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Our Lack of Good Biographies.

In another column on this page "I. N. S." deals with E. K. BROWN's pen sketch of Prime Minister KING in *Harper's Magazine*. This sketch, it is clear, is more than the sort of "profile" that facile journalists dish up for unwary readers. E. K. BROWN, a Harvard professor, succeeded L. W. BROCKINGTON in Mr. KING's inner secretariat, worked close to him for three months, evidently probed deep into the character that baffles many Canadians. It makes one wish that some day Mr. BROWN will take time off from his professional chores, arm himself with the necessary materials, and present Mr. KING to us in a good full length biography.

Oddly enough, there have been very few good Canadian biographies. Sir JOSEPH POPE's life of Sir JOHN MACDONALD was authoritative; is a fine work of reference; but think of what a Lytton Strachey or an Andre Maurois or a Philip Guedalla could have done with that romantic figure! And so with Sir WILFRID LAURIER. SKELTON's biography gave us LAURIER's achievements, but not the man LAURIER; was inferior in that respect to JOHN W. DAFOE's monograph, and inferior to the earlier work of WILLISON. In many respects, indeed, WILLISON's "Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party" remains the best bit of biographical writing that we have in Canada. It was great because WILLISON had the journalist's sense of drama, plus the advantage of having known LAURIER and the chief figures around him through many years in the Press Gallery and as editor. Unfortunately, WILLISON died before he could give us a third and last volume on Sir WILFRID's closing years.

No one has even attempted a biography of EDWARD BLAKE, that figure, towering, cold, aloof, who was at once one of the greatest of our intellects and personalities. In WILLISON we see something of him, holding the House of Commons in awe of his legal learning, matched only by Sir JOHN THOMPSON in his erudition, thundering his jeremiads against the policies of MACDONALD. Yet no one has told of the man who went to Ireland and Westminster to fight the battle of Home Rule; whose cross-examination of Dr. JAMESON (of the Jameson raid) before a House of Commons committee remains one of the great documents of the British Parliament; and of whom Historian JUSTIN McCARTHY said that he was "ashamed to lead a party which contains such an intellect".

We are yet without a biography of Sir ROBERT BORDEN. Sir ROBERT himself left us his "Memoirs"; but they were little more than a chronological record of his parliamentary and Great War experiences, closed when he retired from public life in 1921. Somewhere there must be an abundance of material, sheafs of letters and memoranda, revealing BORDEN the man; revealing what he thought of the men and events that came after him—what he thought of the clouds that shadowed the world in his falling daylight.

There will be those to say, of course, that biographies are not important. As sensibly might they say that history isn't important: because biography is a part of history, and it is from the lives of its great men that a people take the wine of their inspiration—weave into their character the best things from their memories and milestones.

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