canadian literature. The first is, "What do you mean by the term 'light essay'?" And the second, "Whom do you include amongst Canadian writers? Do you mean Canadian-born, whether writing in Canada or elsewhere, or do you mean men who write in Canada, irrespective of their place of birth?"

By <u>light essay</u> I mean the essay or sketch that is read primarily for enjoyment - the essay that gives no information, or that, giving it, presents it in such form that the reader absorbs it unconsciously, unsuspectingly, as the victim in a certain type of penny-dreadful takes laudanum with his coffee, - the sort of thing that certain mellow bachelors read on sunny hillsides on hazy October afternoons, or before an open fire, with pipe and mug at hand, on bleak December nights - the sort of thing that a few householders peruse in bed on Sunday mornings, or by the light of the library lamp on those quiet evenings when

their wives are out to "bridges" - the sort of thing that business-girls, students for the ministry, and statisticians read not at all. I mean discursive essays of the type of Montaigne's Of Coaches, of Lamb's Old China, of Holbrook Jackson's Going to Nowhere, of Max Beerbohm's Going Out for a Walk, of Christopher Morley's Unanswering Letters. I mean essays of the type found in Robert Lynd's Pleasures of Ignorance, or in H.M. Tomlinson's Old Junk.

What part is played by essays of this nature in Canadian literature? What part should they play? Have we a reading public that would appreciate material of this sort? If not, why not? Have we writers that can produce this sort of thing? What are the factors that will encourage its production? These are some of the questions that I have asked myself in connection with this subject. It does not necessarily follow that I am prepared to give answers of finality to all of them; but I have at least sought for what might appear to be reasonable replies in each case.

And in the matter of deciding which writers shall be included in a study of this nature I have simplified matters by accepting all who have come to my attention. If writers come from foreign lands and produce light essays for Canadian consumption, we may adduce the fact that we have in Canada a reading public that can appreciate whimsical and semi-philosophical writings. If we produce in Canada men who can write essays of this nature - and if we can hold them - this must

show that we have here a healthy atmosphere for the production of belles-lettres. If we can produce these men but cannot keep them, it might suggest that these writers are exotics, born out of place or out of season, and that they must go to friendlier climes to secure appreciation.

Before taking up specifically the light essay and its place in Canadian literature, let us glance just a moment at our accomplishments in general in the field of letters. Have we in Canada a literature? If so, what is its status? What are its main characteristics? In answer to the first of these questions we have, on the one hand, the information that "in a kultur map of the world, published in Germany in 1913, Canada shared with Africa the distinction of 'having no assignable culture'"; and we have, on the other hand, the vociferous assurances of our youthful, but lusty, Canadian Authors' Association that we have already accomplished much valuable work in the literary field. Somewhere between these two extremes lies the truth, - that we have made a beginning in literary work, but that our literature has not flourished as it should have done, nor does it exhibit as yet that degree of permanence that we should like to see. And as to its main characteristics, the outstanding thing in Canadian literature is undoubtedly our poetry; the names of Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, Marjorie Pickthall, etc., are proof of this. Next in importance would probably come our political and historical works - whole shelves of them. We have many nature-studies of interest, and books of animal life of the Roberts variety. And

in the field of fiction we have our occasional Maria Chapdelaine, and our hundreds of novels and short stories of the "popular" Ralph Connor - Nellie McClung type.

But of the reflective or discursive essay we have few examples, and it is for this that I make a plea. The essay is, in my opinion, almost a necessity to permanence in our literature. We cannot have a literature of politics alone. Few short stories survive the generation that produces them; few works of fiction pass over into the classics. It is the poetry and the philosophy of a people that are handed on from generation to generation, and that give to the literature of a nation its individuality. Montaigne wrote for all time when he undertook the discussion of his varying topics in the 16th century. Lamb and Hazlitt have outlived most of their more serious-minded contemporaries. And I should not be afraid to wager that Max Beerbohm's sketches will grace the shelves of many an inglenook when even our very best sellers have been consigned to the limbo of forgotten things.

