

SCOTTISH AUTHORS IN WESTERN CANADA

SCOTLAND has accomplished her full share in the world of authorship. A nation which has produced the world's greatest lyric singer, Robert Burns ; the world's greatest novelist, Sir Walter Scott ; the two greatest historians, Macaulay and Carlyle ; and the two great magazines, *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood*, need take a second place to none. Canada is yet young in the field of literary production, but even the Canadian West has done something in the realm of letters. As is natural, narrative writing has been the chief form of intellectual effort, although fiction and even poetry have had their devotees in the Canadian Occident, and these have been followed by writers of Scottish origin. The "ancient" on this field is Sir Alexander Mackenzie, to whom we have already devoted a chapter. He in 1801 published in London his "Voyages." This book was smuggled into France and was translated into French for the great Napoleon when he was contemplating an attack on the rear of Canada by way of the Mackenzie River from the Arctic.

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The doyen of the fur trade authors was, however, Alexander Ross, Sheriff of Assiniboia. Ross as a lad emigrated to Glengarry in Canada and joined Astor's expedition to the Pacific Coast. Becoming a Nor'-Wester, he was received as a trader by the Hudson's Bay Company at the union of 1821, and on retiring from the fur trade in 1825 was given a grant of land by Sir George Simpson, where the city of Winnipeg now stands. He became a leader of the Selkirk colonists. He had married the daughter of a chief of the Okanagans of British Columbia, and his family were highly educated, one son, James, a University graduate, having been night editor for years of the *Toronto Globe*. Alexander Ross wrote—and wrote well—three important works—"The Columbia River" (two vols.) in 1849, "The Oregon Trail," and "The Red River Settlement" in 1856. He was a conscientious and good descriptive writer, though at times possibly somewhat prejudiced. His books, though rare, still have a living interest.

We are not able to find certainly that Ross Cox had Scottish blood, but the presumption is that he had. He was one of the Astor Company, and his work, in two volumes, entitled "The Columbia River" is a charming account of the ups and downs of the Astorians, as well as a vivid description of his overland journey across the Rocky Mountains and Rupert's Land. It dovetails well with "A Voyage in 1811-14" by Gabriel Franchere, who wrote in French a most interest-

ing account of the same events, which was afterwards translated into English.

Among the first Scottish settlers sent out by Lord Selkirk was Donald Gunn, of Caithness. Employed for a time by the Hudson's Bay Company, he settled down at Little Britain, a mile south of Lower Fort Garry, on the bank of Red River. He married a woman with Indian blood, and a large, intelligent family grew up in his house. Donald Gunn became schoolmaster of the parish, was scientifically inclined, and was a correspondent of the Smithsonian Institution. He became after Manitoba was formed, a member of the Legislative Council, and was afterward a stipendiary magistrate. Some time before his death he had completed a history of his times up to 1835. After his death a journalist, under the direction of Dr. John Schultz, completed the work up to date, and it was in 1880 published at Ottawa, under the title "History of Manitoba," by Donald Gunn. At Gunn's house one half of the "Red River Library" was stored, and he showed his Scottish zeal by being to the end of his life a valiant defender of the authenticity of Ossian's poems.

One of the first men met by the writer on entering Fort Garry in 1871 was Joseph James Hargrave, F.R.G.S. He was in charge of the Financial Office of the Company. Although his father was presumably English, yet the fact of his relatives living in Fifeshire seems to indicate Scottish blood. An ardent exponent of Hudson's

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Bay Company views, Hargrave embarked somewhat uncertainly on the treacherous sea of historical literature. He wrote "Red River," a work of 506 pages—a book which, while much of it deals with trivialities, yet contains, from Chapters VI. to XIII., eight chapters valuable to the historian.

