

suggest that he doesn't write his own articles. But of course the same was said about Max Aitken in his first volume of *Canada in Flanders*, while Robertson Nicoll assures us in the *British Weekly* that Max was the real author.

Of course the boundless Belloc had, and has, his day. He had Germany beaten by mathematics two years ago. He is still engaged in proving why he was inaccurate and at the same time absolutely right.

He is not a circumstance to H. G. Wells, whose war works are in every paper that has the price. Twenty-odd years ago Wells began to get a reputation in this country as a sociological expert. That

sort of literature was new. Wells had what is termed a walk-over. He has lived to make good against all competitors. His war work is vast in extent, variegated in character, amazing in audacity, astounding in its casual inaccuracies, and altogether the most prolific and irrepressible thing that has come along to worry printers since 1914. Wells knows as much about the war from behind the front as any man. The war has given him a huge excuse to gather copy. Like a great bee, he is doing it. His sales are immense. The United States buys Wells in large lots. In this country we have not the price. But we have the taste.

United States and engaged in journalism. He does not appear to have been a conspicuous success at this; nevertheless he was all the time acquiring that vast and profound knowledge of English Literature and developing that exquisite literary style with which he was to enrich and delight the world.

In 1891 he went to Japan as correspondent for an American paper, but did not remain long in that capacity. The engagement was cancelled, and he became lecturer in English Literature in the University of Tokyo, where he delivered a series of lectures which are among the most remarkable criticisms of English poetry yet published. These lectures have just been issued by Dodd Mead & Co., New York, under the title "*Appreciations of Poetry*." The circumstances under which they were delivered, the students to whom they were addressed, may have been responsible for the thoroughness with which he analyzed the work of each poet and the simplicity of language in which he clothed his opinions. But this very thoroughness constitutes their highest value and this eloquent simplicity their greatest charm.

By way of illustration, let me quote the opening passages of his lecture on "Matthew Arnold as a Poet":

"For a number of years the prose work of Matthew Arnold has been considered to some degree as affording excellent models of English composition and his essays have been studied as class-texts all over the English-speaking world. I venture to say that this has been a mistake, and that the value of Matthew Arnold's essays has been greatly exaggerated in regard to the matter of style. Matthew Arnold's essays are very valuable indeed, in thought and instruction, but they are not great models of perfect English; they do not represent a vigorous nor a clear nor a concentrated style. It is quite different in regard to his poetry, which is not so well-known, but which is steadily growing in the estimation of the literary world.

"Now there are two ways of judging poetry. It is either great or not great by reason of its form or by reason of its thought. And I must tell you that the very greatest masters of form are not likely to be the very greatest masters of thought. Shakespeare, our greatest genius, is often very deficient in regard to form. The greatest of French poets, Victor Hugo, is a perfect master of form, and a very poor thinker; he is a magician, he is not a philosopher. The greatest of German poets and thinkers of his time, Goethe, a man who excelled in form and thought, said in his old age, that if he could begin his literary life again he would give all his attention to the thought, and waste very little time upon the form. Among modern English poets we may take the case of Browning and George Meredith as opposed to Rossetti and Swinburne. Swinburne is the greatest master of English verse that ever lived, but he is very unimportant as a thinker; there are only two or three of his poems in which we find a grand flash of thought. Rossetti was perhaps the very greatest of our emotional poets during the nineteenth century, and he was nearly as great a master of form as Swinburne; but Rossetti did not teach men to think new thoughts about the great problems of life. He hated science, and he was not, in the modern sense of the word, a philosopher. But Browning and Meredith are philosophers, great thinkers, great teachers—more especially Meredith. Neither of them was a master of form.

"I should like to be able to speak to you of some poet of our own day who is equally great as a thinker and as a verse-maker, but I cannot cite a single name. The nearest approach to such a person is Tennyson, but as a thinker Tennyson is much below Meredith. We have to take our choice in this world between two kinds of perfection in poetry which are seldom united in any one individual. In considering Matthew Arnold as a poet we must bear this in mind.

"For Arnold cannot be placed among the great masters of form. He is very uninteresting in regard to form. It is chiefly as a thinker that we must study him, as a thinker of a very peculiar kind. Not for a moment could we place him upon the same level as George Meredith. His value is not the value of an expositor of new ideas, but the value of the man himself, a personal value, a value of character."

