

# NORTHERN BOOKS

**ALBERTA GOLDEN JUBILEE ANTHOLOGY**, edited by W. G. Hardy. McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., Toronto, 1955. 471 pages. \$5.00.

**SASKATCHEWAN HARVEST**, edited by Carlyle King. McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., Toronto, 1955. 224 pages. Paper bound, \$1.00; cloth, \$2.50.

*Reviewed by Margaret Stobie*

IT would be foolish to try to draw elaborate conclusions about the nature of two provinces from the evidence of two anthologies. Indeed, it would be foolish as yet to draw conclusions at all about provinces which have existed as independent entities for much less than the span of one man's lifetime. Everything is still beginning and everything is yet to be done. There are the old and the new, the valley of the dinosaurs and Uranium City, the land and the people, but the two have not yet found each other. Even among the people, the mixture of races—Indian, Germanic, Latin, Slavic—which holds promise of great richness, is still a matter of self-conscious juxtaposition rather than one of homogeneity. There is no settled pattern, no tradition that has been handed down by succeeding generations.

It is this very fluidity, at once both exciting and baffling, that the two officially commissioned anthologies have attempted to set down. Its evasiveness is perhaps reflected in the widely differing editorial policies of the two books.

*The Alberta Golden Jubilee Anthology*, which has ten sub-editors and W. G. Hardy, head of the Classics Department at the University of Alberta, as editor-in-chief, attempts to be inclusive. Almost all of the material was written during the past year expressly for this collection. There are articles which cover time from pre-historic ages to 1955, and space from the cattle land of the south to the still unyielding oil sands of the Athabasca region. There are sketches and anecdotes of explorers, Indians, missionaries, fur-traders, settlers, newspaper editors and politicians. There are reports full of dates and statistics on education, libraries, sports, the oil boom, the fine arts and agriculture. There are some short stories, a quantity of verse, a number of pleasant woodcuts, eight reproductions of paintings, and some garish colored photographs. From this mass of material, the reader gets a general impression of a rather breathless tourist bureau.

*Saskatchewan Harvest*, on the other hand, is selective, and it is certainly a much more readable book. It has, of course, the great advantage of having a single editor and a good one in Carlyle King, head of the English Department at the University of Saskatchewan. By a selection of previously published poems, short stories, excerpts from novels and other longer works, and some first-hand

\* Mrs. Stobie is the author of "The Formative Years," in this issue and the last.

accounts of events, Dr. King has tried to present the immediate experience of life in Saskatchewan, what he calls "the outer and the inner weather" of the province. There are some translations of Cree legends, excerpts from the diary of an 1882 settler, W. B. Cameron's account of the massacre at Frog Lake, Anne Marriott's striking poem of depression days, *The Wind, Our Enemy*, a fine short story of farm life, *Cornet at Night*, by Sinclair Ross. In this book, however, the dominant tone is a sombre one.

At first glance, these two books would seem to suggest a startling difference of character in the two provinces: Alberta a land of enthusiasts entranced by numbers and size; Saskatchewan a land of stoics concerned with what the numbers mean and what the size is worth. Yet this apparent cleavage comes largely from the differing editorial policies and does not exist in fact.

Sinclair Ross's short story, which sums up an important aspect of prairie living, is as true of Alberta as it is of Saskatchewan. Life, and particularly the life of the creative person, is cramped by the inner climate of the puritan mind and by the outer climate of the harsh domination of the land. This is a land where tragedy strikes suddenly in blizzard, in hail, in fire, and in drought, a land in which the greatest conflict is still not between man and man or between man and machines but, perhaps almost reassuringly, at the present time, between man and the forces of nature. Because conflict is the sustenance of novelists and poets, or because they are personally thwarted by it, or because more of them write most effectively about dramatic situations, it is this side of life which is emphasized in Dr. King's collection. Yet in the fifty years of Saskatchewan's existence as a province, there has been more to the experience of living than cyclone, riot, depression and war. There have also been great prosperity and human achievements.

