

# LITERATURE

THE DOUKHOBORS. By Joseph Elkington.

THIS most timely book is a positive treat.

In his visit to "the Douks," Mr. Elkington has learned their nature "from cellar to garret," and the result of his study is given with both style and ability.

He is a man who can see with the heart and imagination, as well as the brain. Throughout the work he handles the subject with good sense, sound reasoning, and practical wisdom. Every intelligent Canadian should read this book, for it lets clear daylight through a vexed question. The work is illustrated by maps, portraits, and some really remarkable photographs. The publishers are to be congratulated on its tasteful turn-out.

The three principal tenets of the Doukhobors are Internationalism, Communism, and Vegetarianism.

They style themselves as "The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood," and are banded together with the primary object of maintaining the principles of peace, and of love to all men. The author contends that this cannot be set aside as impracticable when the whole Christian Church kept it without violation for more than two centuries. Had their successors held to these doctrines, the history of Christianity would not have been written in the blood of their enemies, nor would we have the incongruity of Buddhists appealing to Christian priests to regard the teachings of the Prince of Peace who declared His kingdom was not of this world.

The line of argument running throughout this work is that the shortcomings, obstinacy, and fanaticism of this people are mental rather than moral, and will disappear when education is brought to bear upon them.

Already a most successful attempt has been made to educate the children, who are bright, receptive, and keen for work. The aim of the teachers is, and should be, not to attack their prevailing ideas and habits, but

rather to supplement them by something better.

Mr. Elkington gives us the very surprising and much appreciated information that only 20 per cent. of the Doukhobors took part in the late troublesome pilgrimage, and these were the victims of a religious fanatic who posed as a prophet, teaching that he had a revelation that the Lord would be found at Millwood, a little village on the banks of the Assiniboine. He also forbade his dupes the use of meat, saying that the living should not live on the living, "but," says the author, "they are not the first people who have been made the victims of false teaching through their ignorance of the Bible."

Much capital has been made out of the fact that the Doukhobor women performed the arduous work of harnessing themselves to the plough, but the author explains that this was entirely at their own suggestion. The women are greatly in the majority, as their fathers, sons, and husbands are in Siberian exile, so that much of the work must of necessity be borne by them. It was only when a few draft horses were available, and these were needed to haul logs from a great distance, so that homes might be built before the rigors of winter set in, that the women volunteered, with true Spartan fortitude, to break up the land. May Agnes Fitz-Gibbon, in her bright letters on these immigrants, in the *Toronto Globe*, has well said, "In days to come one of the Russian artists in their midst will paint a picture which will be a source of pride to the descendants of these women who shouldered this burden with the same steadfast courage with which they have borne many others."

We drop this book fully persuaded in the future of these refugees from the land of the Czar, for surely "a people who do not fight, or steal, or drink anything intoxicating, or smoke, or use profane language, or lie, have a character which will bring forth the best qualities of Christian citizenship."

By the way, Mr. Elkington tells us that