

SPARROWS AND EAGLES

A GREATER CONTRAST could hardly exist than between the two periodicals that lie at this moment beside the editorial typewriter. One is a complete reprint, with an admirable introduction by W. H. New, of *The Victoria Magazine*, which Mrs. Susanna Moodie and her husband edited from Belleville, Ontario, in the years 1847 to 1848. (The reprint is published by the University of British Columbia.) The other is an enormously fat issue of the *Malahat Review* of Victoria (266 pages and possibly the largest single issue of a journal ever published in Canada) which is dedicated to the memory of the British poet, critic and anarchist, Herbert Read.

It is impossible to make a direct comparison between the two journals. The Moodies set out with the "hope of inducing a taste for polite literature among the working classes", while I am sure Robin Skelton of the *Malahat Review* had no didactic intent at all in his mind, but merely the wish to create the best possible tribute to a writer he admired, through a group of serious essays by his peers.

Is this placing the eagle beside the sparrow? I suppose it is, for what the Moodies present to "the working classes" is, except for a few execrable jokes, the dregs of early Victorian genteel writing, the *low* colonialism, if one may adapt an expression of Roy Daniells. Its interest, as Mr. New suggests, is in what it tells us of Canadian taste in its day, and what it tells is not inspiring.

The real point is that in the 1840's periodicals like *The Victoria Magazine* and the slightly superior *Literary Garland* were all that could be expected in Canada. That a journal of the calibre of the great English quarterlies, the *Quarterly* itself or the *Edinburgh*, should appear in Canada was unthinkable.

That a review which can compete with any other in the English language should appear in Canada is now not merely thinkable. It happens — and *in*

Victoria. This issue of the *Malahat Review* is proof of it, and more than anything else I have seen recently in literature (the situation is somewhat different in painting) it shows that at last we have created an atmosphere in which writing and publishing on an international level can be attempted and can succeed in more than the rare and exceptional instances of the past. We have passed from colonial imitativeness into national assertiveness, and now, it seems, we may be ready for the next step when Canada becomes the place where one works, with all that means and nothing more.

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