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LITERATURE IN CANADA.

THE FIRST OF TWO PAPERS.

By Robert Barr.

IN the May number of THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE there appeared an article by the editor entitled "The Strength and Weakness of Current Books." The article deals largely of Canada and its literature, and thus it is interesting to all of us who have an affection for Canada, especially as the subject is treated with illuminating restraint by Mr. Cooper.

As the matter is, strictly speaking, none of my business, I naturally desired to say something about it, but the year has grown several months older before I could snatch time from more pressing work than the delightful task of lecturing Canada, and even now I must treat this important theme with a haste and superficiality it does not deserve.

Canada, from its position on the map, its hardy climate, its grand natural scenery, its dramatic and stirring historical associations should be the Scotland of America. It should produce the great poets, which I believe it is actually doing, although I doubt if their books are selling in the Dominion. It should produce the great historical novelist; the Sir Walter Scott of the New World. Has the Sir Walter Scott of Canada appeared? And if so, is he unrecognized? If he has not yet come forward, what are the chances for his materialization?

If Scott came to Canada, to change W. T. Stead's phrase, how long would it be before he starved to death? It is towards the solution of these questions that the jumbling remarks which follow will be directed, although I do not guarantee to keep to the point, and reserve to myself the privilege of wandering all over the place if I want to. I have felt for some years that it would be desirable for a writing man to take upon himself the odium of telling the truth to Canada, as far as literature is concerned. It is so popular to be eulogistic, that the average man's address or article touching Canada, on literature and that sort of thing, has a tendency to strengthen the delusion, already too wide spread, that Canada is an intellectual country. For an excellent example of this fatal habit, turn to Mr. W. A. Fraser's address before the Press Association, published in the May number of THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE. The chief fault which I find in this address is that it embodies an underestimation of Canadian men and women writers, which is so typical of Canada itself.

Mr. Fraser is addressing a body of Canadian Pressmen, and one of the duties of a Canadian Pressman should be to foster Canadian literature. Does Canada possess a literary man or woman? Not so far as may be learned