

THE CANADIAN SPIRIT IN OUR LITERATURE

By WINNIFRED REEVE (Onoto Watanna)

Being an address delivered before the Canadian Club of Calgary.

With a very few and rare exceptions, there has come out of Canada, thus far, no important literary production in which a typically Canadian spirit is revealed. True, there has been a considerable output of stories and poems of mediocre merit. These are of but questionable value. Canada has produced men and women of literary talent and even genius; but, forced to go outside of Canada to find a market for his work, the Canadian author has written of the country where he has his residence.

In Spare Time

On the other hand, with scarcely an exception, the Canadian author, at home, is obliged to earn his living at something else, and to do his writing in such spare hours as may be left to him. Yet that is exactly what the Canadian author at home is doing. It means writing under pressure, when jaded and worn and tired. Work produced under such conditions cannot possess the fire and freshness and charm of a spontaneous piece of writing done when the mood and urge and inspiration was upon the writer. Writing is essentially a work of the brain, and to do it well one needs freedom from the thousand and one cares and interruptions that beset the working day.

An Important Asset

Comparatively speaking, we are a young nation, but we are old enough to recognize a thing of value when we possess it, and I do not think that anyone can question the statement that literary talent is a national asset, more important than mere gold, and it is, therefore, hard to estimate the value of a truly great author to his country.

But what of our Canadian authors? Where are they? Some cynics declare that there are none. There are indeed Canadian authors of great talent and even genius, but those who are at home are working with the cards stacked against them, under conditions that are discouraging and heart-breaking.

However, the Canadian author has by no means suffered to the extent that Canada itself has through the loss of many of her best authors; for in their place has slipped in the smart charlatans of the pen of other countries, and these have exploited, misrepresented and libelled Canada, both in story and in motion pictures, so that there has gone forth into the world a grotesquely unvarnished and absurd portrayal of our country.

Canada's Picture

Spread abroad in magazines and books and sprawled upon the screen, we behold our country pictured as one everlasting expanse of snow and ice. I do not recall ever seeing a Canadian screen play, that did not specialize on snow as the main product of Canada. Calgary has gone down to dubious fame as a small cowtown of the wild west type. Winnipeg, Montreal—some of our most important cities—have fared even worse. Our prosperous Canadians are revealed as a sort of a cross between lumber jacks and hoboes, and most of our citizens appear garbed in parkas and mukluks. We do not ride in automobiles according to these pictures, but go forth on our streets on skis and snowshoes, or are drawn around on dog sleds. There is a monotonous similarity in all these pictures of Canada—the same bag of tricks rattled over and over again—snow, ice, beautiful Indian maidens, prairie fires, noble mounted police, French Canucks, bears and sleigh dogs, innocent fugitives from justice, a lone waste of land and the wolf's long howl. To be typically and perfectly Canadian, the story must reveal an utterly cold aspect of complete desolation.

A Gross Libel

Now, of course, in all this pudding it may be you will find a Canadian spirit, but it's the kind of spirit that makes a real Canadian hot under

Something New For Quinsy

Ontario Man Tells About That New Vaporizing Salve

Mr. Joseph Haley of 199 West Milk street, Brantford, Ont., says: "My wife has suffered with quinsy for years, but Vicks VapoRub must have prevented it for she got through the winter without a single attack. We sent part of a jar to a neighbor, whose boy was very sick with a cold or grip. He also got relief. Vicks surely should be in every home."

They used to treat colds externally with tallow, goose grease and camphor. Recently, internal dosing has been the habit and people naturally doubt the value of a salve.

For this reason Canada druggists introduced Vicks VapoRub, the vaporizing salve for all cold troubles, last winter by giving away dozens of jars to responsible families and every jar sold was on 30-day trial.

The above report is just one of a great many received from enthusiastic Canada families. With such endorsement and a positive money-back guarantee, every household ought to give Vicks a thorough trial as the home remedy for croup, colds, sore throat, bronchitis, catarrh, neuralgia, cuts, burns, bruises and sores.

At all drug stores 50c a jar. For a free test size package, write Vicks Chemical Co., 344 St. Paul street, west, Montreal, P.Q.

The Vicks is new in Canada. It enjoys a remarkable sale. Over 17 million jars used yearly.