In spite of a great deal of bad writing, perhaps even by its sheer bulk, the Alberta anthology manages to convey some understanding of this equally true aspect of prairie life—the richness of the country and the vigour of the people. No doubt part of the impulse for this emphasis comes from the present heady prosperity of Alberta's oil boom, but it lies deeper than that. A handful of the more perceptive articles reveal its nature. *Inland Empire*, by Robert Collins, which is about the Peace River country, catches some of its excitement, *The Graveyard of the Dinosaurs*, by Constance Balfour Harle, and *The Silk Train*, by John S. Peach, catch some of its wonder and romance. *Five Famous Women*, by Barbara Villy Cormack, and *The Governments of Alberta*, by L. G. Thomas, catch something of its independence, one aspect of which, as Mr. Thomas notes, is "the West's deep-seated distrust of the older [political] parties." And there are occasional

glimpses of a sense of values. Elizabeth Haynes, who has worked for thirty years towards the development of a theatre in Alberta, still feels the need "to work to build this the way it should be." Irene Parlby, one-time member of the provincial parliament, comments on the material wealth of the country and points out that "the great realm of the mind" is yet to be cultivated.

The truth is that in spite of the arbitrary line which separates them, these two provinces are one land, geographically, economically and culturally, and the two anthologies merely represent different facets of that land. The special emphasis of the one complements that of the other. And yet, even taken together, the two books do not present the whole quality of this vast area. In the midst of the hardship and the opulence, in the midst of the towns and the cities and the farms and the oil fields, in the early mornings and at night there is a wild exhilaration which neither of these books has caught.

**BUCKSKIN BRIGADIER: The Story of the Alberta Field Force, by Edward McCourt, illustrated by Vernon Mould. "Great Stories of Canada" series. Macmillan, Toronto, 1955. 150 pages. \$2.00.**

*Reviewed by M. H. Long  
in consultation with Col. F. C. Jamieson.*

MUCH more attention has been devoted by historians to the exploits of the columns commanded by Major-General Middleton and Lieut.-Colonel Otter in the North West Rebellion of 1885 than to those of the Alberta Field Force under Major-General Strange. Nevertheless the career of the latter is full of interest and by no means devoid of significance, as Professor McCourt amply shows. The alarm, amounting almost to panic, in the infant "city" of Calgary caused by the threat of revolt among powerful neighboring Indian tribes; the shattering news of the Frog Lake massacre and the fall of Fort Pitt; the summons from Ottawa for Strange to raise a military force; the strengthening of the Calgary Home Guard and the Alberta Mounted Rifles; the arrival by railway of the 56th Carabiniers of Montreal in their bottle-green uniforms and of the red-coated 92nd Battalion Winnipeg Light Infantry; the formation of Sam Steele's famous body of Scouts; the organization of wagon transport, and the rapid march north to Edmonton, are all vividly described. The author then deals with the safeguarding of the Edmonton settlement, the organization of river transport, the descent of the North Saskatchewan to Fort Pitt, the engagement with the Indians of Big Bear and Wandering Spirit near Frenchman's Butte, the junction with Middleton, and the arduous pursuit which ended with the surrender of the Indian leaders and the disintegration of their bands. He also correctly assesses the magnitude of General Strange's achievement which was all the more remarkable in that it involved the loss of life of not a single man under his command.

\* Mr. Long is Professor Emeritus of History, University of Alberta, and Col. Jamieson's brochure, *The Alberta Field Force of 1885* (Battleford, 1931), is still the most authoritative study of the subject with which it deals.

It is probably an attempt to secure a striking, alliterative title that leads the author to give Strange only the rank of Brigadier, though he had been promoted to that of Major-General in 1882. The frequent reference to the Winnipeg Light Infantry as the "Winnipeg Rifles" tends to confuse these redcoats with the 90th Winnipeg Rifles—a green-uniformed rifle regiment that saw action, not under Strange, but under Middleton at Batoche.