A closer study of the situation, with particular reference to the place of the "light essay" in our literature, but establishes the general rule of its rarity. If one were to go out looking for material of this sort, one would at once be struck by the fact that no one knows just where to look for Canadian essays. Booksellers, publishers, librarians - all look blank when asked for them, although even in Canada one does not need to search long for books by English or American essayists. And the net result of such a search would be a few volumes - mostly by Stephen Leacock and Peter McArthur - excellent books,

some of them, but not sufficiently numerous to disprove the rule of scarcity. The same will be found to hold true in the magazine field, only more so. Our popular Canadian magazines, and the magazine sections of our Sunday papers, have little or nothing of this nature[2]. A few reflective or whimsical bits may

[2] An exception should perhaps be made in the case of The Canadian Magazine, which has recently been publishing under titles "Thrown Out" and "Thrown In" a monthly dissertation by the editor of the magazine himself.

be found in our farm papers, notably in The Farmer's Advocate; and in the files of The University Magazine (a periodical now, unfortunately, no longer appearing) a goodly sprinkling of charming specimens are to be found. But these are the exceptions, not the rule, and as such will be dealt with later.

When we turn to the evidence produced in our histories of literature we find our suspicions justified, our rule confirmed. In his History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation, Ray Palmer Baker hints at something of the nature of our light essay appearing in The Nova Scotian (of Joseph Howe and Judge Haliburton fame) a century ago, and states that The Literary Garland, a magazine that flourished in the 'Forties, 'did for the Canadas what The Nova Scotian did for the Maritime Provinces. It made use of verse, memoir, essay, sketch, and novel." The essays and sketches mentioned were apparently produced by new settlers, either from the Old Country or from the United States, who brought their culture with them. And when this generation passed, the essay apparently passed with it. At any rate we hear much less of it in histories of later periods. In his section on "English

Canadian Literature," in volume 12 of Canada and its Provinces, T.G. Marquis devotes 32 pages to our fiction, 24 to poetry, 11 to history, 9 to travels and exploration, 5 to biography, and 14 to general literature - of which one paragraph refers somewhat remotely to the light essay, its kith and kin. In this paragraph he says: "Canadians, like all northern people, take life seriously. There is a marked lack of humour in poets, novelists, and dramatists[3] - and without humour there can be no true greatness." So our general rule is that the light essay has had a small part in our literature.

3. This is perhaps not so true to-day as it was when written. Stephen Leacock's work need only be mentioned to show that the foregoing charge is now but partially true.

Let us look now for some of the things that might explain this general dearth in our literature of material of a whimsical or semi-philosophical character. The main reason is undoubtedly our youth, with the things that go with life in a pioneering country: lack of scholarship, lack of leisure, lack of appreciation, lack of a relfective atmosphere. Prof. Pelham Edgar, of Toronto University, summed up our situation very nicely in an article that appeared in The University Magazine of October, 1912, when he said:

> It is not that we have been numerically small, for Athens and Judaea were smaller, but that we have been quite extraordinarily busy with our hands, having had no slaves to fell our forests and to build our roads, and equally busy with our wits amassing wealth, having had no accumulated reserves of fortune to permit of easeful and care-free meditation. Money we now possess; but such is our lust for ever-increasing stores, that money has brought with it no leisured class; and literature, we must remember, is not the recreation of a few hours wrested from days and years of labour. Lack of time, therefore, measurably accounts for lack of literature; but had we the time, I fear that we have so long neglected as to have

> lost the faculty for thinking about things which, to the man of affairs, seem useless enough, yet which for literature are really the things that matter.

And Macaulay, in his essay on Milton, seems to have characterized our present situation exactly, when he said that in the literature of a country we find poetry predominating during its pioneer years, with science and philosophy following some distance behind. "Nations," he says, "like individuals, first perceive and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical; that of a half-civilized people is poetical."

A study of our people will show that we have but a small reading public for the light essay, simply because we have in Canada few people who are not pioneers, or imbued with that spirit of restlessness that is so fatal to philosophy, however light, and that comes from the pioneer's profound reverence for <u>doing</u> and his yet more profound ignorance of <u>being</u>. We are cursed with a belief in Longfellow's new-world doctrine that, "Life is earnest!" - that we must "Act, act in the living present." We in this country are still like the cow during her early hours on grass, when she rushes about nervously nibbling the choice clumps before another gets them. We have not yet reached the ruminating stage at which Bossie lies down in the shade of a tree to chew her cud.

Now I have attempted to classify the people of Canada (although necessarily roughly) in an endeavour to find out whether we have <u>any promise of a reading public for reflective</u>

writing, and I have come to the conclusion that our greatest hope lies in two constituencies - those in the older rural districts that have already supported several generations and who are now getting away somewhat from pioneer life and pioneer ideas - and, in some of our older cities, a few small groups of men who have inherited comfort.