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the collar, because he knows it is a gross libel upon his native land.

Of course, we all know that in some parts of Canada we do have a robust, healthily cold winter, but it is no colder than parts of the United States. On the other hand, there are parts of Canada where the climate is so temperate that the country blooms like the rose, even in winter. What is more, our cold is not of the humid type. Our health, our spirits, our happiness are not affected. It is strange that in nearly all these stories and pictures concerning Canada, a Canadian summer is seldom pictured—unless it is as a background for prairies or forests that are being swept by terrific fires, before which the delapidated and terrified, strangely garbed alleged Canadians flee, after suffering incredible hardships.

What They Think

Few people outside of Canada know that with the exception of the winter months, the greater part of this country has a climate that cannot be matched anywhere else. They have beaten into their systems the legend of our implacable cold. I ask you to consider the effect of such stories upon the world. Thousands of people see those films and read those stories. Many people outside of Canada are under the delusion that Alberta is located near to and has the climate of the North Pole.

Apropos of this, I might tell you that in Calgary is a young school teacher who came from Boston, and who possesses a clipping cut from a "Great Boston daily to the effect that "Miss B. has gone to Alberta, Canada, to teach the Esquimaux."

When in New York last spring, I was asked by a perfectly nice and otherwise intelligent woman, whether we crawled into our houses on hands and knees. She thought we lived in snow igloos.

Only recently the newspapers in the States, and in Canada too, gave prominence to a story of the amazing depredations of a band of timber wolves who were eating men by the wholesale. The denial of this canard was printed in a less prominent place in the papers, and the harm was done. In that part of the country at least, I have my doubts whether the hunter and the fisherman will venture next year.

Coaxing Immigration

We are in the midst of a campaign to coax superior immigration to our land, for we know that population is the forerunner of prosperity. Besides population we need the confidence, the brains, the capital of men who will develop our country. There are not enough of us here to do it alone, and we need to prove to the world that developing Canada will be something more than a useless gamble, but a splendid speculation that will bring in the end mighty returns. What is the use of the wealth which we know lies hidden in our country's bosom, if it is not worked? What the value of our agricultural lands if they are not cultivated and used?

We need to proclaim to the world that Canada possesses remarkable natural and mineral resources, the qualities and the climate that go to the making of one of the greatest countries on earth.

A Novelist's Work

Our orators and advertisers—all of the railroads and government tracts and pamphlets, cannot, I declare, have the power or the effect of a single great novel or poem from the magic pen of an inspired writer.

It was a woman's novel that awoke the national conscience of a great nation, and contributed to bring about the civil war which set a race of slaves free. I refer, of course, to Uncle Tom's Cabin. France was set on fire when the Marseillaise sprang like a tongue of flame from the pen and heart of a poet. I could name a hundred instances to illustrate the tremendous power and value of the work of the writer.

Keep Authors Home

And so I assert that it is of vital importance to Canada that its authors should remain at home. Not merely because of the honor and the prestige that will reflect upon the country, but because of their intrinsic value, practical value, to Canada. They are needed to offset and undo the harm and the injury already done by others. They are needed because no country can hope to achieve greatness without its dreamers, and to the clan of dreamers the author pre-eminently belongs.

Not that the author has secured a corner on the dreams of the world. We know that some of our greatest dreamers are hard-headed, cold, keen business men; the very fact that they are building and promoting and putting projects into motion prove them to be men of vision, who are endeavoring to carry out their dreams. But to this clan the author surely belongs. True, he is often ill fitted to cope with the conditions in the hard world of business affairs, nor does he receive a reward commensurate with the value of his services. He is often blessed or cursed with a great fount of uncommon sense and not a pinch of common sense. Nevertheless his importance and value to his country can scarcely be exaggerated.

What To Do

Instead of the lurid and wholly false pictures and stories that authors of another country have been writing of Canada, would it not be fine if a Canadian author of great talent should cunningly weave into a tale something of the fascinating glamor, the exciting spirit of adventure, the wonder and beauty and charm of this land of ours. I am referring now especially to Alberta. Think of a picture or a novel that would reveal our immense cattle lands. A strong, hot pen might unfold the epic of our grain fields. There's a story in our coal mines; something more valuable than oil may spring from our wells. Its name is romance.

