

ROBERT E. KNOWLES' AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I WAS born in a very unpretentious way, and after a very hackneyed fashion, in a locality of Northern Ontario called Maxville, not exactly a place, but a conjunction of a blacksmith shop and a manse. From all I can learn there was no fitting celebration of my advent, my own apathy being shared by that portion of the world which was privileged to hear my opening remarks, neither they nor I having any premonition that I was yet to have a connection with the Fleming H. Revell Company.

The Old Manse I saw it last when I was two years



A New Canadian Novelist, Robert E. Knowles of Galt, author of *St. Cuthbert's*.

young—is still standing, they tell me, pressed into service as a barn by some sudden farmer who knew not what he did. There is, however, enough of it left to make an excellent shrine, and the door has been removed, which you may state to be a providential opening for the reverent feet of future generations. This interpretation was borne in upon me in a vision of the night, that luminous night which followed fast upon your request for the plans and specifications of my being.

I do not wish to boast, but my father and mother were both Irish, the one from Ballymena, the other from Cork. My father was a Presbyterian minister, a greatly gifted man, though those gifts were chiefly of the heart, their hall mark visible to eyes of love. He was very celebrated for a radius of four miles around the manse, his fame being of the centripetal sort, attaining its bloom within the manse. The legacy of his great character is to be equally divided among his children,

My mother's brilliance was of both heart and mind, probated now for forty years before a court unseen. Her nature exuded a separate fragrance to those who knew her, most separate to those who know her best. She was an invalid since my birth, and the benediction of her suffering has been upon us all. In our tender care of her we were brought very near to a Physician who both prompted and supplemented our poor ministry of love.

I have noted your special inquiry as to my age and its genial audacity came to me as a pleasant shock. Having reached the years at which adolescence is gone and convalescence not to be hoped for, I can best indulge my reticence and my candour by informing you that the centennial of my birth will be celebrated on the 30th March, 1968, which date you might request your readers to bequeath in tender trust to their intelligent posterity.

Since the aforesaid date, very little has happened except two cherub children and their mother, the subcontractors of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth God himself. The children's mother consented to share my path, as St. Cuthbert's tells, but three short weeks after our first acquaintance. The probation was brief, I grant, but I always did shrink from pain. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and mine was a malignant affection of the heart. We married in haste and will repent at leisure—much leisure, for it will take eternity.

The last of the aforesaid cherubs effected his arrival only two months ago, affecting a new departure at the same time, that of parental pedestrianism by night. His nature is of the nightingale sort—gales every night—and both his parents have contracted insomnia since he came. His sister is six and sedate, still orchestral when occasion demands, but not nocturnal like the other.

My education was accomplished at Queen's College, Kingston, and Manitoba College, Winnipeg, which institutions total only two, thus being fewer by three than the cities in which the impartial Homer first saw the light. This fewness will contribute to the peace of future ages.

My career in college was animated and varied, other fellows taking scholarships while I took fellowship alone. Others took prizes and medals, but I left the college, having taken little except my fling and my departure. I loved such midnight oil as had a genial glow, and many of my fellow students also contracted insomnia through my humble instrumentality. There are many traditions afloat concerning my college days, but most of them are now.

However, in spite of midnight oil, I stored away some little cargo below hatches and grew a bachelor's degree without nervous prostration.

When I entered the ministry, it surprised everybody except God and my mother. My call was of them both, and the unseen beckoning came when the music was at its height, like the arrest of the Ancient Mariner.

It was my mother who first took me on trials for license, and I was set apart by secret ordination. The minutes of this ceremony are carefully preserved, and I often read them over in the dark.

This ordination was confirmed by the Presbytery of Ottawa in 1891, and I held a church's helm in that city until 1898, calling at many ports the while, unloading many native commodities, chiefly mistakes, and taking aboard much experience in return. This proved lucrative, and nearly eight years ago I was called to more