We can divide the people of our rural districts into three groups. First we find the pioneers - the men who are still clearing the land and building roads, men to whom philosophy or whimsy is of no interest. From these the demand comes for poetry of song, for religious works, and for stirring tales. Then we have a large - a deplorably large - group of men who are naught but clods. Chill penury, lack of learning, hard driving misconceptions of life, make of them a class that has no value so far as the intellectual life of a country is concerned. And last, we have on some of our old concessions a small but promising group of civilized people - and I mean by "civilized" what Macaulay meant - people who are now tasting of the fruits from the trees planted by their pioneering forefathers. This rural group is, to my mind, perhaps our most important constituency from the standpoint of reflective writings.

I do not mean by this that they are our greatest readers of light essays - in many cases they are denied the opportunity of seeing such - but rather that in these districts may be detected something of the atmosphere in which the light essay is ever to be found. Anyone who is at all acquainted with life

in such communities will understand what I mean - the reflective attitude of mind of the better-class farmer, the speculative character of the conversations between neighbours on those nights of winter when the wind howls in the chimney and the "men folks" put their feet on the stove damper, the real wit and humour that comes into play when such men come together at threshing and wood-cutting time. And it seems more than a coincidence that one of our few markets for essays of a non-topical nature is in the farm weekly; that where our other magazines refuse such essays, these periodicals pay for this material from three to five times the price they pay for articles of an agricultural or scientific nature: that Peter McArthur's work appeared for years in The Farmer's Advocate before The Toronto Globe took him up.

Then, turning to the city, we find the pioneering spirit even more in evidence there than in the country, even less of this reflective atmosphere that is so necessary to the growth and development of the light essay. Here again we may divide the public into three great groups, with again the leading group known as the pioneers. This class includes most city dwellers of ambition, and may be further subdivided into our four well-known urban-pioneer types: (a) Pioneers in finance and business - men who are building up business as others are building roads or ditching swamps, and who are not interested in anything of a philosophical nature; (b) Social climbers; (c) Seekers after pleasure; (d) The near intellectuals of the

tea-pouring persuasion. Common to all of these is the pioneer's idea that everything may be accomplished by "push" and "go". It has been shown repeatedly that tremendous energy, if skilfully directed, can accomplish wonders for the first two (i.e. in business and in social climbing), and we on this continent have made the not unnatural mistake of supposing that the rule applies to others as well. So we have our hectic parties of men and women relentlessly pursuing pleasure from midnight frolic to cabaret, from cabaret to dance hall - not knowing that happiness is one of the few things that come not from doing but from being. And we have our tea sets gabbling ferociously of the latest books. Have you read Babbitt? Have you read So Big? Have you read The Conquest of Fear? These are the questions that are nervously asked and nervously answered by harried hostesses and guests -pioneers, these, putting so many books behind them each month as a pioneer axeman puts behind him an acre of cleared land. But all absolutely lacking in literary appreciation! Then again, we have the deplorably large number of morons in city as in country. And finally, in some of our older cities, we have a small group of readers who patronize the counters of light essays (from English and American authors) that are to be found in our better bookshops.

So much for the Canadian situation in so far as the reading public is concerned. Let us now look at it from the writer's standpoint. Here, as well, we find certain conditions

that are unfavourable for the production of the light essay. Amongst these are lack of scholarship, lack of atmosphere, lack of leisure, lack of comradeship, and lack of encouragement. We are not yet a nation of readers, and so cannot expect to be a nation of writers. We lack the old-world atmosphere of hedge-row and sleepy inn. We lack leisure, what Theophile Gautier calls "the tenth and most delightful of the Muses." It will be remembered that when Montaigne decided to write, he gave up his law practice and retired behind walls upon which he caused this legend to be inscribed: "In the year of our Lord 1571, at the age of 38, on the eve of the Kalends of March, his birthday, Michel de Montaigne, weary of enduring the servitude of law courts and public offices, and with all his faculties still alert, yielded himself to the care of the learned maidens, with them to pass in peace and quietness whatsoever span of life might further be allotted him." This leisure we lack, even in a small way. We have not yet learned to sit still a minute. And, more specifically, there is lack of encouragement for writing. But of this, more anon.

Summing up, then, the <u>general situation</u> in Canada with regard to the light essay, we find examples of this sort of writing rare - owing, in general, to the fact that we are not sufficiently far advanced as a nation either to appreciate or to produce work of this nature.

