

a generation ago, that Rev. Dr. C. W. Gordon, known the world over as Ralph Conner, wrote his first story, "Black Rock." At that time he still recalled vividly his own experiences as a young missionary preacher in the Canadian Rockies and took to fiction in order to stir up interest among church people in the east. He peddled his manuscript round to the two or three publishers in Toronto and to many in New York, but each and all failed to see any popular appeal in a story about a sky-pilot in a Rocky Mountain mining camp. Ultimately "Black Rock" was published by a little Toronto group made up of Dr. Gordon's personal friends, who were no doubt as surprised as he was when it became an immediate success. In fact so large a sale was achieved in Canada, and so favourable were the reviews far and wide, that the New York publishers awoke to the fact that they had made a decided mistake in judgment. Within a year some fifteen pirated editions of the story were published in the United States and Ralph Conner had become famous. Since then he has produced a story every other year, and, as every one knows, his books have sold by the million. No writer on this continent has had such a large or steady sale for his books. In England, Australia, South Africa and India his stories are to be found on every book-stall and many of his books have been translated into foreign languages, including Russian and Icelandic.

Now the significance of Ralph Conner as far as Canadian literature is concerned is two-fold: First, he opened up a new field in world fiction, the Canadian west, the broad land of prairie and mountain, where a young and vigorous people is building an inland empire; in the second place he opened a new era in Canadian authorship. Until the publication of "Black Rock" in 1897, no work of fiction by any Canadian writer attained a circulation of three thousand copies. And even after Ralph Conner had started on his meteoric career, there was little activity in the publishing business in Canada. The Canadian people were sceptical as to the quality of home-made fiction and there were comparatively few who were prepared to spend their money for poetry or history or any kind of book of the heavier sort if it came from the pen of a native-born. From the year 1885, when Charles G. D. Roberts published his first volume of verse, "Orion and other Poems," Canada has never been without poets who have sung melodiously of her romantic past and of her glories of lake and forest and stream. Some of these poets, Bliss Carman, William Wilfred Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott, Archibald Lampman, for example, have won international fame, but it is doubtful whether any of them ever sold more than one thousand copies of

any volume of his verse in his own country. Until within recent years a Canadian publisher would not dream of issuing a book of verse unless the cost was advanced by the poet.

About eighteen years ago, however, a new day dawned for Canadian authors. Several enterprising publishing firms sprang up in Toronto, a new interest seemed to have awakened in some sections of Canada in the work of our own makers of fiction and writers were pleasantly surprised to find that it was no longer necessary to bow down in the house of Rimmon, the Publisher, and beg him to accept a manuscript. A period of healthy rivalry had now set in and publishers found it necessary to approach the author of the reputation.

Many of Canada's ablest writers would have starved had it not been for the fact that they found a market abroad, either going to live in New York or London, or mailing their contributions to publishers. One of our most distinguished members, Sir Gilbert Parker, whose career as a maker of fiction has been almost coterminous with that of Ralph Conner, established himself in London, England, where, for some years, he was a member of the House of Commons. Charles G. D. Roberts remained for years in New York, but since the war has been living

in London. Such writers as Bliss Carman, Basil King, Arthur Stringer and Harvey O'Higgins have long been residents of the United States where they first made their mark. And every year Canada loses two or three able sons who find it to their financial advantage to go south to live under the eaves of the editors of the big American magazines. But the exodus is not nearly so great as it was even ten years ago, and during the last decade Canada has seen the rise of numerous writers, some of whom have been big sellers at home and abroad.

The activity of this Association has made the last five years very productive in a literary way. Both publishers and authors have taken heart of grace. A new interest in Canadiana has led to the publication of several anthologies of prose and verse. A most useful series of hand books entitled, "Makers of Canadian Literature," edited by Dr. Lorne Pierce, is in course of publication. The initial volumes of another very fine series of reprints of prose and poetry, "Master-works of Canadian Authors," edited by Mr. J. W. Garvin, have also been recently published. While poetry has held its own in the publishing lists, there has been a notable increase during the last five years in general works and in novels by Canadian authors. Last fall, for ex-

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