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RECORD-BREAKING NOVELIST

By W. A. CRAICK

If one were asked to name the author, who had written the greatest number of novels about Canada, the answer would probably be, "Why, Ralph Connor, of course." But the Winnipeg clergyman by no means holds the record. There is a vigorous little Englishman over in London who has actually written and published sixteen novels, the setting of which is laid in Canada. And it has not been long-distance, imaginative writing, either, as one might expect, but the result of numerous personal visits to the Dominion.

G. B. Burgin, for that is this prolific author's name, first came to Canada as a young man, when, after acting as secretary to the Armenian Reform Commission, he contracted typhoid fever, and was sent to this side the Atlantic to convalesce. Ever since, Canada has had a fascination for him, and he likes nothing better than to board an ocean liner in June and cross to Quebec, whence he visits different parts of the country during the summer months. Like most writers, he had a struggle to get on his feet, but he eventually succeeded, his first long story being accepted for the Detroit Free Press by our own Canadian, Robert Barr, with whom he struck up a lasting friendship, and one which led to his receiving the appointment of sub-editor of The Idler when Barr launched that magazine in 1892.

Mr. Burgin has a remarkable output of novels. On March 7 his fortieth book was published, and he has already completed two more to appear later in the year. Then he is under contract to produce three novels in

1912. He has also written hundreds of short stories. All his work is characterized by a cheery optimism and a bright unforced humour. What is considered his best book, "The Shutters of Silence," had its origin in a visit to the Trappist Monastery at Oka in Quebec. The first night he attended evening service, and saw the procession of brown-robed monks file in; there were "good faces, wicked faces, morose faces, faces of dreamers, faces of men who suffered perpetual martyrdom, faces of angelic purity and sweetness, faces which were simply foolish, faces which had seen hell, faces which were still seeing it, faces which had no expression at all." Then bringing up the rear came the face of a boy of thirteen or so, ethereal in its beauty, but already covered with the mask of silence. Deeply moved by the spectacle of one so young already shut off from the world, Mr. Burgin made inquiries, and learned that the boy had been taken in as a foundling some years before, and might in due course take the final vows. In a flash the author saw the skeleton of his story, in which he takes the boy out of the monastery as he nears manhood and dumps him down in London society.

Mr. Burgin's other Canadian novels include "The Cattle Man," "Old Man's Marriage," "The Way Out," "A Wilful Woman," "The Land of Silence," "The Hermit of Bonneville," "The Marble City," "The Devil's Due," "The Only World," "The Belles of Vaudroy," "Fanuela," "A Simple Savage," "The King of Four Corners," "This Son of Adam," and "The Dance at Four Corners."

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Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Vol. 15, Wrong & Langton, University Press.

Nonsense Novels, Stephen Leacock, Publishers' Press.

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