Land of Romance

For this is a land of romance, which cries aloud to be told in story and in song. It appeals to the imagination, it stirs something into restless activity; it keeps one on tip-toe. No one can be lazy or sleepy in a land like this. And just as the land fascinates and charms us, so it appeals from a literary point of view. No writer could live in such an environment and not become obsessed with a desire to capture some of our golden sunshine and imprison it in the pages of a book.

Rockies Never Commonplace

Our Canadian Rockies can never become commonplace though we see them every day. The fascination of our prairies bathed in that mystic haze that seems to merge sky and land in one, is almost beyond the power of description. Calgary itself has a personality all of its own, and teems with material for the writer. Who is going to write of this electrical city with its daily booms. It is hard to analyze the fascination of this part of the world; the strangers that come and go; who have trailed in from all parts of the world; the odd and interesting types we meet with every day. The gambling sense and thrill. We can pull pious faces over gambling, but there's a pinch of it in all of us up

Do you suffer from urinary troubles

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here. The man on the street, taking his chance on every boom that sweeps electrically over the country, and the farmer, throwing his seed upon the land, like the dice of fate upon the eternal board; they are brother adventurers and gamblers. Farming indeed is the greatest of all gambles, for the farmer gambles with the elements, and the elements are like unto the moods of a temperamental woman, who smiles before her tears and tantrums are ended.

Man on the Land

Often I hear people moaning and groaning over the fact that our population is being depleted, and they predict wholesale ruin for Alberta; but the history of all new countries is that they attract a floating population. As many as go out will come in again, and vice versa. The pessimists of the city might take a lesson from the man upon the land who, after successive crop failures, still turns over the sod and puts in his crop anew. He is hard hit, but he is still in the game. He knows of the recuperative qualities of the land, and before him always is the dream of that great crop which sooner or later he is assured will come to him.

Some Experiences

Half the men in Calgary, I have heard, have either been, or just escaped, being millionaires, and I suppose they all know what it is, at some time or another, to have been stone broke. It's good to have that knowledge, though pretty hard at the time. Besides being broke isn't a condition peculiar only to Calgary. It can be a great deal more uncomfortable in a big city. I know, because I've been there. I've gone out

He Says He Can Now Do His Work

Quebec Man Used Dodd's Kidney Pills

Mr. Aubin States that they have made him well and that his Kidneys are Without Pain.

ST. NICHOLAS STATION, Que., March 23. (Special).—Gaudias Aubin, a well known and respected resident here, is a sure friend of Dodd's Kidney Pills. He has tried them and found them good.

"I am now very well and my kidneys are without pain," Mr. Aubin states. "Since the time I started taking Dodd's Kidney Pills, I have not had any more pain and I have been able to get to my work."

That Mr. Aubin's trouble came from the kidneys is evidenced by the relief he got from Dodd's Kidney Pills. They are purely and simply a kidney remedy. They heal and strengthen the kidneys and put them in shape to strain all the impurities out of the blood.