However, the only departure from accuracy that at all seriously transcends the license of the story teller is in connection with the miniature battle of Frenchman's Butte. The Butte itself has had its name given to the engagement solely because it is the most prominent landmark of the locality; but on the day of the battle the Indians were not posted upon it, it bore no trenches or rifle pits, it was not the objective of Strange's assault, and no fighting occurred on its slopes. The actual encounter took place along the edges and bottom of a coulee some distance to the north of the Butte, and the name applied to the engagement by men who fought in it was the Battle of Stand-Off Coulee. Strange's objective was the dislodgment of the Indians from the northerly rim of the coulee where they were strongly entrenched.

Mr. Mould's numerous drawings which illustrate this book are executed with an imagination and delicacy of touch which add greatly to its attractiveness.

**LAST OF THE CURLEWS, by Fred Bodsworth. Illustrated by T. M. Shortt. Dodd, Mead and Company, Toronto and N.Y. 128 pages. \$3.00.**

*Reviewed by Clarence Tilenius*

NEVERMORE!" Few words in the language of man attain the poignancy of this, valedictory of a beautiful form of life that may be vanished forever. The dinosaurs, the vanished saurians, the pterodactyls: These we do not mourn, these were before our time; they lived and died milleniums before man as we know him appeared on the globe. But here was a race of birds whose flocks within the memory of men yet living darkened the sky. Had some great natural catastrophe overwhelmed them, had nature in her mysterious and often inscrutable machinations removed them from our ken, we still would mourn them, but without remorse for personal guilt.

Here the case was different. The guilt rests on man, and on man alone. From A. C. Bent the author quotes:

"... slaughter by human beings, slaughter in Labrador and New England in summer and fall, slaughter in South America in winter and slaughter, worst of all, from Texas to Canada in the spring. They were so confiding . . . the gentle birds ran the gauntlet all along the line and no one lifted a finger to protect them until it was too late . . ."

As the epic migration flight unrolls, one reads with ever increasing absorption the lonely quest of the last curlew for the mate he has never seen but in search of whom instinct continually drives him on. He finds her: and then,

\* Mr. Tilenius is well known to *Beaver* readers as a naturalist-author-artist.

with the 9000-mile return flight to the mating ground almost accomplished, comes the testing of Mr. Bodsworth as a writer.

With interest mounting towards the end of the story, a fear begins to grow that the author in some ill-considered desire for a happy ending might destroy what is a true work of art. If this temptation did assail Mr. Bodsworth he resisted it. He has handled his theme with restraint and rare insight. The illustrations, too, ably abet the author's work. They reveal, beyond the accuracy one has come to expect of Mr. Shortt, a real feeling for the sweep of tundra and ocean, the drama of the vast migration route.

For the Eskimo curlew, it is too late. But such books as this, awaking us to what we have already lost, must work powerfully to rally public action to save other forms of life fast vanishing from existence. The book ends as it began—a haunting epic shadowed by the mystery for which mankind may perpetually seek the answer: the love that some men bear the birds, the lust that makes others destroy them.

**THE GHOST VOYAGE OUT OF ESKIMO  
LAND by Gontran de Poncins, Double-  
day & Co., Inc., Toronto and N.Y.  
1954, 22 pages. \$3.85 in Canada.**

*Reviewed by R. H. G. Bonnycastle*

GONTRAN de Poncins is well known as author of the best-seller *Kabloona* published in 1941. That book described brilliantly (with the help of Lewis Galantière) his adventures of the previous twelve months amongst the Eskimos of the Western and Central Arctic. *The Ghost Voyage* is a translation from the French, being the account of the author's voyage out of the Arctic after the *Kabloona* year—57 days at sea from Coppermine to Vancouver via the Beaufort Sea, Bering Strait, and Dutch Harbour in the Aleutians. The time: August and September, 1939. The ship: the *Audrey B*, 100-foot motor vessel owned and operated by Art Watson and Slim Purcell, Western Arctic trappers who were returning outside after many years' sojourn in the far north. Since Poncins was seeking passage to civilization and they needed an extra hand, he was invited to be the third member of the crew. The vessel was an ex-rum-runner the trappers had bought cheaply in Vancouver and sailed to the Arctic several years before. I knew Watson and Purcell well, sailed with them in the *Audrey B* several times under difficult conditions, and finally, having made two voyages from the Arctic to Vancouver in HBC vessels (one of which, the *Baychimo*, we lost), I know something of the hazards. Chiefly for these reasons I found the book interesting if sometimes tedious in form.