But when we come to look at the specific exceptions to the rule, things appear more hopeful. As we have already seen, we have in Canada a couple of constituencies already welcoming reading material of a reflective nature. And on the other hand, in the midst of the desert we find some most refreshing oases of light essays that have been produced by modern Canadian writers. Two or three of our own writers have already produced enough of these to make possible the publication of a few books. And in the late University Magazine Sir Andrew Macphail included some things of very great charm. Before beginning this essay I looked through three dozen issues of this delightful periodical, and in these I found a dozen or so really fine specimens of the "light essay". .....

So here we have on one hand a small reading public that might be interested in light essays, and on the other a few writers who have shown their ability to produce material of this sort. But to-day, in the absence of the University Magazine, we find these promising writers either rusting, or, as one or two are doing, writing occasional pieces for English or American magazines. And on the other hand our readers receive not Canadian essays, but English and American.[4]

4. Here, again, I wish to make myself clear. Literature recognizes no boundaries, and I should be the last person in the world to wish to make Canadians read nothing but Canadian productions. But from the standpoint of building up a Canadian literature it seems unhealthy to have no bond of union between our readers and our writers.

Something is wrong, and that something is lack of encouragement. There is in Canada practically no demand for the light

essay as such. Our book publishers are friendly towards it, but essays are not usually written in bookfuls. They are more often produced singly for magazine publication, and afterwards collected; and how many magazines in Canada, or users of magazine material, offer anything to the essayist?

Our magazines seem to shum all but topical articles, - those sketches that have some news value, but little more permanence as literature than have the stories appearing from day to day on the front pages of the morning paper. I may be wrong in my estimate of our editors as a whole, but I have a strong suspicion that without previous fame Charles Lamb, if he were alive, would find difficulty in marketing in Canada his Dissertation upon Roast Pig, the late Sir Robertson Nicoll his essay Never Chew Your Pills, A.A. Milne his sketch A Word for the Autumn. And in this I am backed up by no less an authority than Sir Andrew Macphail, who gave it as his opinion, during a conversation that I had with him recently, that the only outlet for the essayist in Canada to-day is the pamphlet - published through some local bookseller.

The trouble with our magazines is that they are too much like glorified newspapers. The typical Canadian magazine (and in the term magazine I include the Sunday papers, etc.) has held too strictly to the rule to accept naught that lacks in news value. The essays that I have noticed upon their pages have usually been either news stories from the press gallery of the House of Commons humorously treated, or else something from the pen of some man who has already become famous (or

even infamous) and so carries in himself a potential headline. So to-day the would-be writer of light essays must go for his inspiration, not to the pleasant companionship of country inns, nor to the wind-swept reaches of the open prairies, nor to the lackadaisical atmosphere of the sun-soaked city park, nor to the rumbling solitudes of the seaside - but rather to the Press Gallery. Or, if he would write something apart from the perishable news of the day, and is at the same time desirous of having his work appear in a Canadian magazine, he must first go our and "make his name" as a railroad president, or a pork packer, or a political boss, or even as an author of books or articles that find sale in the United States of America.

I am aware that the magazine editor would probably reply to this by saying that his magazine is run for money, and that he must give the people what they want. He must also remember, however, that he is responsible for the tastes of his readers. Unless the magazines set the pace, we shall never have people reading anything worth while. We do not suddenly wake up and find non-readers, or readers of Ring Lardner's stuff, clamouring for Beerbohm. They must learn to appreciate, and our magazines must give the lead. Nor is it necessary to sacrifice readability and entertainment for permanence. True humour is not dependent upon time and place. And little by little our magazines might, if they so wished, help to build up a real literature for Canada. On the other hand, so long as the <u>news story</u> is taken as the standard of excellence of the mag-

azine article for Canada, we need expect no general elevation of the literary tastes of the country. So long indeed will the average intelligence of the readers of our magazines remain at the level of the intelligence of their editors.

In conclusion, let me make a plea for more of this pleasant, reflective sort of material in our Canadian literature. There may not be much of this offered us; but there is some. There may not be at present much demand by readers; but their taste may slowly be developed. I do not make a plea for a literature of essays, but I do ask that some niche be apportioned to these in the temple of literature that we are trying to build in Canada. Poetry alone cannot make up a literature in this day and generation when verse plays so small a part in the lives of the people. The novel alone cannot make up a representative literature, for there are so few amongst the thousands of stories published that have any excuse for longevity. History and science have their place; but they do not make for refinement, for culture. We need the essay. The little reflective sketches to which I have attempted to draw attention constitute a very delightful and a necessary part of any literature. They fill a place - the place of a friend. They are the things that coax us into easy chairs before the fire after a hard day's work. They are mellowing and comforting, like a chat with a friend who is neither a moron nor a pedagogue. Their words fall upon our ears like the pleasantly discursive conversation of friends who leave their business at the office,

who refrain from shoptalk, who never try to sell us anything. And of such conversation we cannot have too much.

