

# CONCERNING BOOKS

## LAWYERS AND LITERATURE.

**M**R. JOHN W. GARVIN, designated as Editor-Author of "Canadian Poets," has sent us a lawyer's letter asking us to apologize for the publication of some opinions contained in an article, "Wanted, a Canadian Masefield," published in our literary section of March 10, 1917.

Mr. Garvin assumes that "Canadian Poets" is the work referred to in the article, and that the article was written by some one, who in all probability is known to the Editor, though his name was not signed thereto. But as the writer, so far as the reading public is concerned, is nameless in this instance, so he must remain for all purposes of explanation. No reader of the Canadian Courier would attribute the sentiments of an unsigned article to any but the Editor. It happens that the Editor did not read the article in question; therefore he did not endorse it. But as a matter of editorial usage, we assume that the Editor of the paper in whose literary section the above criticism appeared, is solely responsible for the article.

The Editor of the Canadian Courier does not endorse the statements referring to the work, "Canadian Poets," which he has not read. From what we know of the poets whose verses appear in the said anthology, and of the Editor-Author of the same, we should hesitate to apply any such language to such a work. But, of course, literary criticism exists. Every critic of a work is entitled to his opinions, and as long as said opinions do not constitute a libel on author, editor, or publisher, he is entitled to print them. We admit that the article contains forms of expression quite unsuited to the polite appreciation of any such respectable and artistic work. We can only account for these expressions by surmising that the writer gave vent to them in a fit of anti-poetics—which is now and then likely to happen to any of us. If the publisher will send us a copy of the said work—which he has not—we shall be glad to review the same in the light of its own internal evidence, unprejudiced by a word of criticism appearing in these columns, or construed by the Editor-Author into an attack upon "Canadian Poets."

## PALMER'S WAR SKETCHES.

**F**REDERICK PALMER'S "First Year of the Great War" established his reputation as a chronicler of the great events of the present war. Those who read that volume will be interested in the sequel "My Second Year of the War" (McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart), which has just come to hand. In reading it they will not be disappointed either. It is excellent matter even in a world already flooded with good war books.

His description of the change in the conditions at the front after his furlough in America is striking. He writes:

"In London, recruiting posters with their hectic urgings to the manhood of England to volunteer no longer blanketed the hoardings and the walls of private buildings. Conscription had come. Every able-bodied man must now serve at the command of the government. England seemed to have greater dignity. The war was wholly master of her proud individualism, which had stubbornly held to its faith that the man who fought best was he who chose to fight rather than he who was ordered to fight.

"There was a new Chief of Staff at the War Office, Sir William Robertson, who had served for seven years

as a private before he received his commission as an officer, singularly expressing in his career the character of the British system, which leaves open to merit the door at the head of a long stairway which calls for hard climbing. England believes in men and he had earned his way to the direction of the most enormous plant with the largest personnel which the British Empire had ever created.

"It was somewhat difficult for the caller to comprehend the full extent of the power and responsibility of this self-made leader at his desk in a great room overlooking Whitehall Place, for he had so simplified an organization that had been brought into being in two years that it seemed to run without any apparent effort on his part. The methods of men who have great authority interest us all. I had first seen Sir William at a desk in a little room of a house in a French town when his business was that of transport and supply for the British Expeditionary Force. Then he moved to a larger room in the same town, as Chief of Staff of the army in France. Now he had a still larger one and in London.

"I had heard much of his power of application, which had enabled him to master languages while he was gaining promotion step by step; but I found that the new Chief of Staff of the British Army was not 'such a fool as ever to overwork,' as one of his subordinates said, and no slave to long hours of drudgery at his desk.

"Besides his routine," said another subordinate, speaking of Sir William's method, "he has to do a great deal of thinking." This passing remark was most illuminating. Sir William had to think for the whole. He had trained others to carry out his plans, and as former head of the Staff College who had experience in every branch, he was supposed to know how each branch should be run.

"When I returned to the front, my first motor trip which took me along the lines of communication revealed the transformation, the more appreciable because of my absence, which the winter had wrought. The New Army had come into its own. And I had seen this New Army in the making. I had seen Kitchener's first hundred thousand at work on Salisbury Plain under old, retired drillmasters who, however eager, were hazy about modern tactics. The men under them had the spirit which will endure the drudgery of training. With time they must learn to be soldiers. More raw material, month by month, went into the hopper. The urgent call of the recruiting posters and the press had, in the earlier stages of the war, supplied all the volunteers which could be utilized. It took much longer to prepare equipment and facilities than to get men to enlist. New Army battalions which reached the front in August, 1915, had had their rifles only for a month. Before rifles could be manufactured rifle plants had to be constructed. As late as December, 1915, the United States were shipping only five thousand rifles a week to the British. Soldiers fully drilled in the manual of arms were waiting for the arms with which to fight; but once the supply of munitions from the new plants was started it soon became a flood.

"All winter the New Army battalions had been arriving in France. With them had come the complicated machinery which modern war requires. The staggering quantity of it was better proof than figures on the shipping list of the immense tonnage

which goes to sea under the British flag. The old life at the front, as we knew it, was no more. When I first saw the British Army in France it held seventeen miles of line. Only seventeen, but seventeen in the mire of Flanders, including the bulge of the Ypres salient.

"By the first of January, 1915, a large proportion of the officers and men of the original Expeditionary Force had perished. Reservists had come to take the vacant places. Officers and non-commissioned officers who survived had to direct a fighting army in the field and to train a new army at home. An offensive was out of the question. All that the force in the trenches could do was to hold. When the world wondered why it could not do more, those who knew the true state of affairs wondered how

it could be so much. With flesh and blood infantry held against double its own numbers supported by guns firing five times the number of British shells. The British could not confess their situation without giving encouragement to the Germans to press harder such attacks as those of the first and second battle of Ypres, which came perilously near succeeding.

"This little army would not admit the truth even in its own mind. With that casualness by which the Englishman conceals his emotions the surviving officers of battalions which had been battered for months in the trenches would speak of being top dog, now. While the world was thinking that the New Army would soon arrive to their assistance, they knew as only trained soldiers can know how

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