

During the recent war Canadian literature developed out of all recognition. The first professional class of authors is rapidly forming and their work has received high commendation outside the country.

Literary awards have done much to stimulate good writing and the publicity given to winning books both here and in the United States, with the resulting good sales, has provided a further incentive.

The development of a representative Canadian literature was long delayed by the fact that Canadian authors until recent years had to depend largely on markets in Britain and the United States. To-day Canadian books enjoy a wide sale in their own country. This is encouraging the writing of biography and other non-fiction works. There is a growing export market for Canadian books, especially to England and the United States.

The Canadian Authors Association, established 25 years ago, has a current membership of almost 1,000.

French Publishing

In French publishing the development has practically all taken place since 1939. Before that time French books published in Canada consisted of school text books, religious books and some general literature by Canadian authors. Of the half dozen firms in French-speaking Canada only one, established in 1927, was a publishing firm in the strict sense of the word. The others printed Canadian books at the authors' expense and sometimes bought them later if they proved successful. Two or three old established firms, including one in Montreal which dates back to 1842 and one in Quebec which is still older, did most of the printing for which there was a steady demand--school and religious books.

Prior to 1940, books by French authors originally published in Europe could not be reproduced in Canada except by consent of the copyright owners, who showed no great interest in authorizing such reproductions. Consequently, French books of general literature had to be imported from France or Belgium. Imports included religious books, the French classics, fiction, technical and scientific books. The Roman Catholic Church was the chief buyer of books, for church and school libraries. The choice of books for individual buyers was limited by the fact that booksellers simply did not handle any book or type of book of which the Church disapproved. There were only five or six important booksellers in French Canada and by way of retail outlets perhaps 15 or 20 second hand stores. Booksellers would order from French publishers only the books for which there was a demand, and special orders placed by individual buyers would take several months to fill. The result was a poor sale of French books. About 200,000 titles were being imported before the war but the sale of each was often as small as 50 or 100 copies.

With the outbreak of World War II the picture changed. From 1940 when France and Belgium were occupied by the enemy the supply of books to Canada was cut off entirely. Booksellers and publishers were dismayed at the prospect of a book famine lasting perhaps for years. They were further alarmed at the tendency of French readers to turn to American books, which were given increasing publicity by French reviewers.

In 1940 French Canadian publishers approached the Government with a solution. Since France and Belgium were now in enemy hands the Berne convention governing copyright no longer applied. By virtue of Emergency Order, 1939, established under the War Measures Act, Canadian publishers were authorized to reproduce French books in this country with the imprint of the original publishing firm. An unobtrusive notice at the back of each book indicated that it had been printed and published in Canada in conformity with a licence granted under the Emergency War Measures Act