

A Collection of Canadiana

(By Margaret C. Cowie)

Here in the West we are at times slightly irritated by the Easterner's attitude when we draw his attention to something in which we take pride. "Oh, we had that in the East long ago," he says, and we feel an unholy desire to slap him!

Nevertheless, one of the smaller Vancouver schools possesses something which more than one Easterner has admitted he has not seen in Eastern schools. This is the Canadian Library possessed, and much loved, by Division 4, of the Aberdeen School on Burrard Street. Some years ago one of the staff realized that her pupils were leaving her class with some knowledge of authors of other nations, but absolutely ignorant that their own country had any writers of note. This condition of affairs seemed to require correction. So one day the children were told something of the life of that fascinating personage, Pauline Johnson, and one of the "Legends of Vancouver" was briefly sketched for them. The class listened enthralled, and at the end a little girl arose and offered the teacher five cents, saying "Couldn't we save up and buy the book?" On being told that they might, they hastily produced various coins, and in a few days possessed the desired volume and had a few cents left. "Let's get another book by a Canadian author; let's have a Canadian Library! Oh, please!" they begged, and thus the now well-known library was begun. Three small book-cases were presented, and later one was purchased. (Another is now needed.) The shelves contain over two hundred and fifty books, some of which were gifts; but the greater number were the purchases of the pupils. Nearly thirty volumes of poetry, including Bliss Carman's "Ballads and Lyrics" and "Later Poems," A. M. Stephen's "Rosary of Pan" (a gift from the author), Mrs. Mackay's "Shining Ship," Garvin's anthology "Canadian Poets," Charles Mair's "Tecumseh," and Arthur S. Bourinot's "Pattering Feet" are there; travel is represented by Agnes Deans Cameron's "The New North," Wilfred Campbell's "Canadian Lake Region," Burpee's "Among the Canadian Alps," and half a dozen others; twenty odd volumes of history, such as Canon Scott's "The Great War as I Saw It," Beckles Willson's "Canada" and Machar's "Stories of the British Empire," find a place; Peter McArthur's "Red Cow" and "In Pastures Green" are cheek by jowl with Mrs. Murphy's "Janey Canuck in the West;" there are a few volumes of biography; and a few bound copies of "The Canadian Magazine." By far the most numerous, of course, are

works of fiction, under which heading legends and folk-lore have also been classified. Here are Macmillan's beautiful "Canadian Fairy Tales" and "Canadian Wonder Tales;" Virna Sheard's "Golden Apple Tree," not easily obtainable on the Coast; volume after volume of animal stories by Roberts and Fraser; Mazo de la Roche's delightful "Explorers of the Dawn," the "Anne" books; rather unexpectedly perhaps, Hopkins Moorhouse's "Every Man for Himself;" Douglas Durkin's "The Lobstick Trail;" Stead's "Neighbors"—but why name more? Do you think that some of these could not possibly appeal to children? Ask their teacher what her experience has been, and hear her tell how she has watched her pupils turn from cheaply-written "boys and girls' series" to these books. There is no compulsion; no child ever takes a book unless he wants it, but many prefer stories written primarily for adults. There is not a volume in the Canadian Library that could bring harm to any child. Merely, all tastes are regarded when purchases are being made, and the pupils are left free to select what they wish from the shelves.

The class raises money by various means. For five years an annual concert was held; magazines are sold to second-hand bookstores and it is to be feared that illness in the home sometimes produces, instead of sympathy, the eager query, "Mayn't I have the medicine bottles to sell for the Canadian Library?" When a book has been bought, the class discuss what the next shall be. They watch the bookshops, and bring their suggestions to the teacher, who adds any she may have, and tells the class what the books deal with, and at what price they are obtainable. Then the list is voted on, and "saving up" for the chosen one begins.

Several authors have been good enough to address the children. Mrs. Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, Mrs. Winlow, Miss Colman, Dr. Fewster, Wilson Macdonald, A. M. Stephen, Evah MacKowan, Douglas Durkin, and Bliss Carman have been among these kind-hearted ones. No one who saw the shining young faces turned to such guests can doubt that the children appreciated the honor done them. In particular, Bliss Carman won all hearts. He may have audiences who understand his perfect art more completely, but he will never have a more loving or more appreciative one. Whatever the politicians may think, these children *know* who is the greatest man in Canada; it is Bliss Carman, and they don't want any argument about

it. Didn't he come and talk to them? Didn't they see for themselves?

A feature of this Canadian Library is the "picture-gallery" connected with it. An unusual thing for a library, you may say. Ah, but you should hear the proud owners talk about it! They love it almost as much as they do the Library itself. About thirty Canadian writers have presented their photographs; the teacher has had these framed, and they hang in a long row, low enough to be seen plainly even if one isn't very tall yet. Charles Mair's kindly face is there; Peter McArthur's; Mrs. Mackay's; Mrs. Winlow's; L. M. Montgomery's; Alan Sullivan's; Arthur Stringer's; Frank Packard's; Mrs. McClung's; Bliss Carman's; and there is a most fascinating portrait of Mazo de la Roche and "Bunty."

This Library is not a waste of school energy. Its effect on the English of the children is noticeable, and it is equally effective in forming literary taste. As a Canadianizing class-project, I doubt if it can be equalled; I am sure it cannot be surpassed.

Visitors who wish to view this collection of Canadiana are welcome after school hours, if they will notify the teacher of the date. She will also supply a copy of the library catalogue to those wishing one for reference purposes.

POETRY CONTEST \$25.00 CASH AND BOOK PRIZES

Owing to change in printing service the *British Columbia Monthly* has extended the time for closing the Poetry Contest to March 1st, 1927. To accede to requests sent in each contestant may send in two poems. Those who have sent in poems are entitled therefore to send a second poem to the contest. Nothing received after March 1st shall be considered. Results will be announced in the April issue of the magazine.

Poems may be from sonnet length to 72 lines, and must not have been previously published.

Only subscribers (or those sending in new subscriptions) to the *British Columbia Monthly* may enter. The editor cannot undertake to return poems or give criticisms.

Address poems to: Editor, Poetry Page, *B. C. Monthly*, 1100 Bute St., Vancouver, B. C., and mark envelope "Poetry Contest."

Write name and address at upper left hand corner of MSS.

(The magazine subscription is ONE DOLLAR A YEAR throughout Canada, and to any address in the United States or British Empire.)