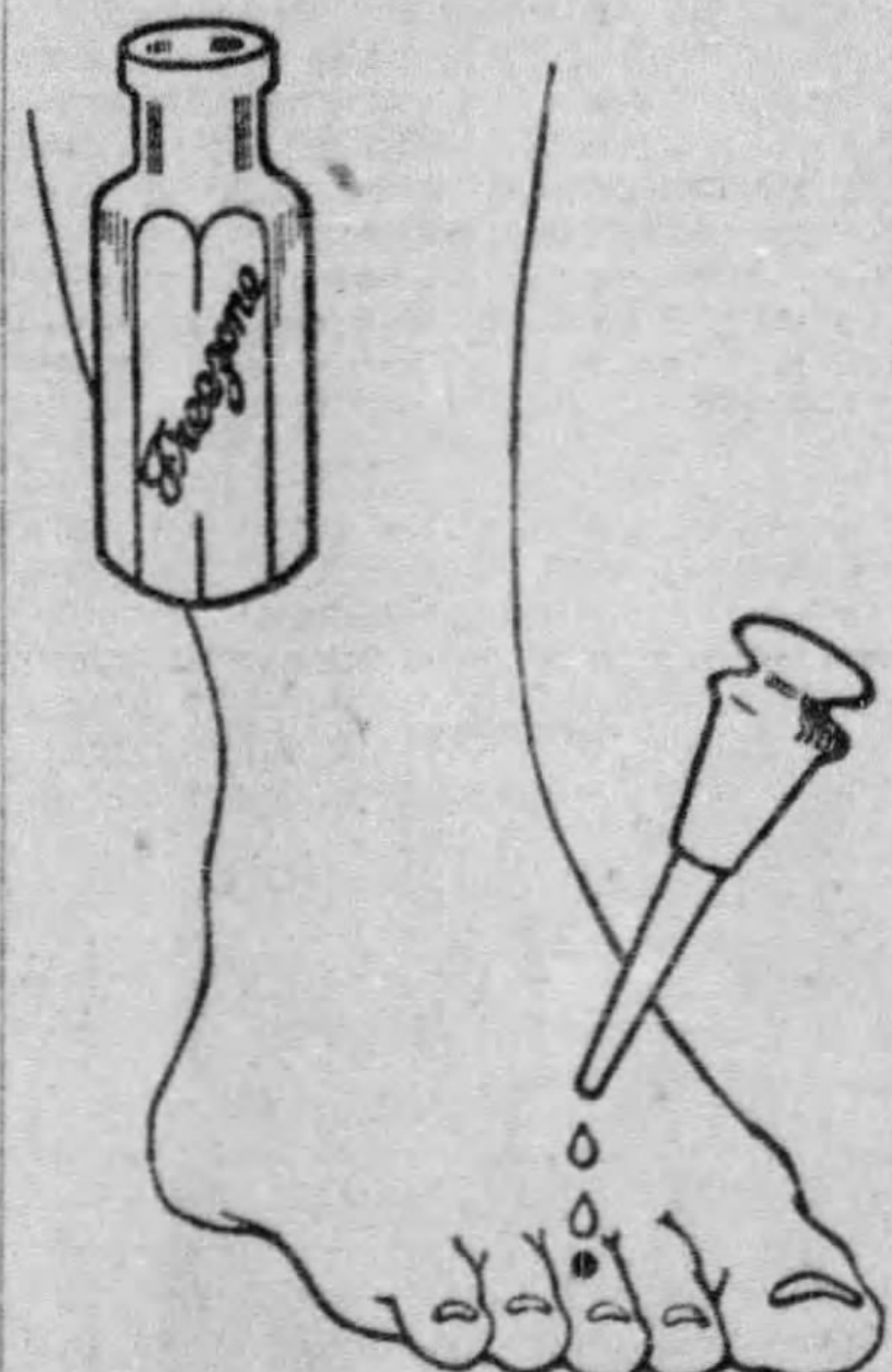
It is easy to see how neglecting them may be the cause of serious illness. Rheumatism, Dropsy, Urinary Troubles, Diabetes and Heart Disease are some of the penalties that follow neglecting the call of sick kidneys.

Sound kidneys mean pure blood. Pure blood means good health.

Ask your neighbor if Dodd's Kidney Pills are not the best remedy for sick kidneys. Advertisement

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Your druggist sells a tiny bottle of "Freezone" for a few cents, sufficient to remove every hard corn, soft corn, or corn between the toes, and the calluses, without soreness or irritation. Advertisement

when a young girl, in New York, and bought dog meat—I mean, meat intended for dogs, because I could make ten cents go three times as far, and I am not likely to forget a dinner to which I had thoughtlessly bidden an editor and wife, and in my enthusiasm had spent my all upon the things we were to eat, forgetting all about the gasman, who duly arrived while my dinner was cooking. I could neither induce him to lower his voice or put off the collection. I honestly believe that kind editor bought a story from me, not because of its merit, but because he was much concerned about my future gas bills.

The Answer

You might ask, and quite naturally, if this country is such a mine of literary material, why does not the Canadian author go ahead and utilize it. The answer is not far to seek. I need only repeat: The Canadian author either does not live in Canada or, living here, works at some other employment. Do not forget, moreover, that every country possesses but a very limited number of truly great writers. Now, some very excellent work is being done by our authors at home, but with few exceptions their fame is local; so that their work is not known outside of Canada. Consequently they cannot compete with or offset the harm done by the fellow from across the line who has the right-of-way in some of the popular magazines, and with film people.

