

Literary Notes

By Roderick Random.

British Columbians, especially Vancouver people, should read with interest and appreciation a novel, just published by Miss Muriel F. Watson, of the ambitious city on the north shore of Burrard Inlet. We understand that Miss Watson is no relation of Mr. Robert Watson, whose recent story, "Gordon of the Lost Lagoon," was recently reviewed in this magazine. The name of Miss Watson's book is "Fireweed," and the scene, as with the book just mentioned, is laid largely in or around Vancouver.

The story centres around the childhood, youth and young manhood of two girls and a boy, triplets born in British Columbia, but, while still very young, taken over by their mother to England and left to be reared and educated by their grandparents. Very pleasant reading is the account of their English home and their environment and the loving old couple, the curate of the parish and his wife, who have the formidable task of bringing them up. The result, however, is a complete success. The circumstances that finally take the one girl and her brother out to British Columbia again to investigate a bar sinister that has been laid upon their escutcheon, are startling and unusual, but the blot is in the end happily removed and allows the girl to marry the peer, who had already plighted troth with her.

The plot hinges somewhat on the drug traffic in British Columbia. It is rather disconnected at times, but forms a satisfactory enough framework for a first book that has much in the way of interesting characterization to commend it. The descriptions of British Columbia plant life and scenery are good, and the introductory poem, "Fireweed," is conceived with some imaginative charm and artistry. I shall quote the first two verses:

"From the heart of the low valleys, as the sun slips down to rest,
Beyond the mighty mountain walls that guard the shining West,
I look when day is over, to those heights of wreck and scar
Where the evening winds foregather and the purple Fireflowers are.

"With the splendour of an emperor's cloak they cast their flaming tide
Athwart the rocky shoulders and down the canyon side,
In clouds of glowing feather-seed and blossom, spire on spire,
Till the children, looking upward, cry, 'The peaks are all afire!'"

One of the heroines of the book writes verses, and she persuades her sister to attempt the muse also. The result is several poems, one of which deserves to rank with Mrs. Hunter Jackson's celebrated "Ode to An Expiring Frog," by which possibly it may have been inspired. It is not long, so I shall quote it:

"ON THE DEATH OF A SHEEP."

"O Sheepy Baa! O Sheepy Baa!
You're dead, you are! You're dead, you are!
You've gone to happy fields afar
To nibble turnips on a star,
Where every lamb has got its Ma!"

Canadian Book Week will be with us again in the first six days of December, and an effort will be made to direct attention to good literature, old and new, with especial notice of books written by writers of our own country, wherever these are of high quality. The plea is for a reasonable interest to be taken by the reading public in books written by Canadians. The flood of American literature that comes over the line is really a

menace to our individuality as a nation unless we can encourage our own talent and build up a virile and distinctive literature for ourselves.

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Wilson Macdonald's articles headed "A Canadian Viewpoint" in *The Daily Province* are well worth reading, even if one does not always agree with his contentions. Recently he has been reviewing Canadian anthologies,

a useful work if it is helpful in inducing others about to enter on this field of literary activity, to take a more serious view of their responsibility.

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The posthumous autobiography of Mark Twain, recently published, will be of great interest to admirers of one of the most picturesque and lovable figures in all literature. This was written by the great humorist in a discursive way, with no attempt at form or system, but one may be sure that it will be all the more delightful and distinctive because of that, coming from Mark Twain.

Canada's Book Week

By Stephen Golder, Hon. Sec. B. C. Section, Canadian Authors' Association.

The fourth annual Book Week will be held December 1st to 6th. This year it has been decided, after careful consideration, to change the name from Canadian Book Week to Canada Book Week. For three years the Canadian Authors' Association have put special emphasis on Canadian books, with the gratifying result that thousands of Canadians have awakened to the fact that we possess a national literature of some promise. It now seems desirable to widen the scope of our efforts, and to make more definite the underlying motive of encouraging the reading of good books, whether these are Canadian or otherwise.

In his recent address at Ottawa, Mr. John Buchan said some very flattering things about the character of Canadian poetry, fiction and history. He at the same time put a great deal of stress upon the fact that if Canadian or any other literature is to survive, the objective must always be quality rather than quantity. The Authors' Association endorses that statement wholeheartedly. In establishing Book Week, it has never been the object of the Association to urge Canadians to read Canadian books merely because they are Canadian books, irrespective of their quality.

What the Association wants is to ask readers to take the trouble to inform themselves as to what are worth-while books, and read them, whether they be Canadian or not, and when they find a Canadian book that comes within that class, to recognize and recommend it to others as the creditable work of a fellow-countryman.

"The Totem Poles in Stanley Park"

By Rev. John C. Goodfellow.

This little book, which is the official publication of The Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver, is dedicated to the surviving founders of that Association.

The book serves a two-fold purpose, as it explains the totem poles which have recently been placed in Vancouver's beautiful Stanley Park, as well as telling the reader something of the aims and objects of the Association which was responsible for their erection there.

"It is no easy task to interpret for the white man of to-day the strange relics of a vanishing race," says the author in his preface. That is indeed true, but the Rev. John C. Goodfellow has succeeded in this little volume in conveying to the reader a concise and definite idea of the meaning and uses of totemism; its origin and significance to those primitive peoples who made use of it.

The author explains the religious and social aspects of this "belief in guardian spirits," and describes the building of a totem pole even from the felling in crude manner of the chosen tree.

The British Columbia Section of the Canadian Authors' Association is this year endeavouring to follow out as far as possible the suggestions contained in Mr. Stead's letter of last year, viz.:

1. To arrange for speakers, both local and visiting, and to supply them on requisition to other co-operating committees.

2. To arrange with all clubs, such as Canadian, Rotary, Kiwanis, Gyro, Lions, and the various public and fraternal organizations to devote a meeting to the cause of Canadian literature, and to requisition suitable speakers for this purpose.

3. To enlist the co-operation of the clergy and of all church organizations.

4. To enlist the co-operation of all schools, parent-teachers' organizations, and educational institutions.

5. To interview all booksellers and insure Canadian books being featured during the week. To arrange for library lectures on Canadian authors, and to have on exhibition works of Canadian authors.

6. To enlist the good will and co-operation of the press, supply articles on Canadian literature and Canadian authors, and keep the press informed concerning local activities during the week.

7. To arrange with any broadcasting stations in the district to give special attention to Canadian literature during Book Week. Addresses by officials of the Association, or by local visiting authors of distinction, to be nightly features of the broadcasting service.

Several pages are devoted to the description of the poles erected in Stanley Park, with explanations of the strange characters carved thereon; while a chapter is given to the interesting old Indian canoe which was presented to the Association by Mrs. Jackson, of Harrison River, and which has also been given a resting place in the Park.

The little volume is well illustrated with interesting photographs, and an appropriate introduction, touching on Indian art, is contributed by Prof. Harlan I. Smith, the Dominion archaeologist.

The Association was honoured by the acceptance of a specially bound copy of the book by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales during his recent visit to Vancouver.

Artistically bound copies enclosed in greeting envelopes have been prepared for the Christmas season, and make charming gifts for friends at home or abroad, while the proceeds from the sale of these go to swell the fund which it is the intention of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association to devote to the erection of a complete model of an Indian village in Stanley Park.

S. G.