

New Books by Canadian Women



Miss Marjorie MacMurphy.

REVIEWED BY ESTELLE M. KERR
 THE WOMAN—BLESS HER

 THE WHITE COMRADE

 JESSIE ALEXANDER'S
 PLATFORM SKETCHES



Katherine Hale (Mrs. John W. Garvin).



Jessie Alexander (Mrs. Roberts).

THREE books lie on our office table: one fresh from the printers' hands, one that is still unbound, and one that has been on the market scarcely three weeks. "The Woman—Bless Her," by Marjorie MacMurphy, has already been welcomed with enthusiasm by the critics of our leading journals and is a real contribution to knowledge on a subject that is to our feminine minds of the utmost importance.

No woman can read this little volume without a feeling of self-consciousness, as if, among the glass cases of a museum of natural history, she came upon one containing a female of her own species, carefully stuffed, mounted, exposed to view and labelled. Miss MacMurphy has gathered together an amazing number of statistics. We learn, for instance, that over 80 per cent. of us marry, that two hundred and fifty thousand of us belong to national organizations; that three hundred and sixty thousand are in paid occupations! Then we are classified under various heads: The Business Woman, the College Woman, the Country Woman, and the Woman at Home, while the last chapter is devoted to Women and the War, with pertinent advice as to how we may become useful citizens.

CANADIAN women, Miss MacMurphy states, have a genius for organization, and such national societies as the National Council of Women, the Daughters of the Empire, Women's Institutes, Y. W. C. A.'s, etc., provide an intercommunication between provinces that is a genuine contribution to national life. Yet few of these organizations have made a study of the special business of women—the business of home-making and child-rearing. If women's organizations made the saving of infant life and the health of children their special care, infant mortality would be reduced fifty per cent. Neither do these organizations give much attention to the food supply, yet ten million dollars was spent last year, practically by women, in buying imported fresh fruits and vegetables! The business of the country can hardly prosper if women who yearly spend one billion of the total income of Canada, remain ignorant of the fact that their purchasing has an economic effect on the country. The main plea of the book is that home-making and child-rearing should be regarded as skilled occupations for which all women should receive definite training. (Published by S. B. Gundy, Toronto: Price, \$1.00.)

KATHERINE HALE, whose "Grey Knitting" met with such success last season, has brought out another little book, consisting chiefly of one long poem, "The White Comrade." In it a young soldier tells of his experiences from the outbreak of the war to the time when he lay wounded on the battlefield of Ypres and the White Comrade in the form of his dead friend came to his aid. There is some incongruity in the fact that a Canadian boy of the virile type that answered the first call to arms, should express himself in such vague, colourful language, should pay attention to the scenery, the "bourgeoning of springtime," than to the realities of battle, but it is a relief after all the grim horrors described in

recent war literature to read these delicately imaginative lines.

"So comes the Comrade White, down silent pain—
 He comes to woods and battlefields to-day,
 (Sometimes I think he loves the woods the best)
 And finds free souls flung skyward, glad to go
 Among the lonely and the pain-racked ones
 He comes—not death at all, but radiant life
 Comes in the eyes of comrades, lives in hearts
 That give all, taking nothing in return."

"I Used to Wear a Gown of Green" and four other short poems are included in this pretty blue booklet. (McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, Toronto: Price, 25 cents.)

I USED TO WEAR A GOWN OF GREEN

I used to wear a gown of green
 And sing a song of May,
 When apple blossoms starred the stream
 And Spring came up the way.

I used to run along with Love
 By lanes the world forgets,
 To find in an enchanted wood
 The first frail violets.

And ever 'mid the fairy blooms
 And murmur of the stream,
 We used to hear the pipes of Pan
 Call softly through our dream.

But now, in outcry vast, that tune
 Fades like some little star
 Lost in an anguished judgment day
 And scarlet flames of war.

What can it mean that Spring returns
 And purple violets bloom,
 Save that some gypsy flower may stray
 Beside his nameless tomb!

To pagan Earth her gown of green,
 Her elfin song to May—
 With all my soul I must go on
 Into the scarlet day.

JESSIE ALEXANDER is a figure of real importance in our National Canadian life. There are few of us who do not remember her contribution to our pleasure at some Sunday-school entertainment or a concert in a village school house or town hall. She has made repeated visits to nearly every town in Ontario, and her never-failing kindness, combined with a keen sense of humour, makes for her a host of friends wherever she goes. Universities, prisons, drawing rooms, hospitals, soldier-camps, churches, steamships, mining and lumber camps, opera houses, barns, porches, and "all out-doors," in turn, served her as auditoriums in Canada, England and the United States, and she says, "I have found people of all ranks and nationalities wonderfully alike in their sensibilities, just plain 'human.'" "Jessie Alexander's Platform Sketches, original and adapted," will be hailed with delight by the student of elocution. They make capital reading, too, and if you think her original sketches, such as "Friday, Bargain Day," or "An Irish Shillelagh," are lacking in literary merit, why you should just hear Jessie Alexander read them and then you will be convinced that they are masterpieces.

THE best part of the book is the Confidential Preface and Reminiscences, wherein she sketches her career from the time when, at the age of four, she made her initial bow to the public, up to the present day. She was always the "best reciter" in her room at school, and amongst her girlish recollections is one of a Collegiate teacher who fostered independent thought—Mr. Sam Hughes—now General Sir Sam Hughes.

"Even in those days 'Sam' loved to superintend an argument and to set pupils to sparring verbally to defend their individual opinions as to the meaning of phrases and the relation of words. In 'Young Lochinvar,' the line, 'One touch to her hand and one word in her ear' evoked the question, 'What verb would you supply in that line?' 'Gave,' was the general suggestion. 'Gave one word in her ear,' was the ironic comment. 'Gave and spoke,' came the amendment. 'Any other suggestion? Well, Jessie?' 'Whispered or breathed,' was my choice. 'He breathed one word in her ear.' The master laughed: 'Jessie has been there.' Jessie had not been there, but it is one of the privileges of dramatic instinct to know some things without having 'been there.'"

LATER came a period when she taught elocution, and amongst her pupils were Margaret Anglin, Carrie Scales (Caroline Miskel Hoyt), and several others who have achieved success in dramatic art, but teaching was abandoned in favour of a public career. Ontario towns with no theatres of their own and very few concert attractions, were eager for entertainment, and it was a joy to cater to such keen appetites.

"Concert halls were, in those days, deplorable places, the atmosphere varying from the icy blast of an unheated, draughty stage, to the inferno of a six-by-ten dressing-room, with its big box wood-stove,

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