

Courier. I think that lately it has become one of the best little rags that I see, and I see a good many from all over. You get the kick into it all right—and I say this not as an occasional contributor, but in real appreciation. . . . Charles W. Stokes.

A Writer's Opinion

Editor, Canadian Courier:

Sir:—The article about Canadian short-story writers in a recent Courier (contributed, I presume, by Mr. Britton B. Cooke), interested me very much. I wish he would give us some more information along the same line. I have often wondered why I could always sell my Canadian tales so much more easily across the line than here in my native land.

I have sold probably one hundred short stories in the course of eight or nine years and received just about three times the amount for them in the United States than I could have here, but I would much prefer to take less and have my stuff appear in Canadian publications. Consulting with a number of friends who are also in the magazine game, I find that their experiences are similar to my own. As one of them says: "If I lay my scenes in some indefinite area anywhere between the north and south Poles, I can sell to any Canadian paper, but as surely as I try the patriotic dodge and work in prairie or foothill stuff my story here in Canada becomes a white elephant on my hands."

Aren't you sorry for us poor story writers? We cannot all move to New York, you see!

I'm sorry to see so many stories appearing in the Courier, which have for a setting New York City or London, England, especially when we Canadian writers are sitting up nights cooking up plots and studying Canadian "atmosphere," all to no avail apparently.

From 1913 to 1915, Mr. Cooper, who was then editor of your paper, accepted seven short stories of mine, the settings of which were all, I believe, laid in Canada. I don't think the circulation fell off any on that account though, but what in the world has happened to the good old Courier since those days?

Don't you think it is rather absurd to say that our land is split up into so many sections that what appeals to one cannot appeal to all, or words to that effect? Have not the United States also these same conditions—they have their Pacific-Coasters, their Middle-Westerners, their Southerners and their New Yorkers, yet they have room for Irvin Cobb and Corra Harris, who are Southern, as well as for Harry Leon Wilson and Kathleen Norris, who hail from California.

Will you kindly ask Paperknife to further elucidate this problem soon? Selling Canadian stories here, seems to me to be somewhat like climbing a greased pole.

I am going to write a story soon and lay all the scenes in Berlin, Germany (of which I know next to nothing), and I will wager you a pair of kid gloves that I'll sell that yarn right off the bat, while a sister tale which shall be all about pine trees and rolling prairie and the Maple Leaf Forever will go begging around the various Toronto magazine offices, until I am obliged to try little old New York as a final resort.

But I am not going to quit writing Canadian stories—not if I land in the poor house as a result of my pig-headedness, or patriotism, call it what you will.

Yours very truly,

AUTHOR,
Melville, Sask.

Unappreciative Canadian Editors

Dear Paperknife:—Your article in the "Courier" of the issue of Dec. 9th, on "Our Short Story Writers," attracted my attention.

That young American editor's remarks, "Why don't you publish Canadian Short Stories?" has been the question we have all asked for years, and "Why Canadian Short Story Writers have failed to get into Canadian magazines?"

We would prefer writing for Canadian magazines, but we meet with so many discouragements. Our stories are returned, "respectfully declined." One time out of ten our stories are retained, and after considerable time has elapsed the editor acknowledges its receipt and the writer is informed that when it is published a cheque will be forwarded.

The writer received a letter to-day from the Literary Editor of one of the largest pictorial magazines in New York City. The manuscript was sent on the 16th October. We concluded to write to find out the cause of delay, and this is the reply: "Article will appear in one of the Spring numbers." In the meantime the writer may be starving.

Why should a short story writer be thus imposed upon? In the commercial world an article is paid for when purchased, not after it has been used. It is the pay that the writer needs.

I know a Canadian writer who was bold enough to compete for a prize offered in a magazine published in the United States on agriculture and horticulture, the article to be illustrated. The Canadian, though living in this great North Land, captured the second prize. We believe the Canadian writer is quite capable of competing successfully with any of the writers of the United States and on any subject.

We would like to see the Canadian Courier and other Canadian magazines ask for the kind of stories they would prefer. Offer some good prizes, and find out by this method who your Canadian writers are

and encourage them to write for Canadian periodicals.

We believe that there are numerous Canadian writers, and if encouraged they could write on any subject. Let the writers know that you wish some first class literary productions and pay for them and they will cease sending "Ontario back-woods stories, Toronto business episodes, Nova Scotia yarns, moose-hunting in New Brunswick, salmon fishing or goat shooting in British Columbia." We do not believe that statement that we have not achieved in Canada a Canadian consciousness. A consciousness is the knowledge of sensations and mental operations, or of what passes in one's mind; the act of the mind which makes known an internal object.

I would infer that you leave the impression that Canadian Short Story Writers do not possess the faculty or power of knowing one's own thoughts, or of being capable of strong mental operations.