Conditions are not encouraging here for the author. Apart from the fact that there are only two or three publications in Canada that pay an author more than a nominal price for his work, it is only of late years that Canadians have shown an interest in the work of their own authors. Our country has been and is flooded with magazines and books from the United States and England, and these fill our shelves and tables, and shoulder aside the, perhaps, more modest product of the native author, not only poorly paid for his work.

Then, too, the Canadian author is here, but often waits indefinitely for payment.

Fortunes Made

I might point out that fortunes have been and are being made from the product of the brain of the author. Publishers and theatrical managers have become very rich. Actors, song publishers, music firms, gramophone manufacturers, book-sellers, newspapers, magazines, advertising agencies, literary brokers and agents—these all depend in a large part for their existence upon the work of the writer. The fourth great business in the United States is today said to be the motion picture industry, and the motion pictures depend mainly upon the creations of the author. They could not carry on without the author. Yet the author's reward is small when compared with the returns that flow into the laps of those who depend upon his product.

Hard Earned Money

Again I will give a personal experience to illustrate my point. I took a prize offered a number of years ago for the best synopsis for a motion picture serial play. I was engaged to write 28 instalments, and to deliver them within a period of two months.

I worked extremely hard, and often late into the night. I went out seldom. I cut out social pleasures and sports. I denied myself the society of friends and family. In fact, I became a sort of mental machine—that ground out so many lines, so many words, so many sentences, per day. The work was not pleasant, and violated every literary ideal I possessed. Nevertheless I had contracted to do the work, and I wanted the money. When I was not writing I sat in conferences with the financial men whose money was in this project, and I had long sessions with directors and people connected with the film business. Every one of them gave me different suggestions and advice as to what they wanted in that movie play, and my head used to reel with the weird, wildly exciting and lurid incidents that seemed to be the thing desired for a motion picture serial. However, I persevered, for I wanted that money. Before I tell you how much I received, I will first name the prize paid to the pretty faced star who was to play the heroine in my play. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I received ten thousand—one hundred and forty thousand dollars less than the actress.

Author More Valuable

Yet I think an author is more valuable to a play than the actress. Of course, in this case, the actress was a big star, and although I had attained to some celebrity, I could not compete with such glory as that. I was entirely outclassed.

Day Is Dawning

However, I am inclined to think the authors' day is at hand. Since the formation of the Authors' League of America, of which, by the way, I was one of the charter members, the position of the writer in the States at least has become more and more independent. Important laws have been enacted to protect his product, and he can command considerable return for his work. Canada also now has a "League"—the Canadian Authors' Association, the inspiration of and founded by Murray Gibbons, of the C.P.R. It was formed for the purpose of affording the Canadian author protection and such help as possible. We hope in the coming year to have put in force an up-to-date copyright act, entitling Canada to adhere to the Revised Berne Convention, and this will mean a great deal to the authors of Canada. I was one of the delegates in Ottawa last spring who called upon the minister of justice, and we were courteously and cordially received, and promised a consideration of our request.

Give Them A Chance

Since our association came into being, we have had the sympathy and support of all the greatest clubs and organizations in the Dominion, with the result that there has been an increasing interest in the works of Canadian authors. I think that more and more Canadians are beginning to realize that its artists and authors are a part of the natural resources of the country. We are only a very limited company. Not all are endowed with a God-given gift. We cannot all produce world shakers; but each in his way can do his bit to show the Canada we love.

I believe we should be catholic enough in our tastes so that while neglecting not the work of the great masters, we will make room also for the new race of writers, even if their voices be not as great or as sweet as those who have gone before us. I do not urge upon you to read the works of Canadian authors, merely because they are Canadian; but I do suggest that just as England, as France, as America, and Germany—and, indeed, all of the important countries favor their own writers, so Canada should give thought to the fortunes and the fate of her own writers, not only for their sakes, but as a matter of national self-protection.

The lumberjack was directed to proceed from camp to the nearest town and arrange for certain supplies. This entailed a long tramp through a forest composed of hemlock. For miles and miles he trudged through a never ending growth of hemlock. At night he camped. The hemlock was hard to cut and when it was cut it made a poor fire. Hemlock roots tripped him and boughs of hemlock scratched his face. So when he finally emerged it was not inappropriately that he remarked: "Gosh all hemlock!"