Can you find anywhere a passage in which you get so many brief but exquisitely clear and just estimates of so many writers at once?

LORDS AND LITERATURE

LORDS and literature don't, as a rule, cohere very well. But the House of Lords has, nevertheless, a great deal to do with literature, oratory, science, and all those higher manifestations of the human intellect that have to do with the dictionary.

Just to mention a few:

Lord Tennyson, Lord Byron (poets), both dead. No other English poets of renown ever got to the Lords. Viscount Morley is an eminent man of letters. Viscount Bryce is another. Lord Chatham was a great orator. Lord Brougham was another. What novelists ever climbed to the peerage? None. Thackeray, Dickens and Scott were all plebs. Thomas Hardy, Hall Caine, H. G. Wells (living) all commoners. Kipling, Noyes, Masfield—all untitled.

We are moved to recall this because the second volume of *Canada in Flanders* has recently come to hand. It's quite as good a piece of literature and as noble a story as the first volume. The nobility and the literature both came from the facts of the case. They would have been there even if written by a school-boy, so long as the facts were told. Too much literary form might obscure the grandeur of the story.

The only objection a Canadian can urge against this book is the name of the author. It is a lasting pity that a book of such tremendous significance as a Canadian epic should not have on its title page the name of a Canadian as the author. The *Iliad*, story of the Greeks was Homer's. Suppose Virgil the Roman had written it? Or suppose Macbeth had been signed by a German author; or *Hiawatha* by an Italian; or *Les Misérables* by an Englishman? In all these cases the nationality of the writer had a great deal to do with the nationality of the subject.

Is it less so with *Canada in Flanders*? Surely this great Canadian epic, our greatest story of great Canadian deeds, not excepting those of Parkman or Parker, should have conferred its lustre upon a Canadian author. We do not, of course, pretend that Canada has produced any wizards of the pen. We are a young country. Most of our literary geniuses are probably unborn. But we have at least a dozen or so Canadians engaged in the business of writing, any one of whom would have been proud to attach his name to such a story and to have written it with all the regard for the great facts of the case displayed by the man who happens to be the author.

But no, it was thought better to entrust this work to—Lord Beaverbrook. The story of how Canadians fought and died in a foreign land must be told by one who is not a Canadian. We regret this. None of us would desire to see this young lord deprived of any just eminence in any field wherein he prefers to display his talents, whether in literature, politics or finance. We understand—as a matter of common gossip—that this very clever personage was in point of fact born in Canada; that he began life as the needy son of a minister with one year of academics at Dalhousie University; that he afterwards made a great deal of money and a tremendous reputation as a financier in Montreal; that he organized and lost a weekly paper known as the *Canadian Century*; that subsequently he went to England, where, without even the preliminary of a seat in a Canadian legislature, he plunged at once into politics.

But at all events, we know as a matter of fact that the young financier and politician from Mont-

real—Max Aitken, afterwards Sir Max—became a fast friend of Kipling. The intimacy seems to have borne fruit. Sir Max Aitken was given the task of being Eye-Witness with the Canadian troops. He was afterwards made Lord Beaverbrook, and as such naturally signs himself in his latest volume.



Alfred Noyes, poet, lectured in three Canadian cities week before last under the Canadian management of McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart. His lecture was largely a series of readings from his own works.

But, of course, the House of Lords is a high place to inhabit; and Canada may have been regarded as a good ladder of fame.

So it is. But we prefer to have those who climb into fame by the Canadian ladder—keep out of the House of Lords, which is not a Canadian institution, or remain in Canada.

ARE GREAT POETS GREAT THINKERS?

Lafcadio Hearn in his "Appreciations of Poetry" Raises This Question and Answers it

By WAYFARER

APPRECIATIONS OF POETRY. By Lafcadio Hearn. Dodd Mead & Co., N.Y.

Lafcadio Hearn was born of an Irish father and a Greek mother in one of the Ionian Islands, Leucadia (pronounced Lefcadio, whence his self-adopted name). His paternal uncle was a well-known member of that group of artists known as the Barbizon School. From him, therefore, he inherited his very artistic, though rather Bohemian tastes.

Like a good many men who achieved fame in later life he was not particularly brilliant at school and his education was of the most casual and desultory kind. When nineteen years of age he drifted across to the