Alexander Begg, born in 1840 in Quebec of Scottish parents, was sent home to the Mother Country and educated in part in the greater life of Aberdeen. Trained to a commercial life, he found his way West into Fort Garry about 1868, the time just preceding the Canadian occupation of Rupert's Land; and he claimed to have introduced the Canadian commercial system upon the banks of Red River. He became a partner in the many-sided business of Hon. A. G. B. Bannatyne. A quiet and attractive man, he took little part in public or party affairs, but, notwithstanding, he was "a chiel amang us takin' notes." He was one of the founders of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. He was also a strong defender of the rights of the old people of the country against the aggressive Canadians who sought to override them. He had the "literary microbe," and wrote a work of descriptive fiction called "Dot it Down," which, aiming at being a picture of Red River society, produced when printed some consternation. His historical works were: (1) "The Creation of Manitoba"; (2) "Ten Years in Winnipeg"; (3) "History of the North-West," in three large volumes.

Number 2 of these was little more than a gazetteer. His *magnum opus* was No. 3, which reflects to the full the view point of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Alexander Begg (2) was almost a contemporary of No. 1; but was born fifteen years earlier in Caithness, Scotland. Coming to Canada, he entered journalism and was connected for a time with the *Toronto Mail*. He is said to have come West about the time of Governor McDougall's ill-starred attempt to enter Red River Settlement. Although a Bohemian of the Press, he seems always to have sought the West. He was for some years in British Columbia, and journeyed in 1887 to Britain to arrange for the importation of a thousand Orkneymen to develop the British Columbia fisheries, but the British Columbia Government withdrew from the scheme. Well acquainted with the province, he published in 1894 "The History of British Columbia" (568 pages, illustrated). While the book is reliable and shows a vast deal of detail, it lacks arrangement and balance. Mr. Begg passed away before his namesake.

John McLean, a lively but somewhat discontented Hudson's Bay Company officer from Scotland, has left two very interesting volumes of his experiences in the Company. His work was entitled "Notes of Twenty-five Years of Service in the Hudson's Bay Company," 1849. McLean's experiences range from the west—and the centre—to the far north-east of the continent

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in the inhospitable region of Ungava. He is a very interesting but caustic writer, and thoroughly scourges the Hudson's Bay Company in its system and management. He was sent by Sir George Simpson to Ungava, which in the eyes of the fur traders was the Company's Siberia, for deep reflection and wholesome silence. McLean left the Company in an unhappy state of mind and passed away in poverty in Victoria, British Columbia.

It would hardly be justifiable to claim as a Western man the Scottish writer of boys' stories, R. M. Ballantyne, although he was for a time, it is said, in Rupert's Land, and became able to write such books as "Hudson's Bay," "Ungava," and others among his vast number of popular and useful volumes for boys.

Rev. Dr. John McLean, a Methodist minister of standing in Western Canada, was born in 1851 in Kilmarnock, Scotland, and graduated in Victoria College, Cobourg, being ordained as a minister in 1880. He was placed among the Blood Indians in Alberta as a missionary, and has held pastorates in Moose Jaw, Port Arthur, and Morden. He is a devoted student of ethnology, and is acquainted with the language and customs of the far west Indians. He is an able author, having written "The Indians of Canada," "James Evans," "Lone Land Lights," and a number of valuable pamphlets on ethnological subjects. As a magazine writer he has been well known, and is Scottish in thought and tongue.

Dr. Charles W. Gordon is the son of a stalwart

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Highland minister, who was one of the pioneers of Ontario and a famous Gaelic preacher. His mother was the daughter of Rev. Mr. Robertson, a Congregational minister, and he is said to owe his literary tastes largely to his mother's side of the house. He graduated in Toronto University and Knox College and went as a missionary to the Rocky Mountains, which region exercised a deep influence on his emotional nature. Coming to Winnipeg to take charge of a Mission which has become St. Stephen's Church, he began to have aspirations toward literature. The glamour of the West has always been upon him, and his first book, "Blackrock," took immediately with the people as a religious novel, for which kind of literature there is among Church people a decided demand. His second, and perhaps the best of his series, is "The Sky Pilot," a Rocky Mountain story. These were succeeded by "The Man from Glengarry," which immediately struck a chord among Scottish hearts, prepared by the kailyard scenes of Barrie and Ian Maclaren. In yearly succession have appeared "The Prospector," "The Doctor," and "The Foreigner." His Life of Rev. Dr. Robertson was a work of love for the memory of a man for whom he had all the chivalrous devotion of a Highland follower. It is worthy history. The large circulation of the Ralph Connor series of books has, with their Scottish strain running through them, added to the spread of Scottish ideals and to the regard for Scottish character in the minds of the Canadian people.

