

"My land is a woman who knows
Not the heart at her breast.
All her quests
Have been gold,
All her joys, all her woes
With the thin yellow leaf are enrolled;
And here is my grief that no longer she cares
For the tumult that crowds in a rune,
When the white curving throat of a cataract bares
In a song to the high floating moon.
I am Caneo,
The poet she loves not, grown bold."

In this country of ours, we have the essentials for a great literature, romantic scenery highly diversified and a population drawn from numerous nationalities presenting a veritable mine of picturesque material for the novelist or poet who is able to treat it with inspiration and informing power. Let the reading public, then see to it that they encourage their own writers and let these make the most of their heritage and beware lest they dissipate it wantonly by dallying with the harlotry of literary slovenliness and commercialism.

ROBERT WATSON'S NEW BOOK, "The Girl of O.K. Valley"

Certain reviewers have set a standard of their own by which to measure the work of Canadian writers and the present seems to be a timely occasion in which to suggest that after all there are various forms of the story telling art of which one is that simpler form of story which is written for mental relaxation and entertainment.

It hardly seems fair to examine such a book and discuss it from the standard of high intellectualism, neither is it quite just to establish certain boundaries within which an author because he is a Canadian, must work. One wonders why the business of entertaining Canadians should be left to strangers and nothing left to our national literary workers but the provision of literature to be buried in drab-covered magazines or left to lie gathering dust on a library shelf.

The foregoing is called forth by the reading of a review of the book we are now considering, in which the critic seems to disapprove of the work for the reasons aforementioned.

Now, if Mr. Watson were asked to reveal his purpose in writing this story he would probably say something very much like this:

"I wrote the 'Girl of O.K. Valley' to entertain those who look to books to furnish relief from life's hard lesson time. It is a playbook. A book for the fireside. I cannot pretend that it is a metaphysical puzzle miscalled a novel, nor a problem in psychology with a fiction wrapper on it. It pleased me to try and provide entertainment, for that great crowd of people who are not interested in 'literature' as prescribed for them by those who have the leisure and inclination to satisfy a finer taste."

This imaginary statement is based on the fact that the author has provided his readers with a straightforward romance after the style which interests the average reader. The scene is laid in our own Okanagan Valley but the characters are types which would fit into other surroundings and are reminiscent of other days.

The school teacher is as chivalrous and high-minded as any knight of old while the heroine is gentle, gracious and beautiful as any lady of the brave days. These two are the victims of slanderous tongues and suffer unjustly through the spiteful machinations of a passionate jealous woman who burdens her innocent relative with the shame of her own guilt. It is not our intention to spoil the narrative by revealing the nature of the plot or dealing with its many points of interest. Suffice it to say that here is fictional fare served in appetising style.

By way of criticism, there is this one thing to say; the author does not seem to have dealt quite fairly by the unfortunate woman, Mrs. Jackson, the wife of the hard, sullen Colin Jackson.

—Tim Wise.



ROBERT WATSON,
Western Canadian Novelist.

Robert Watson was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1882, his father and mother being natives of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire. The youngest of a family of fourteen, he spent the first twenty-four years of his life in and around "the dull, sea-girt city of the North." Educated in Pollok Academy and Shawland's Academy, Glasgow, he was a bursar of both schools.

Though not a big man physically, Mr. Watson was well known in Scotland as an athlete during the years 1900-5, and was a member of the famous West of Scotland Harriers. He has many trophies gained for shirt-distance running.

He is an accountant by profession and spent ten years in the shipping trade in Glasgow, emigrating to Vancouver early in 1908; he was ten years in the warehousing and distributing business in this city, and consequently is known to many business men. He left Vancouver in November, 1917, to fill an executive position with the Hudson's Bay Company at Vernon, B. C., and is still located there.

The novelist was married in 1911 to Anna McNaught Johnstone, a native daughter of Vancouver, and the second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Johnstone, old-timers of that city. They have two children.

We understand that writing has been Mr. Watson's hobby since he could first hold a pen. "My Brave and Gallant Gentleman" was his first ambitious work, and it went into three editions in three months last year. Arrangements have now been made for a new edition of it in the United States of some twenty-five or thirty thousand copies.

As readers would gather from that first book of his, Mr. Watson is a lover of all athletic exercises and of the open air.

Optimistic in his outlook on life, brimful of literary lore, and fond of that fellowship of the spirit which comes from kindred interests, Robert Watson, story-writer and man, is one of those genial souls with whom it is a privilege and delight to spend an hour or an evening. (C.)

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