

**ARTHUR WENTWORTH HAMILTON EATON, M. A., D. C. L.**

By Mary Kinley Ing'ham

(From Sunday Leader)

In my recent article in the Sunday Leader entitled "Philosophers and Psychologists of Nova Scotia," I promised that I would summarize in later articles what eminent Nova Scotians have done in our field of scholarly endeavor. So many of our people have achieved distinction in poetry that I did not feel that I could do them adequate justice in one short monograph.

Before continuing the series, however, I wish to call the attention of Nova Scotians to the work of one really great living man of letters, Arthur Wentworth Eaton, M. A., D. C. L.

Dr. Eaton has made himself eminent as a priest and theologian, as a scholar in the broadest, most catholic meaning of the word, as a poet, as an historian and genealogist, as a teacher who writes and edits important text books, as a man with that rare but selective genius for friendship that draws to itself the best people in the best circles with the sure, straight attraction of gravity.

He has done many good things and he has done them all with distinction.

Dr. Eaton was born in Kentville, Kings County, Nova Scotia. Surely the Annapolis Valley is one of the loveliest places in Mother Nature's ample lap. The imagination of the young man was kindly but strongly matured there, and a passionate love for his native province was born that endures to this day.

As an example of his Nova Scotian sentiment I venture to quote from a personal letter:

"I am first, last, and always a Nova Scotian... I might keep on writing about Nova Scotia for many years more, if I had many years to write. The province stirs my imagination and compels my continued love. I know its remoteness, I know its limitations, but it has present charms and a history that gives it a high place in the regard of any lover of interesting localities."

Dr. Eaton's father was William Eaton, Esquire, at one time inspector of schools for his county, and at his death in 1893 an honored official in his town. His mother was Anna Augusta Willoughby Hamilton, a lady of interesting Scottish ancestry and of rare social charm.

As early as 1873 Dr. Eaton left Nova Scotia and has ever since been resident in the United States.

He was graduated from Harvard in 1880, in the same class with Theodore Roosevelt. In college he gave special attention to philosophy and the fine arts, but immediately after his graduation he began reading theology with vigor. Reviews of Dr. Eaton's life hint that this period was one of great mental and spiritual conflict, the Calvinist in his singularly yet very complex personality being at war with the Anglican.

Finally, he became a Broad Churchman of the delightful Charles Kingsley type, was ordained to the deaconate in 1884 and to the priesthood. For a year he was minister in the Parish of the Redeemer, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, and then he removed to New York.

Dr. Eaton made his home in bachelor lodgings in the most socially conservative section of New York City, the region near Washington Square. Then he prepared youths for Harvard and Yale, giving special attention to the teaching of English literature; there he studied and wrote, and there he gathered about him a distinguished coterie of literary friends.

He removed to Boston in 1907 and continues to reside there. While his time is devoted principally to literary work, he is always ready to exercise his functions as a priest of the Anglican Church. His address is 48 Pinckney Street, Boston.

It is not my purpose in this article to catalogue Dr. Eaton's many works in the various fields where he has used his pen so effectively, but to call attention to the most significant ones, and thus attempt to indicate the scope of the man's brilliant mind and great, loyal heart.

"The Heart of the Creeds: Historical Religion in the Light of Modern Thought," was the first important literary venture. This work, which has already passed

through several editions, was first published in 1888, and immediately established its author's fame. It was a "Broad Church" essay, or series of essays, that suited the temper of our rationally thinking times.

The subjects treated were: God, Man, Christ, The Creeds, The Bible, The Church, The Sacraments, The Liturgy, The Future Life. The book received high praise from leaders of modernistic religious thought and also from men who did not as a rule care much for theological writing, but were profoundly interested in literary style.

No less a critic than Edmund Clarence Stedman, meeting the author soon after having read the book said: "Eaton I seldom read books on theological topics, but I sat down to your book and never stopped reading it until I had read it through. Your views are so reasonable that I cannot help fully sympathizing with them—and where did you get such a beautiful English style?"

"The Heart of the Creeds" should be in every Nova Scotian home. The author had reacted greatly to all that parental training, Nature, wide reading, and his own deep spiritual vision had taught him concerning the eternal verities, and the result is a book that speaks alike to the mind and the heart.