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Rev. Dr. John M. King was born in 1829 in Yetholm, Scotland; his only daughter married Dr. C. W. Gordon. He was a teacher and a theologian rather than an author. His pastoral duties in Toronto and professorial tasks in Manitoba College kept a fine literary taste from showing itself objectively. A small volume forming a critique of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" showed what he could have done as a poetical exegete but for his otherwise busy and useful life. A portly volume of his sermons and addresses was prepared with sympathetic care by his old friend and admirer Chief Justice Taylor.

Rev. Roderick G. McBeth, of the old Kildonan stock of Lord Selkirk's colonists in Red River Settlement, graduated in Arts and Theology in Manitoba College and Manitoba University, and occupied pastoral charges in Carman, Manitoba, Augustine Church in Winnipeg, and in First Church, Vancouver. His present charge is in Paris, Ontario. He is the author of two small works, one called the "Settlers of Red River" and the other on the "Second Riel Rebellion in 1885," which was useful and timely.

The Rev. Dr. William Patrick, Principal of Manitoba College, is well known as a scholar and distinguished linguist. He was born in Kirkintilloch, near Glasgow, and was first settled as Free Church minister in his native place. He for years edited magazines for his Church, and published a work, showing much study, upon the "Epistle of St. James."

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A young Canadian clergyman, Rev. Robert Edward Knowles, born in Ontario, has gained distinction as a writer of fiction. Educated in Arts in Queen's, Kingston, the fact that he took his theological course at Manitoba College, Winnipeg, places him on the list of Western authors. Settled at first in Stewarton Church, Ottawa, and later in the largest and perhaps most distinctively Scottish Church in Canada, Mr. Knowles manifests his Scottish blood in his first novel, "St. Cuthbert's," which has reached its tenth edition. Year by year he has published and has in his list of prolific production "The Undertow," "The Dawn at Shanty Bay," "The Web of Time," and "The Attic Guest." The last of these has gained the highest encomiums from some of the critics of the author's Motherland.

Three women of Scottish race have made names for themselves and their forbears in the realm of Canadian literature in Western Canada. The first of these is Miss Agnes Laut, born in Ontario in 1871 and reared in Manitoba, the daughter of John and Elizabeth E. Laut. Educated in the public school, she became a successful teacher in the schools of Winnipeg. Desiring to enter the uncertain race for literary fame, Miss Laut spent two years in Manitoba College, and probably on account of indifferent health sought occupation as a journalist on the staff of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. After going to Ottawa as a newspaper correspondent and travelling widely over Canada, she has taken up her home on the Hudson River

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above New York. She has most industriously written numerous magazine articles, and has now a formidable list of books to her credit as an author. These are "Lords of the North," 1900; "Heralds of Empire," 1902; "Story of the Trapper," 1902; "Pathfinders of the West," 1904; "Vikings of the Pacific," 1906; "The Conquest of the Great North-West," 1908; and "Canada, Empire of the North." Industry and the lure of the wild are strong characteristics of Miss Laut.

Miss Agnes Deans Cameron was born in 1863, the daughter of Duncan Cameron and Jessie Anderson. She grew up in a thoroughly Scottish environment, as any who has met her strong-minded, intelligent mother knows full well. Miss Cameron became a prominent and well-regarded teacher in Victoria, British Columbia. A dispute having arisen concerning some of her pupils, who were accused of dishonesty in connection with their examinations, Miss Cameron took up their cause and pleaded for them. The result of the discussion was that she lost her situation as teacher. She, however, at the next election of trustees ran as a candidate and was elected. Miss Cameron is of a singularly independent mind, and in some attempts at literary work, chiefly in connection with education, showed an original and epigrammatic style of writing which attracted attention. Her career has been in magazine articles, lectures, and book-making. She has a practical turn of mind and an inclination to discuss social

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problems, and is interested in the study of national resources, as is shown in her "The Wheatfields of Western Canada." As a lecturer she has considerable descriptive power, and her lecture, "From Wheat to Whales," finely illustrated with stereopticon views, is very interesting. Her book, "The New North," published in New York in 1909, is a most interesting book of travel and has been well received.