2. Comments by Canadian Journalists

a. Editor, Saturday Night (extracts from a letter, dated Dec. 2, 1924, by the late C. Frederick Paul, then managing editor of the Toronto Saturday Night): Dear Mr. Hodgins - Yours on the 'Light Essay' I have read with a good deal of interest. I may say to begin with that light essayists are few and far between in this country. But as the advertisement says, 'there's a reason,' and that is lack of vehicles at their command.

Periodical literature, the natural home of the light essay, is down and nearly out, owing to United States competition. In magazines we have practically nothing left. How could we have in view of the competition with the United States? We take their surplus, dumping they call it when any other commodity is mentioned, paying a trifling part of the original production cost, this having been taken care of in the home circulation and home advertising.

We face a condition that exists, so far as I am aware, no where else in the civilized world, other countries being naturally protected from their neighbors, so far as their literature goes, by differences in language. In this connection it may be said that the publication of periodical literature in the French language would today in Canada have the best chance of success.

So far as our own publication goes it may interest you to know that Saturday Night carried the earlier work of Leacock, Macphail (with whom I spent some time on Prince Edward Island last summer), and Peter McArthur, not to speak of P.O'D. (Peter Donovan) whose light essays appeared in these columns weekly for a ten year period....

As to the condition of periodical literature in this country and lack of a market for writers, this can never be altered for the better until we can, by greatly augmenting our population, or by other means, give encouragement to publishers. At present it is merely throwing away money to attempt anything in the way of periodicals of a usual sort....

b. Editor, MacLean's Magazine (extract from a letter, dated Mar. 25, 1925, by J. Vernon McKenzie, at that time editor of MacLean's): Dear Mr. Hodgins - ... I read with interest what you had to say last November in the Montreal Gazette, but I'm afraid this is too small a country to provide markets for various specialized kinds of literary product. We are looking at the present time chiefly for those kinds of articles which you at least inferentially condemn - namely, current news and feature articles. We are also after short fiction and serials....

c. 'The Bookman,' in Manitoba Free Press (from 'A Reader's Notes' in the Free Press of Jan. 1, 1925): I have received a 'separate' of the Dalhousie Review, dealing with Canadian 'Neglect of the Light Essay.' I made some notes on this article after receiving the issue containing it.

Mr. Norris Hodgins is not alone in deploring the lack in Canada of the lighter essay like those of Montaigne, Lamb, Max Beerbohm, Robert Lynd, etc. In passing, I cannot help saying that Robert Lynd and other journalists, who turn out a light essay of sorts every week, ought to reject and select when they put these discourses into book form. No journalist, unless he be a wide scholar and a genius to boot, can turn out a high class essay every week. Lamb could have done it, and Montaigne, and the masters, but that is another story.

Mr. Hodgins surely cannot be in earnest when mentioning with appreciation a Canadian whose adventures in the essay are excruciating, so dull and flat and inane they are, though I believe they attempt to be humorous. He says truly that the now defunct "University Magazine" contained some excellent writing of that kind. It did, indeed, and its editor has published a rare good volume of "Essays in Puritanism." Why is that book never found on our bookshelves? And why, oh why, does not some Canadian publisher persuade or compel Professor Macnaughton to publish a baker's dozen or a score of his delightful essays and lectures and so enrich Canadian literature? Sir Andrew Macphail's "Essays in Politics" will not go in the catalogue as light essays, though they are capital reading. As for his "Essays in Fallacy," with their ridicule of the twentieth century woman, they are in that catalogue no matter how angry the women may be. Professor Leacock would, if he only looked to his syntax, I suppose be

first of Canadian light essayists. Mr. Hodgins thinks that if Lamb were alive today, he might find difficulty in marketing the "Dissertation on Roast Pig.".. Sir Andrew Macphail thinks that the only outlet today in Canada is through the pamphlet published by a local bookseller. He may be right. Well, far, far too many books of all sorts are published everywhere. There is material in our west for good literature, given the writers.

d. Editor, Montreal Gazette (an editorial, entitled 'The Light Essay', in the gazette of December 15, 1924):
We commend to the readers of The Gazette the very interesting article in our Book Week issue in which Mr. Norris Hodgins discusses the place of the light essay in Canadian literature. The writer complains that this commodity is not marketable. It is left to the junk yard, to the rains and rust. The point stressed is that this phase of literary craftsmanship is in our land practically ignored or conspicuous only by its absence. Whilst numerous books dealing with Canadian history, politics, industries, biography, etc., are put in evidence, the essay proper is a rara avis among the efforts made. And although the output of novels each year makes a creditable total, the brief, crisp, chatty essay which forms so delightful a feature of literature in Great Britain and France is not gleaned and sheafed upon these shores. It is treated as though it were an "undesirable" or alien to the Canadian mind. A collection of such essays in book form is a most unusual event in Canadian letters.

