



CANADA'S CRIME

SEVERAL European visitors, experts in social conditions—some of them labour leaders from the United Kingdom—have been telling us of late that our “slums” are very much worse than anything they have across the water. They say that hovels in which families live in Canada would be torn down by the Boards of Health in British cities. And I am quite prepared to believe it. The “slum” is a new evil with us; and we have just begun to fight it. Naturally, we lack both the “know how” and the assiduity. We have not come to death grips with it—we do not yet realize that we must strangle it or it will strangle us. The consequence is that we leave our “slums” pretty largely to the willingness of transient foreigners to be temporarily crowded in anyway, and the greed of native landlords who are quite willing to pick coins from the eyes of the dead. Such a combination automatically forms a murder club which it is hard to beat.

OF course, we will pay for our negligence. The carrying breeze blows over the filthiest “slum” toward the finest residence quarter; and “the little children of the rich” sicken and die of diseases which are bred in the festering bodies of the exploited poor. Epidemics will come from that source; and the man who would not take a day off to establish a civic government which would abolish the “slum” and absolutely prevent its further transplantation to our fresh soil, will take a sadder day off to attend the funeral of his best loved. From the beginning of time, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” has been a murderer’s question. And the punishment of murder is—well, the least terrible punishment is death. We are bound to be our brothers’ keepers. We cannot stand aside and permit the weak and the ignorant and the lacking in capacity to be ground into the muck of our great cities without ourselves finding the poison of the tragic mixture in our own veins.

A “SLUM” in Canada is an absolutely indefensible and unpardonable crime. Europe—you may say—was born with “slums.” The utter social, economic and political break-down of the Middle Ages crowded all but the strongest and best-equipped survivors into a dank cellar of pitiless and yet powerless communal anaemia. The Church did what it could—some few noble souls struggled ever to help their fellows—but society was a shattered and hardly self-conscious existence. Still, from the day when Europe began to try to gather her broken limbs up from amongst the wreck of ruthless barbarism and decadent classic civilization, it has steadily endeavoured to better the conditions of life for the disinherited. And it has wonderfully succeeded. Read any record of the state of the proletariat in Europe even two or three centuries ago, and contrast it with their condition to-day; and you will see an almost miraculous advance. Europe may have floundered in the muck and lived amidst conditions too terrible to describe; but it has long been mounting toward the sunshine.

CANADA, on the other hand, has plunged stupidly and viciously downward. Our forefathers knew no “slums.” They had poverty, but it was poverty with dignity and cleanliness, and even culture. It was poverty caused by the pitting of unequipped human endeavour against the wild force of an untamed Continent. It was not poverty that rotted men—it was poverty that spurred them on. The “slum” with us is a recent acquisition. How we got it is entirely, and appallingly, plain. We got it by permitting—by, in many cases, driving—people to live in wretched squalour in our large cities. They were at first people who were practically setting up only a temporary encampment in our midst. They had no notion that they would ever really live amidst such conditions; but, while they were getting a foot-hold and coming to understand the game as we play it, they would put up with anything. They simply sought to keep alive until they “found themselves” and got to earning money to rent a real home.

BUT we soon found that the existence of a “slum” in a city is a danger to the gilded dweller on its widest and proudest street. It becomes a per-

manent city of refuge for the native poor as well as the foreign “climbers”—and who dare say that his children will not be among the native poor? It is a place where a man can go to get his breath after a “knock-out” blow—where a family can go when their provider has suffered from this financial “knock-out”—and where people have an unhappy habit of staying when they fall down into it, instead of merely starting from there to climb up out of it. The “slum” has become—not a camping ground—but a permanent section of the city. It has its citizens—not merely transients. It breeds its children; and they grow up in a school of petty theft, prostitution and all the ugly methods of preying on the better-off. It has begun to punish us for our criminal negligence in allowing it to be.

AND what are we going to do about it? One of the favourite ways of fighting the “slum”

New Books and Their Authors

By “PAPERKNIFE”

THE Renouf Publishing Company, of Montreal, has issued an edition of “The Britannic Question.” The author is Richard Jebb. This book is a most important contribution to the naval discussion and embodies the views on imperialism of a man who is strongly opposed to centralism. Copies may be had from the publisher, at 25 McGill College Avenue, Montreal, or from the Literary Editor of the “Courier.” The price is forty cents, which includes postage.

“Stories of the British Empire,” by Agnes Maule Machar. This is a mighty attractive book for young people—of all ages. Miss Machar is a Canadian authoress of repute, and this last book will add to her popularity. The modern method of writing history is to write it in the form of biographies of the great men of the centuries, and Miss Machar has followed this idea. The book contains about thirty stories written around the lives of the important and epoch-making figures, such, for instance, as Boadicea, Alfred, King John, Wycliffe and Victoria. A feature of the book is in the form of a supplement which deals with the British and Canadian flags, showing how they have come to their present form.

