


Within The Sanctum



IT is a remarkable fact indeed that the novice or the person who labours without artistic instinct or aptitude to attain something in the realm of art almost invariably dislikes being led out from the meshes into which an over-fanciful enthusiasm has misguided, dislikes even to learn the prosaic lesson that a knowledge of the proper purposes and functions of tools and materials in any art or craft is of much more importance than the doubtful quest in ethereal regions after those uncertain, evasive, almost evanescent qualities that are cherished in the disguise of *Soul* and *Truth*. Doubtless to put *Soul* into work is a very gratifying accomplishment, but unfortunately some of us seem to be more soulful than soul-stirring. To glow with rapture at the birth of an *Idea* is a pardonable symptom, but unless the person who glows is trained and capable the result from an artistic standpoint will be a lamentable failure. Transmission of this quality, *Soul* (or, as painters sometimes say, *Spirit* or *Feeling*), is brought about spontaneously, and no amount of *Soul* or *Spirit* or *Feeling* will avail anything unless it is supported by the fundamental principles of the art in hand.

To letters this applies just as much as to any other branch of art. It applies with particular significance right here in Canada, because, after all is said and done, if *Truth* must come out, we have a good percentage of novices. We have also in the ranks of our writers many who have little or no artistic instinct or aptitude, whose writings reach the public simply because the authors are able

to insure the publishers against loss. Books are published in Canada, especially books of verse, that should never be printed. But there is amelioration in the fact that our Canadian publishers are not alone in this respect. Worse offenders can be found in Boston and New York, and to them some of our determined poets have had to resort. Nevertheless, we have by no means a clean slate in Canada, for frequently we find books of verse by persons who have had more commerce with the muse of finance than with the muse of poetry. We should not infer, however, that every book published at the author's own expense is an indication of unworthiness. Nor should we infer a reflection of discredit on the publisher. Some of the greatest literary successes have been results of publication on the full responsibility of the authors, but that does not alter the fact that some of our publishers degrade their imprints by permitting them to be placed on books that should never go to press. Thus the average of our literature is lowered simply because there is not in connection with all of our publishing houses a standard sufficiently rigid to keep out the writer who has more money than ability.

So we come again to the subject of literature itself in Canada. We have admitted doubt as to the possession of a national literature. Some critics profess uncertainty regarding a Canadian literature of any kind; some even go so far as to declare that we have none at all. Mr. Arnold Haultain has quite properly admitted that he does not know whether we have any or not. He has made an honest admission, commendably so,