Mrs. Nellie Letitia McClung, living in the Manitoba town of Manitou, is a young Canadian woman who has come into fame by writing an attractive book which has had a large circulation. The work is called "Sowing Seeds in Danny," and it has been popular in Britain as well as in Canada. The authoress is the daughter of John Mooney and of Letitia McCurdy, of Dundee, Scotland. She was born in Chatsworth, Ontario, in 1873. Her simplicity of diction and naïve and graphic style have helped her to tell a pretty story of rural life in Manitoba and has led to her writing a new book, lately published to run the gauntlet of public criticism and consideration, called "The Second Chance" (1910).

Ernest Seton Thompson (now Thompson-Seton) was born in 1860 of Scottish parents. Young Thompson came to Manitoba and lived for a time near Carberry. He had early an absorbing interest in nature. He would lie out all night studying the habits of birds and animals and watching them early in the morning. Here he cultivated his love for animals. His writings of birds and

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mammals of Manitoba and his appointment to prepare a Natural History Exhibit for the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago kept him in touch with Manitoba. One of his latest works, and one requiring great biological knowledge and perseverance, is "Life Histories of Northern Animals." Three others of his most popular publications are "Animals I Have Known," the "Trail of the Sandhill Stag," and the "Biography of a Silver Fox." He has elaborated a scheme for a Temple of Fame in commemorating the pioneers of Rupert's Land. Mr. Thompson-Seton is also an artist of considerable note.

Robert W. Service has risen rapidly into notice by the publication of two books of poetry, one bearing the name "Songs of a Sourdough" (a helpless old-timer), the other "Ballads of a Cheechako" (which means the hungry new arrival). He was born in England of Scottish parents, and was educated in Glasgow. Going to the Western Coast of America, he entered the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and served awhile till his works were published. He has now retired from labour and has resolved to devote himself to literature.

Charles Mair was born in the county of Lanark in Ontario in 1840, the son of a Scottish settler. After preparation in the Perth Grammar School he entered Queen's College, Kingston. There was born in him the restlessness of a poetic imagination, and his dreams were of different occupations. The young rhymester took a poetic flight in 1868

in publishing "Dreamland and Other Poems," but Canada has not yet reached the stage of taste to appreciate aspiring talent. In the autumn of that year young Mair went west on Snow's surveying expedition to the Red River Settlement and became correspondent of the *Toronto Globe*. The realities of the Riel Rebellion and his being made a prisoner in Fort Garry did not lead to cultivation of the Muses. After peace was restored he became a merchant, first at Portage la Prairie, and afterward in Prince Albert. In 1886 appeared his greatest work, a drama, "Tecumseh," which was well received. Mr. Mair as an employee of the Dominion Government made his home in Alberta. Mr. Mair has published a readable account of a visit to Mackenzie River on a mission of treaty-making with the Indians.

Dr. G. Bryce, born in 1844 at Mt. Pleasant, Brantford, Ontario, was son of George Bryce, J.P., and Katherine Henderson, natives of Perthshire, Scotland, and early settlers of Brant County, Ontario. Educated at Canadian Public Schools and at Toronto University and Knox College, Toronto, he became a pioneer to Manitoba in 1871 and at once began to study the history of Western Canada. In 1879 he was a leader in establishing the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. He visited many of the historic sites, and became acquainted with the Hudson's Bay Company officers and forts from Lake Superior to the Pacific Coast. He was also a leader in the archaeology of Western Canada, and opened a

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number of the burial-places of the Mound Builders. As a teacher of science and an educationalist he introduced the study of science into Western Canada and was a well-known lecturer to the people, literary societies, and teachers' institutes of the wide region from Lake Superior to the Pacific Coast. A list of his works in History and Science is given opposite the title-page of this volume.