The authoress of this book is a remarkable woman. This, her last work, has been produced when its writer has passed the seventieth milestone. Among the many books from the pen of Miss Machar are “Lays of the True North,” a volume which abounds in splendid historical poetry, and “For King and Country.” This latest book is sure to be well received. (Toronto: William Briggs. \$1.50 net.)

“The Story of Canada,” by E. L. Marsh. Everybody seems to be writing about Canada. Whether they do it because they are so entranced with the land of the Maple Leaf or whether the prospect of additional lucre—albeit filthy—lures them to put pen to paper I know not. But Miss Marsh, who is an Ontario writer, has written a very interesting little book which, while specially attractive to young readers, will find favour with older folk as well. Like Miss Machar’s book, the history lesson is woven round the lives of the outstanding men of the time. In this way, the author manages to feed the young people with history, while apparently offering them something much more interesting. I don’t know who originated this method, but I fancy it must have been a woman. A man wouldn’t have had the “savvy.” (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.)

“The Players,” by Sir William Magnay. This is a story of politics, play-acting, and people. It has a plot, which is worked out to a very nice and anything but probable conclusion. There isn’t very much to be said for this book. It may help one to pass away an hour when the afternoon is too hot and the brain is too sluggish for an ordinarily clever book. But that is its chief virtue. Sir William Magnay (who wants the reader to know he is a Knight) has written several stories of this kind before. They are all pretty much the same; indeed, the sameness is what annoys you. There is a hero who is everything he should be. That also applies, as a matter of course, to the heroine. The chief plotters are a scheming aunt, and a love-sick woman who is bizarre and weird (the female plotter always is), and a degenerate snob, who is—also as a

matter of course—poor and a “sport.” Many of the sentiments which the knight-author kindly makes his characters speak are drivel. Those that are anything else are as old as the hills. For the reader who likes this sort of book, it is the sort of book he likes—and that’s all that can be said. (Hodder and Stoughton, Toronto. \$1.25 net.)

One publishing house in Toronto, at any rate, seems to have developed a penchant for historical novels. The house is William Briggs, and the latest announcement concerns “The Loyalists of Massachusetts.” The author is James H. Stark. Mr. Stark has treated what he calls “The other side of the American Revolution.” Through considerable study and poking around in old-time garrets he ran across some early documents which have brought to light the facts that the forebears of these aristocratic families were not all that they have been claimed to be, since the majority of them were bred to trade and commerce and more than one were in the early days convicted of smuggling. The book gives a reason such as we in Canada have never before been possessed of for the action taken at the time by the United Empire Loyalists.

“The Chief of the Ranges,” Mr. H. A. Cody’s forthcoming novel from the same house, is based upon information gathered while in the Yukon. It concerns the struggles between two tribes of Indians in the northland for long years, coming down to modern days, even the early fifties. The Chilcat Indians, of the North Pacific Ocean, having defeated the Interior Indians in a bloody battle, kept them in cruel bondage. They robbed them of their furs, wives and daughters. The coming of the white men, who built a trading post, diverted the trade from the coast. This so aroused the Chilcats that they swept down and wiped the post out of existence.

“A Fool and His Money,” by George Barr McCutcheon. I remember the delight with which I first read “Brewster’s Millions,” possibly the book by this author which was widest in its appeal. The Graustark stories, though they had a great vogue, hardly seemed as readable as “Brewster’s Millions.” Put this latest work is one of the best efforts of Mr. McCutcheon. Latterly, his stories always centre round a castle. There is one in “A Fool and His Money.” John Bellamy Smart buys it, and finds he is harbouring unawares an American girl who divorced her husband, a European Count. Nor is the fair American alone; she has abducted her baby daughter, and consequently has to remain in seclusion. So she calmly takes possession of one wing of the old castle.

The story concerns itself with the course of true love, which ended up in the somewhat not-often-come-across-haven of the woman’s proposal. Mr. McCutcheon finds opportunity for satirical remarks as to international marriages, and other things. He is agile and nimble in his treatment of the story, which is vastly entertaining throughout.

One thing puzzles me, though. And that is the title of the book. The reader will find himself somewhat in the position of Miss Betsy Trotwood, who, addressing her nephew’s wife, Mrs. Copperfield, said, when she heard that the house was called “The Rookery”—“In Heaven’s name why Rookery?” Exactly! In McCutcheon’s name, why “A Fool and His Money”? (Toronto: William Briggs. \$1.25 net.)

THE MONOCLE MAN.