What is the reason for this? Can it be that we despise the day of small things? Are we content to grub along in old ruts, the slaves of conventional styles? Is it possible that aspirants to authorship deem such effort unworthy of their wits? Is the imagination dazzled by some grandiose notion of literary art such as blindfolds the eyes to the values of things within easy reach? Does the craving for doing big things, the avid search for bizarre incident and sensational episode, act like a mirror which reflects images even while it shuts off the living landscape? Have we amassed knowledge at the expense of blunting the soul? Is it worth while to become critics if we lose the wonder of life, the humanist touch? Why so out of touch with the gossip that enlivens every hamlet and makes the bond of human fellowship at the corner of every street?

One thing certain is that it is not for any lack of material. All life is literature, though all literature is not life. Nature is romantic in stars, not in fireworks; in crumbs and mice, not in monsters and thunderpeal. Science attains its climax in such trifles as soap-bubbles, a bit of chalk, the chemistry of a candle, a nest of ants, or the structure of snowflakes. Take up any list of essays called "classic." Are the topics exotic and remote? Ask the readers of Goldsmith, Lamb, Leigh Hunt or Gilbert White. On the spur of the moment we recall the names of Thoreau, Gail Hamilton, Dudley Warner, Grant Allen, Mabie, Burroughs, Muir; and of living essayists such as Holbrook Jackson, A.G.Gardiner,

and E.V. Lucas. We might mention many others, but the sum and substance of what they wrote can be expressed in one line from Whitman:

"I will take an egg from the robin's nest,
and preach to the world."

We are far from suggesting that any aspirant can become expert as the masters of classic style or emulate the genius of old Montaigne. But we may suggest that the lighter vein of essayist literature has its claims and any seeker for "local color" going round a Canadian farmstead may find the self-same opportunity to turn a rural stroll into a page of passion and apt delight as caused Montaigne to recite what "lay at the bottom of his mind," inspired Izaak Walton to catch up the "smell o'the wet earth," and moved Richard Jefferies to pen his prose poems upon such topics as "bits of oak bark" and the "speech of a starling." We do not here refer to those labored and erudite efforts that would fain make little fishes talk like whales. Johnsonian phrase is not easy to imitate. It is playful only in the same way as is Milton's mighty line:

"The elephant, to make them sport,
wreath'd his proboscis lithe."

And this great stroke is not required. It is enough if the essayist take up the mingled yarn of life and deftly touch upon its varied strands of good and ill, upon those humdrum gestures that make up the daily round and common task. It is certain that some of the best books in the world have enriched the romance of literature from a bundle of private letters never penned with a view to publication, and it is equally certain

that some of the richest books have been produced from the jewels that amateurs have flung into the dust-bin.

As for the style thereof, we may quote Montaigne himself. "It is a natural, simple and unaffected speech that I love, so written as it is spoken, and such upon paper as it is in the mouth, a pithy, sinewy, full, strong, compendious and material speech, not so delicate as it is vehement and piercing."

"In fine, the word is wisely fit
Which strikes the fence, the mark doth hit."

Such speech inweaves all human dialects and is confined to no one of them. It is the discourse, the native eloquence, the everlasting poetry of life. It halts upon the dress, manners, looks, gestures, foibles and fashions of our humanity as some merry brook songfully churns bubbles around the reeds and over the pebbles in its seaward course. And it fertilizes a vast landscape. The writer of the article alluded to opines that dependence upon a "foreign" market hampers the would-be Canadian essayist. We venture to demur to this verdict. We imagine that readers of the light essay do not bother their heads very much where the screed is born so long as it is cheerful, human, and strikes upon the common chord. Human nature has no insular limits. The field is the world. The literary commonwealth has its citizenship in all places under the sun. But the whole tone and trend of the article is commendable as showing that there is ample material and almost endless scope for the production of the light essay.