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Ex-servicemen And The Liberal Arts

• ALL ACROSS the nation at the present time the Canadians who helped fight and win the war are obtaining discharges from their particular service and, taking advantage of the gratuities the country has awarded them, are registering at their local university for courses that lead to the granting of a professional

For some of these men this means only the picking up of their studies from where they left off, one, two, or even five or six years ago. A large percentage, however, are entering university for the first time, and included among them are many who, save for the country's offer to provide the necessary funds, would otherwise never have been able to afford advanced education. Great credit would certainly be due this Canadian democracy if this move to place the advantages of a university within the reach of her ex-servicemen be only perliminary to placing them within the reach of all her citizens able and willing to appreciate them.

While a few of the men coming back hope but to postpone the day when they must face the world alone, and, in the meantime, take a prolonged holiday at someone else's expense, the vast majority of them appear to be in deadly earnest. They are older, more mature, with more practical experience of this world than when they went away, and they are conscious of the years of normal living they have missed, of the opportunities they have lost, and of the opportunity they have now to qualify themselves for a position in life that will bring them financial security and the leisure to seek happiness. With grim determination they brace themselves for the coming struggle with books and examinations; and no one may blame them.

Because of the obvious scarcity of time they are taking every short cut available in bringing themselves up to the required standard. And the universities are co-operating, both by cutting down on the prerequisite education necessary for entrance into the professional faculties, and by eliminating some of the courses not absolutely essential to the maintenance of the technical standard of the particular profession. In many instances they are so overcrowded, and suffer from so acute a shortage of professors and facilities that they have no alternative. Both parties argue, and no doubt argue correctly, that these men are better off with a knowledge of law, medicine, or engineering and nothing else than with no knowledge at all.

The result has been a general snub of the liberal arts. And this snub is in keeping with the tendency of the past few years when the accent was upon those forms of education that produce what might almost be called "mechanically practical returns" within a short length

Some familiarity with the liberal arts, on the other hand, makes a man not merely a more successful lawyer, doctor, or engineer, but more than all these things together: it makes him a more successful human being. For the study of the liberal arts involves the study of life from the human viewpoint, how our greatest men have lived it, what our greatest thinkers have said about it, and the manner in which all our civilizations have struggled through it.

Many professional graduates can give a sound judgment on some problem that concerns only the particular field they have specialized in. But can they give a similar judgment on some problem of life? Can they even think reasonably upon such a problem? Yet frequently during their lives they will be called upon to do so. Because of the superior social positions they will occupy by right of their supposedly superior education they will be asked not only to make decisions for themselves but for all the other not so privileged persons about them.

The recent advances of science make it highly improbable that the structure of our civilization can survive another war. The recent increase in industry of organization, specialization, and mass production make it highly improbable that the democratic way of living for which we have fought so desperately and paid so dear a price can sustain another economic depression. Never more than now has the world needed a majority of successful human beings.

In order that these ex-service men may fully appreciate the precarious perch upon which their much sought for security rests, no matter what proficiency they personally may attain in some special line of endeavour, in order that they may effectively continue the struggle to preserve this security, let their opportunities to acquaint themselves with the liberal arts be not entirely eliminated.

BOOK REVIEW

The Distinguished Artistry of Jean Stafford

"BOSTON ADVENTURE" by Jean Stafford

(Harcourt, Brace & Co.) OIT IS NOT often difficult to distinguish a good book from a bad one, for the chief reason that bad books are rather obvious. Neither is it very difficult to review a bad book: since there is no book to speak of, there is no review to speak of. When, however, a reviewer is confronted with a first novel that is not only a good book, but perhaps even a great one, life then becomes very complicated.

There are, I suppose, two points of view from which to approach "Boston Adventure", both of which may, in part, be correct. The title is in itself a challenge to that part of Boston-the proud, rich, aristocratic section-which, in the words of the author, "begins somewhere on Beacon Hill and conludes abruptly with the end of Commonwealth Avenue." Although "Boston" in this sense is bound to debate the sociological accuracy of the portrait, it is, none the less, brilliant satire.

An Imaginative Experience

The other point of view, however, and probably the more accurate one, is to consider "Boston Adventure" as imaginative experience. As such it is the autobiography of a young girl, Sonia Marburg. Born in Chichester, a small fishing village outside Boston, of povertystricken immigrant parents, her earliest recollection was of the "golden blister" of the State House Dome, rising above the city in the

distance. Substituting for her beauty in the child's brief life and mother as chambermaid at the death, in his pathetic burial, and she secretly watched and admired Nathan Kadish. Her perverse ob- personality than sports or other one of the elderly guests, Miss session to touch the birthmark on extra-curricular activities. All Pride. Her attachment became an obsession in time, and her fondest wish from earliest childhood was that she herself might someday go to Boston with Miss Pride to live. The story is how her dream came true, and what the reality turned out to be.

