



more concerned with the verdict of history than with present applause (though he did not despise applause), and he could cherish the thought that he had solved a problem even though the world and the voters were not aware that he had. He kept a detailed diary and in its wartime chapters, just made public, he credits himself with preventing disaster over the conscription issue. "It interested me immensely to think of my being there as Prime Minister and knowing that it was literally true that but for the part I played there would have been civil war."

His death inspired a poem by F. R. Scott, which said in part:

"Truly he will be remembered

Wherever men honour ingenuity,

Ambiguity, inactivity, and political longevity."

Granatstein is kinder than Scott. He observes that Canadians emerged from the war with a feeling that they had the resources and the ability to provide a good life and that the government was a positive factor in their lives. "To say that Mackenzie King led this shift in public perception towards a new reality is not too strong a claim. For all his caution, he had a clear idea of the direction he wanted Canada to follow, of what he wanted to prevent. . . . His greatest talent was for sniffing the wind."

## A Triumphant Third

*World of Wonders*. Robertson Davies. MacMillan of Canada, \$10.95, (published in the US by Viking Press).

Few writers write great novels and fewer write great trilogies. Robertson Davies, having twice done the former, has now done both. *World of Wonders* follows *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore* and as improbable as it may seem, it is of the same excellence. It is a book which causes the addicted reader to almost swoon in anticipation and then to revel once more in Davies' infinite, intricate charm.

His charm is manifold. He writes with lucid-



ity and his tales roll along in great waves of domestic drama set against a perceptive backdrop of the world (Canada, England and Switzerland). They are also—and this is his most difficult and successful venture—of a great and persuasive psychological complexity. His extraordinary people do extraordinary things for what always seem profoundly right reasons.

The trilogy is not sequential—each book covers much of the same time span, and all revolve around the lives of three men born in the same Canadian village. Each emphasizes in its own fashion the same particular occasion, the sudden death of "Boy" Staunton. Each has its polished perfection and is a vital part of the whole. Each is a tale of the contrasting romantic, tragic, sexual, fiscal, emotional and metaphysical adventures of: Dunstan Ramsay, a scholar, hagiographer, war hero and school master; "Boy" Staunton, the rich boy and adult tycoon, philanderer and public man, and Magnus Eisengrim (who was born Paul Dempster of a mad mother), the greatest magician of the twentieth century. The women are mostly off-stage, except for one, Liesl Vitzlipützli, who is one of the marvels of modern fiction.

The books are much, much more than well told stories. They are mysteries in both the mundane and the profound senses; they are philosophical essays of a very high order, and they are marvelously and evocatively Canadian.

## Hop, Skip and Splash

*Stepping Stones*. Jamie Brown. Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, \$7.95.

Jamie Brown, author of *Stepping Stones*, believes he has written the first third of a trilogy when in fact he has written the first third of a novel. It is a good effort, almost. At the risk of being confusingly arithmetical, the first two-thirds are very good, the last third is perfunctory.

Mr. Brown, judging from the picture and biog-