The voyage was a remarkable feat. Watson and Purcell were essentially trappers and woodsmen, and good ones at that. They were not seamen or engineers, and yet they

sailed their 100-foot twin-diesel-engined craft throughout Western Arctic waters for years and finally brought her successfully (with de Poncins' help which was much less skilled than their own), to Vancouver through the fog and ice floes near Point Barrow and the stormy and dangerous waters of the Bering Sea and North Pacific Ocean. Nor did they hug the coast, except around northern Alaska where there is nothing else to do. In particular they sailed direct from Dutch Harbour to Vancouver Island, a most courageous course for landlubbers in what was actually a pretty flimsy motor-boat.

De Poncins, an artistic Frenchman, failed utterly to understand his two hard-bitten Canadian shipmates who, after years virtually alone in the north, conversed together in monosyllables, if at all, and infrequently with De Poncins who was equally beyond *their* comprehension.

The description of the voyage itself is good. There is a particularly interesting story of whaling and a whaling station in the Aleutians that they visited. Too much space is taken up on the other hand trying to analyse the actions and characters of Watson and Purcell who certainly did not ask for all this attention in print and probably resent it, just as Paddy Gibson resented the public discussion of his private life by De Poncins in *Kabloona*.

Again there is much "philosophizing" about the manners and customs of people all over the world who have nothing to do with this voyage. During his long lone watches the author frequently recalls and recounts events or discussions of earlier travels in Polynesia or other remote areas or even takes us back to *Kabloona* experiences to prove this or that contention.

An epic voyage and a readable book but not up to *Kabloona* standards. However, Vicomte de Poncins has done something worth while in putting on record the voyage of the *Audrey B*, because certainly neither Art Watson nor Slim Purcell would ever have done so.

**I MARRIED THE KLONDIKE, by Laura  
Beatrice Berton. Little, Brown and  
Company, Boston and Toronto, 1954.  
269 pages. \$4.50.**

**THE GOLDEN TRAIL, by Pierre Ber-  
ton. MacMillan, Toronto, 1954. 147  
pages. \$2.00.**

**THE YUKON, by Arthur Cherry Hin-  
ton with Philip H. Godsell. The Ryer-  
son Press, Toronto, 1954. 184 pages.  
\$3.75.**

*Reviewed by W. D. MacBride*

L AURA Berton's book is a unique and valuable addition to Yukonia. She has given us a most intriguing personal narrative of Yukon pioneer living down to the smallest detail—sourdough bread, caribou steaks, salmon slices broiled over a camp fire, fresh Dawson blueberry pie; the roadhouse rooms which required no loud-speaker

\*Mr. Bonnycastle was manager of the Western Arctic district for the H B C.

\*Mr. MacBride is president of the Yukon Historical Society.

system. Having known many of the characters named and most of the anecdotes, I am unable to find any factual errors of consequence. While the Canadian Rockies end near Lower Post on the Liard River in British Columbia, the other ranges are but continuations. On page 112, Mrs. Berton mentions a stage driver Webster and his eight-foot habitant braided sash. This sash is now in the Whitehorse Museum, having been presented by Mr. Webster's sister-in-law. Mrs. Berton's references to certain prominent people either by name or by thinly veiled *noms de plume* have in some cases been criticised or deplored by existing friends or relatives. With this exception her book has received the accolade of all the Yukoners who have read it.

It is seldom that both mother and son offer books on the same subject in the same year. *The Golden Trail*, being produced as a part of an historical series for young people, is really a classic condensed story. To clarify a few items: Page 13. "Devil's Club." Believe this bush not in Yukon. Is found on Alaska coastal slope.