Is this true of all the profession in Canada? Is the Short Story Writer the only individual in Canada deficient in consciousness? Has the Canadian teacher, preacher or physician failed too to achieve a Canadian consciousness? We are firm in the belief that



THE LATE RICHARD HARDING DAVIS.

Not since the days of Joaquin Miller with his sombrero and white corduroy jacket, says the New York Times, has the world known a figure more colourful than this cavalier of the pen. A complete edition of Richard Harding Davis's novels and stories has just been brought out in 12 volumes by Charles Scribner's Sons; illustrated by frontispiece drawings from Gibson, Appleton Clark, Christy, Morgan and others.

there are no failures. We fear that our Canadian Short Story Writers have not been properly recognized or appreciated by our Canadian Editors. Why should we be compelled to find a market for these productions in the United States? The United States editors appear to appreciate Canadian productions.

It appears to us that the following statement is without foundation, "Our ability or no ability to produce short stories in Canada has a good deal to do with our natural state of mind. The Short Story is a direct expression of a highly concentrated mental development."

Is it true that Canadians do not attain that "highly

concentrated mental development" necessary to the production of Short Stories? Canadians appear to possess a "highly concentrated mental development" along other lines of mental achievement. Canada has great orators, educators, artists, engineers, inventors, in fact, Canadians appear to excel in all professions and are able to stand shoulder to shoulder in mental development and attainment with any of the highly civilized nations. Why are the Canadian Short Story Writers the only deficient ones?

We appreciate the following admission, "Yet, strange to say, some of the best American Short Story Writers are Canadians." Did the Canadian writer have to go to the United States in order to become "one of the best"? He was evidently a good Short Story Writer before he left Canada. It was the United States editors who discovered him and helped to make him "one of the best."

In your article you have answered their question. Here is the secret: "The greatest market in the world for Short Stories to-day is in the American Market." The correct expression would be: "In the Markets of the United States."

No one will sell wheat in Toronto for \$1.00 per bushel, and the buyer takes it because it is an accommodation to do so, but you prefer to sell in New York for \$2.00 per bushel, and a score of dealers are after you for it.

There is no use to attempt to achieve in Canada a Canadian consciousness or strive for a more highly concentrated mental development. The writers of Canada possess these attainments, and it is recognition and a market which they desire for their product.—R. A. Burris, Port Arthur, Ont.

And in Reply - - -

Editor, Courier: Sir,—To "Author" and to Mr. Burris, who differ with my conclusions in the short article on Our Short Story Writers, I can only repeat my main statement, i.e., that a group of eight million people can only with great difficulty compete in the production of short stories when they are faced, as Canada is faced, with two older and stronger groups using the same language and having very little in the intellectual way to distinguish them from the Canadian group. If there were a separate Canadian language, as distinct from other languages as Russian is from Chinese, or Japanese from French, the situation might be very different. Granted a language of its own and some sort of permanent area of its own, almost any group of human beings (except mere aborigines) might be expected to produce literature of its own.

But we Canadians are handicapped in two ways. First, the demand for Canadian short stories is cut down by the fact that the larger English-speaking groups (the United States and Great Britain), have a larger population, a larger magazine-reading public, a larger leisure class (and therefore a larger class of persons with the time and inclination to study, to criticize, and to attempt to write short stories), and larger and richer publications. These publications, circulating freely in Canada, tend to satisfy the Canadian demand for fiction before the Canadian supply is developed. In fact, the productions of the United States and England have taught Canadians to expect the highest class of short-story writing, to the great disadvantage of young Canadian writers who, if they were writing in a Canadian language for Canadians only, and if they were not being continually contrasted with English and American writers, would in time become the props of a national literature. The second point I had in mind is the fact that Canadian PRODUCTION of short stories is bound to be small because we are still pioneers and our chief energies must be directed toward practical everyday problems. We have not any large number of leisured people and we cannot claim that life here is reflected as intensely as in the larger centres of England and the United States. There have been, and there will continue to be good Canadian short stories. More will be produced from year to year.

In the American market there are big rewards and intense competition. Until we have those conditions here we cannot hope for a steady output of good Canadian stories. Of course I am not saying the American short story is good literature—that is another question. I am speaking of the short story as a commercial article.

B. B. C.

"Billy" is a Good Canadian

ONE of the happy effects of the war is that upon the mentality of the lads who are for the first time able to visit the old world and to look back on Canada in contrast, and another happy effect is the possibility of good Canadian books cropping up out of the experiences of these men.

We have had occasion to review in these columns "A Sunny Subaltern—Billy's Letters from Flanders." Since then, by special inquiry we have learned that they are REAL letters, not manufactured, and that Billy is a real young Canadian lieutenant now recovering from serious wounds in London. Not only are we glad to know that Billy is a real Canadian and