

TITANIC, BUT NOT OLYMPIAN

THIS ISSUE OF *Canadian Literature* is devoted largely to new studies of E. J. Pratt, the poet who over a generation has become the dean of Canadian letters. There has not yet been a satisfactory and complete critical study of Pratt, and we may have to wait some time before his individual achievement and his position in the tradition of Canadian literature are adequately assessed. Appearing at a time when writing in this country was emerging from colonial dependence, he seemed something of a giant in isolation, and still, like that other figure of imperfect grandeur, Frederick Philip Grove, he stands apart from the rest of Canadian writers, distinguished by his largeness of texture as well as by his talent for giving new life to traditional forms, as Spenser and Keats variously did in their own times and places. When one reviews his career, the subject and title of what is perhaps his finest poem does not seem accidental; he is a titanic rather than an olympian figure. It is hoped that the studies we publish in this issue will contribute to a more complete and genuinely critical understanding of his achievement.

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The visual arts lie outside our field and within the province of our distinguished contemporary, *Canadian Art*. We cannot, however, pass without mention a volume which reveals the scope and excellence of our most comprehensive art collection — that of the Royal Ontario Museum. *Art Treasures of the Royal Ontario Museum* is prepared and edited by Theodore A. Heinrich, the Museum's director. It is published by McClelland & Stewart and is technically one of the

best art books that has ever appeared from a Canadian house; it is significant of the limitations of our book-producing industry that the forty-one excellent colour plates were printed in Holland, and the rest of the book, including the hundred and twenty odd monochrome illustrations, was produced in England. The illustrations demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the Royal Ontario Museum, dedicated as it is to "The Arts of Man through all the Years". Ancient Greece and Peru and Mexico are admirably represented; so are the primitive arts of Africa and the Pacific. At the same time, the desire to be comprehensive has resulted in an inadequate representation of the R.O.M.'s chief glory, its great collection of Chinese ceramic art. One may also deplore the scantiness of the accompanying commentary. Yet, when all is said, this volume leaves little doubt that Toronto contains one of the best North American art museums outside the financially charmed circle of New York.

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We hear a great deal about Canadian anthologies of Canadian poetry. Other anthologies produced in this country are often less well-known outside their particular field of reference. Yet there is at least one excellent production in this field which has been going through revisions and reprintings for the last thirty years, and now appears in a completely revised third edition. This is *Representative Poetry*, published in three volumes by the University of Toronto Press (Volumes I and III cost \$6.00 each and Volume II, \$9.50). *Representative Poetry* is in fact a college textbook, designed to cover three years at the University of Toronto; it is prepared by the people who actually teach English there and who prefer their own selection to those which emanate from the College Divisions of New York publishers. The 1,500-odd pages contain an ample and well-balanced introductory selection of Modern English verse from Wyatt to Swinburne. The notes and critical apparatus are reduced to a minimum, so that both professor and student, not to mention the general reader who may profitably use such a volume as a basic introduction, are virtually left without that elaborate mediation, beloved of American scholarly publishing, which so often in college texts turns into a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. The lazy temptation to create a course of isolated "greats" is avoided; *Representative Poetry* finds room for the curious and the little-read, and for a surprising amount of work by those pleasing minor figures who give a literary age its own flavour. Of course, every teacher of English should dream of making his own anthology, containing the works which he can most fervently expound; in default of that unattainable ideal, one wishes

that more Departments of English would follow the University of Toronto in preparing their own anthologies to give scope for variation of preference and at the same time express the collective taste of a group of practising teachers. At the very least it would save professors of English from many tedious committees designed to select the poor best of a group of unsatisfactory texts produced by hack scholars in another land for the benefit of that profitable branch of big American business, commercial college text production.