Page 22. Carmack's discovery claim was recorded at Ft. Constantine (40 Mile) Sept. 24, 1896, "On creek known as Bonanza flowing into Klondike river," and signed by C. Constantine of the N.W.M. Police.

Page 44. Alec. McDonald died in January 1912 while splitting wood on his claim at Clear Creek, a tributary of Stewart River. His remains were conveyed to Dawson City by dog team.

Page 121. "Fifty deaths" in Whitehorse Rapids. I believe the R.C.M.P. records show eighteen deaths, but there were undoubtedly some drownings not on record.

As a brief and well written history of the Klondike Gold Rush, with many little known historical facts, I can highly recommend *The Golden Trail*.

Now we come to *The Yukon*. It was my lot to render some assistance to Mr. Hinton, while he was in charge of War Assets office in Whitehorse, in the way of loaning him many historical books, clippings, etc. This publication offers a new treatment of the Yukon story, in that it embraces the mouth of the Mackenzie, Yukon's Arctic coast and the Alaska Highway; *vide* Philip H. Godsell's classic, *The Romance of the Alaska Highway*. These two authors have provided an extremely interesting and informative addition to Yukon literature and have added much historical data not ordinarily found in northern tomes. Again I might clarify some statements made:

Page 1. "Celestials." No Chinese were allowed to enter the Yukon for many years.

Page 13. "Seventy below" in Skagway. Being on the Pacific ocean slightly tempered by the Japan current, temperatures at Skagway do not drop lower than 30 degrees below zero.

Page 20. "Untold miles of bunting"?

Page 63. The statement that supplies had to be shipped from Skagway to Dyea is hardly correct. Supplies for Dyea were transferred from ocean steamers to lighters and landed on Dyea beach direct.

Page 67. Lake "Linderman." Should be "Lindeman." This lake is near the head of Lake Bennett, not at the foot of Chilkoot Pass.

Pages 73-75. Starting with last paragraph with sentence "On May 27, 1889" (should be 1898), I note with interest that Mr. Hinton included word for word a portion of my article on the White Pass and Yukon Route without the use of quotation marks or other acknowledgment. This wording first appeared in an information circular issued to travellers under my name, and later in the *Beaver* of Autumn, 1954.

Pages 45, 95-96. The references to public services of Capt. and Mrs. George Black are rather sketchy and not quite correct. Capt. Black resigned the position of Commissioner, Yukon Territory, in 1916, to take 150 Yukoners known as "The Black Contingent," overseas in World War I. In 1921 he was elected Yukon member of Parliament, which position he held until his illness in 1935; was Speaker of House of Commons, 1930 to 1935. Mrs. Black was then elected member in 1936 and held office until next election when Capt. Black was re-elected, retiring from political life after the last election. The title of Mrs. Black's book is "My Seventy Years," not "My Seventy Years *In The Yukon*."

**NORTH AMERICAN MOOSE, by  
Randolph L. Peterson, University of  
Toronto Press, 1955. 280 pages. \$12.50.**

*Reviewed by R. W. Sutton*

**H**ERE is a book—the wildlife biologist might well call it a bible—long needed and hence doubly welcome in the field of wildlife management.

The moose problem—depredation, diseases, hunting pressure—is one that, for years, has given rise to much discussion amongst conservation agencies and sportsmen's groups. Data on the moose has, in this writer's experience, been available only to the man with the time and effort necessary to wade through many widely varied texts, extracting from each, in bits and pieces, the information he requires. Too often the results of such searches are hardly worth the time involved.

Now we have *the* Moose book. In this work, obviously the result of much arduous toil in the laboratory and in the field, Dr. Peterson has presented virtually all that is worth knowing about the moose in North America.

Beginning with the various races of moose throughout the world, the author traces the history of the moose in America from pre-historic times to the present. The greater part of this book deals with those matters that directly concern the conservation and management of moose—hunting statistics, complete life history, calf mortality, growth rate, food habits, disease, parasites, population studies, effects of predators, hunting regulations and many other moose problems.

*North American Moose* is a "must," not only for the professional biologist, but for all groups seriously interested in the status of the moose in our country.

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