"The Church of England in Nova Scotia and the Tory Clergy of the Revolution," published in 1891, is Dr. Eaton's greatest contribution to the subject of American ecclesiastical history. "The History of Kings County, Nova Scotia, Heart of the Acadian Land," is, I believe, unique among local histories by reason of its literary appeal. It can be read with interest by one who knows nothing about the locality as can Longfellow's "Evangeline", for by its large grasp of the local concerns it lifts them into the realm of the universe.

Such books as this give our province a priceless prestige in the world. It was published in 1910.

From 1915 to 1921, Dr. Eaton has published a series of monographs. "Sixteen Chapters in the History of Halifax," in "Americana," a noted historical magazine in the United States. We hope these will be published in book form and thus made available for wide distribution.

Dr. Eaton's tireless energy in the local history field has resulted in many biographical, genealogical and historical monographs, such as "The Nova Scotia Eatons," "The Berwick, Maine and Nova Scotia Hamiltons," "Bishop Charles Inglis and His Descendants," and "Alexander McNutt the Colonizer."

There are many others, but I mention those I consider the most significant. Of educational works he has published "Letter Writing: Its Ethics and Etiquette," "College Requirements in English," and

an edition of Pope's "Rape of the Lock". It is a delight to come to the discussion of Dr. Eaton's poetry. Poetry, I take it, is the distilled essence of a man's soul life, the kind of writing in which the author gives us the beauty of his personality.

I have on my desk as I write four volumes of Dr. Eaton's verse, "Acadian Legends and Lyrics", "Poems of the Christian Year", "Acadian Ballads", and "The Lotus of the Nile". The first of these was published in 1889, and from that time the author's place among poets has been secure. Not a single anthology of note has appeared in Canada or in the United States since that time but has given generous place to the poetry of Arthur Wentworth Hamilton Eaton. His subjects are various; "Sometimes I think the source of soul must be.

The Primal Beauty, we so quick respond To loveliness in earth and sky and sea—" is an excerpt from one of Dr. Eaton's poems that doubtless explains his facile genius. His poetic responses are so deep, so sure, that he can write on any subject whatever and endow it with beauty.

The striking events of Acadian history furnished him with many a theme. The intensity of his religious feeling finds august expression in his "Poems of the Christian Year". Perhaps he is right in estimating "The Lotus of the Nile and Other Poems" the best volume he has published of general verse.

I confess that nothing he has written stirs me more than that stately lyric "The Ancient Gods Are Dead". The hidden Titanic force in that poem make one wish that Dr. Eaton had conceived and written a great epic. I know he could have done so.

In selecting a quotation, however that will reveal the fine sensibility of this essentially poetic personality, I am compelled to take one quoted by Dr. James B. Wasson in his article on Dr. Eaton in the Canadian Magazine for August, 1907, entitled "Poet and Priest". The true spirit of a good man speaks here, as well as the poet sensitive to every loveliness: "When the still hour draws near that I must die,

I ask that in some western-windowed

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room,  
Where I can see the sunset, I may lie.

I love so well the blue and green and gold  
That fuse in liquid splendour, ere the  
gloom  
Of evening settles and the day grows cold.

A single rose I crave beside my bed,  
For I had once a bush of roses white,  
Whose fragrance through my deepest soul  
was shed.

Let someone skilled in friendship hold my  
hand,  
For all my life my peace has suffered  
blight  
If none were near me who could understand.

I want no weeping, but I ask a prayer  
That God would rob the evil I have done  
Of harmful power, and make my influence  
fair.

Then as my breath grows fainter, and my

eyes  
Dim to the last trace of the kindly sun,  
Kissing my forehead, say your last good-  
byes."

As Librarian of Acadia University, I have been fortunate in coming into personal relations with Dr. Eaton. He has visited us several times, and has been a most generous donor to our department of Canadiana. We are always impressed by his lofty patriotism, expressing itself when he is with us in a zeal for the culture of his native province, and for a chastened development of our people's historic sense.

Last autumn he lectured to us one Sunday afternoon in the Library on the importance of caring for all local records, especially old township books.

The cultured judgement of the world makes Arthur Wentworth Hamilton Eaton the greatest literary man Nova Scotia has produced since Judge Haliburton.

It is indeed well that we should give studios care to his work, and that we should receive his teaching.

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