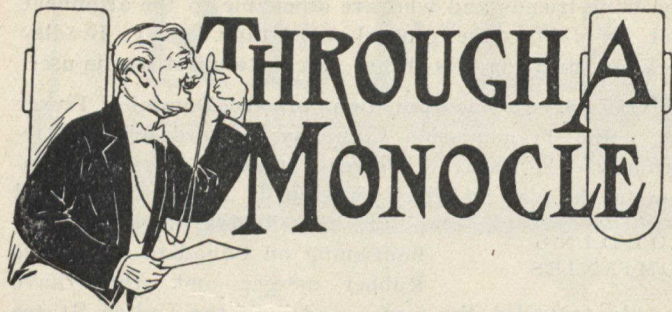




THE Monocle notices that one of your correspondents objects to what he calls my "defence of the Thaw stuff." He cannot "see a bit of interest in it for Canadians"; though it would have been interesting to us, in his opinion, if one of the parties concerned had been related to a Canadian. That is a very good test of interest, but a very poor test of morality. If the writer is merely objecting to "the Thaw stuff" on the ground that it is uninteresting to our people, his point is well taken; but if he thinks that it should not have been printed because it is bad for our people to read it, then its evil effect could hardly have been neutralised by the circumstances that White or Thaw had a second cousin living in Pugwash, N.B. On the ground of popular interest merely, I had rather trust the judgment of the newspaper editors than that of your correspondent. They think the people want to read the trial or they would not give it space; and it is their business to know what the people want to read.

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As to defending "the Thaw stuff," I would like to enter a plea of "not guilty" so far as I may have been imagined to defend or excuse the life it has revealed. It seems hardly necessary to say this; yet people are continually writing as if only those who approved of the life could possibly think that the report of the punishment of some who lead it, should be printed. The printing of it is, of course, a commercial transaction. Your correspondent does not want to read it, but very many do; and the papers print just as much of it as they think the greatest number of their readers want. They take a plebiscite on the question every day; and their circulation managers count the ballots. But what I should like to ask those who think that the press should ignore such a trial is how they would arrange otherwise for the wholesome publicity which such trials must have in the interests of justice? Would they be satisfied to have a court sit with closed doors and clear a millionaire murderer without any one knowing what the evidence had been?

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"M. J. G.," writing in his accustomed corner ("At Dodsley's," in the Montreal Gazette, remarked a week or two ago:—"One of the things for which those of an older generation pity those of the present, is that they have now no novelists." But haven't we? The older generation had a great galaxy of brilliant novelists which happily we can still call our own. They had Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Jane Austen, Kingsley, Trollope, Charles Reade, Lytton—not to exhaust the list. It is also true that a reader of these great artists who is over-persuaded by much advertising to pick up one of the "six best sellers"—chiefly in the departmental stores—feels very keenly that this generation is being fed on trash. But is that quite the whole case? In the first place, these people who are reading "best sellers" for the "thrills" they contain, are a class of people who read nothing bound in book form when the great novelists of the last age were at work. They are a new tidal wave of readers; and it is their numbers which have caused the record

sales of "yellow novels which are all plot and no style.

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Now this is not a bad thing. It is better that a woman should read Marie Corelli than that she should read nothing. She gets a great sense of being "literary" by enjoying the broad brush work of Hall Caine; and she never knows that he writes like an apprentice and makes up his plots with a box of blocks. But the man of taste is not left desolate. I have just been reading a book of short stories by Henry James; and there is no master of the old school who ever—in my opinion, whatever that may be worth—did a better piece of work. The portraiture is minute, exact, vivid, real. Every character in them lives. Then there is Mr. Howells. It is true that he is writing of a people who do not fare forth on any very dramatic adventures; but his "genre" pictures of American life are as convincing as those of any Dutch painter of the scenes that lay under his eye. Moreover, Mark Twain is a great novelist. People usually think of him as a humourist; but his "Tom Sawyer," his "Huckleberry Finn," and his other pictures of the life he knew, are as penetrating as salt air.

* * *

Robert Louis Stevenson is really of our generation, though death claimed him early; and I confess to preferring him to his countryman, Walter Scott. His canvasses were not so many or so large; but they are fully as fascinating. "Treasure Island" is a story which will hold any reader from ten to seventy. Mr. Hardy is also a novelist, surely. Many will think that he entered the forbidden fields in "Jude, the Obscure" and "Tess"; but were they not magnificent pieces of work? Then there are his Wessex novels in which one smells the hedgerows and the reek from the cottage fires. Kipling has written at least one great novel—"Kim." George Meredith has written several, if Jane Austen was a novelist. The late Frank Norris came very near writing a novel in "The Octopus." Then the lettered man of this generation has easy access to the writers in France, Germany and Italy; and some of them are as superior to the Anglo-Saxon output in the way of art as the work of the studios of Paris exceeds that of London and New York. I had thought to say something about our Canadian novelists, too; but that will have to be postponed, as I see the Editor getting out his "blue pencil."

The New Cabinet in B. C.

THE re-elected premier of British Columbia, Hon. Richard McBride, gathered his forces last week and on Monday, February 25, announced his cabinet. Mr. McBride takes the Chief Commissionership of Lands and Works, Mr. W. R. Ross of Fernie becomes, as is befitting a member from that district, the Minister of Mines; Mr. T. Taylor of Revelstoke is Provincial Secretary, Mr. R. G. Tatlow is Minister of Finance, and Mr. F. Fulton becomes Attorney-General. So the province of the farthest west has settled down to work once more, with the labour party somewhat disgruntled, but the average citizen more interested in development of new railways and mines than in the aftermath of a political struggle. The new appointments do not come as a matter of surprise, as the distribution of portfolios was fairly anticipated by the public.



All for Peace.

—N.Y. Life.