Falls Into Two Selections

Unfortunately perhaps, since the transition is incomplete, the book falls into two sections - one of Sonia's life in Chichester, and the other of her life in Boston. Part One recounts the tense, emotional turmoil of her early life, aggravated by her mother's perpetual nagging, and her father's brooding sensitiveness. Discouraged, and driven beyond endurance, he deserts the family, after which the mother withdrew into a shell, refusing even to leave the house, or to admit anyone but Sonia.

Although the chapters are rather long, and sometimes even tiresome, there are yet passages of great strength and power - moments even of haunting beauty. There is. a strange horror in the mother's persecution of her infant son, born two or three months later, her hatred finding vent in the sadistic pleasure she derived in the child's periodic fits. Sonia's slow realization that her mother is gradually going insane is tense, concentrated emotion. There is a kind of quiet

summer resort hotel in the village, in Sonia's strange love for young his face—in site of being grotesque —is yet memorable and haunting.

> The second part, entitled "Pinckney Street", is concerned with Sonia's life in Boston with Miss Pride, and particularly her slow realization that beneath the outward decorum of Boston aristocratic society, there was yet an inward life of almost desperate futility. That, in essence, constitutes her adventure—the numbing discovery that the madness from which she thought she had escaped, the hollow, desperate futility and insecurity of her Chichester life, lay all around her still in the well-bred purlieus of Pinckney Street. Although brilliant for its satire and wit, its cool contempt, it lacks, however, the more powerful moments of the earlier part. The construction is more indefinite, as if portions had been cut away and the remainder joined awkwardly together.

Style Unique

Miss Stafford's style, which is curiously reminiscent of Proust, and sometimes even of Henry James, is yet unique and highly original. It is beautiful prose, quiet, restrained, and hauntingly suggestive.

There are, of course, flaws. But the book is bigger than its mistakes-much bigger. It is a brilliant achievement-a striking and

LETTERS to The Editor

The Editor, Dalhousie Gazette.

With the First issue of the Gazette, I should like to put forth the suggestion that the Dalhousie Band be reorganized this year. Much of the colour formerly present at our football games and other sports events was lost when the band became a war casualty. We have the instruments, and this year, with a greatly increased student enrolment, there should be no difficulty in finding suitable talent. This is one good way in which you new students can work towards a Gold "D", as well as have a lot of

By the time this letter is published, the Students' Council will have held its first meeting, and we hope to appoint at that meeting two students, one from the Council and one from the Student Body, who will act as organizers of the Band. The purpose of this letter is to ask all those who are interested in becoming members of the Band, to cooperate with this committee in every way possible, so that an early start may be made. Let's get behind this effort one hundred per cent.

> Respectfully yours, Laurence Sutherland, President. Students' Council

What Dalhousie Expects from You

• AROUND the campus this most important topic woud probably be a very unpopular one. Many students, from their conjectures of college professors would think the only answer to be a most disquieting one, one that they surmise to be something like "Study your fool heads off'. This is untrue.

Dal has a program for you, a program which has as its purpose the development of a well-rounded personality. What Dal expects of you is to try to follow this program. The prime function of college is (and as some students would probably add 'unfortunately') to educate. This thought should be foremost. 'Work before play' is, as are many other such sayings, well-meaning and with good philosophic content, but because they are so much overwrought, they are received with disinterestedness. This, nevertheless, is the motto Dal offers you.

"Well, what about the play" you are asking. That also Dal holds as a necessary part of its program. There are few things which can better develop the well-rounded work and no play very seldom fails to make Jack a dull boy. Dal expects you to try your hand at one sport at least, and to have at least one other extra-curricular

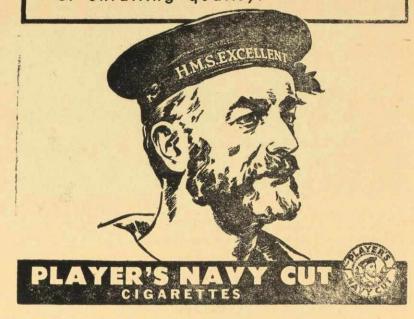
Some students, or perhaps professors, might try to belittle the importance of these other-thanstudy activities. The experience, the confidence, the social contact that these activities can give you are not to be under-rated. They are for success as are good examination marks; for success with society is important as well as success in the field you have chosen. In ten years, if John Jones is able to get along with people better than you, can you console yourself with the knowledge that you always made better marks than John did?

And so, dear Freshman and Freshette, we offer these few words of encouragement which we hope may decrease any bewilderment and confusion that might be yours. Dal helps those who help themselves. Sincerety and clarity of purpose are your duties; and it is the duty of Dal, with your cooperation, to help you fulfill that

original first novel. As one critic has written, "American letters have been enriched by a unique, vigorous, and remarkable artist."

-L. M. N.

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