

HONOURS AND AWARDS

UP TO NOW we have refrained from trying the patience of our readers by self-congratulation or by printing the messages of appreciation that have come to us from our friends. For the latter we have been grateful, but we have always wished the contents of our pages to be judged on their own merits and to be presented without garlands.

This time, however, we cannot refrain from breaking our custom to mention an honour which we value greatly. In the annual exhibition of Canadian printing, Typography '60, the first issue of *Canadian Literature* was granted an Award of Distinctive Merit; it was one of fifteen exhibits, out of a total of fifteen hundred entries, to be selected for this honour. This is an occasion for legitimate self-congratulation, but even more for congratulation—in which we hope our readers will join—of the typographer and the printer, whose names appear on our contents page and without whom we would certainly have gone awardless.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is not a piece of Canadian literature. But what happens to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the Canadian courts may well become part of our literary history. It is for this reason that we publish Hugh MacLennan's spirited defence of that masterpiece, whose treatment, incidentally, gives considerable support to the misgivings we expressed on the new censorship law in the editorial, "Areopagitica Re-Written", which appeared in *Canadian Literature* No. 2.

IN ANOTHER RECENT EDITORIAL we discussed the question of literary awards, and particularly the Governor-General's Awards. At that time we made no reference to the prizes which are periodically presented by certain publishers, both American and Canadian, to writers whose books subsequently appear on their lists. Our neglect was not undeliberate. We were disturbed at the

time by the literary quality of the books which receive such awards; the opinion expressed by one of our reviewers in this issue on a recent prize-winning novel, plus our own reading of another which has been honoured by a different publisher and not yet reviewed in these pages, only reinforces our misgivings.

We do not know on what basis these prizes are granted. Certainly the best of our contemporary writers and novels never seem to receive them, and a look at the books which do succeed makes one suspect that publishers' prizes are in fact given not for literary achievement, but for saleability, that they are aimed at the mass readership of today rather than the discriminating readership of tomorrow. This suspicion may be unjust, but if it is, then the case is even worse, because we have to face the situation in which certain well-known publishers cannot even tell the difference between well and badly written books.

Either way, the result is embarrassing. It is embarrassing for editors and reviewers to feel that they must expose the pretensions of poor novels which publishers have found prizeworthy, instead of allowing them to go unnoticed with the herd. It is embarrassing for readers who wonder if their taste may be at fault when they find nothing worthwhile in a book that has been launched with much ballyhoo. And it *should* be embarrassing to the publishers whose motives, or discrimination, or both, may be called in question by such dubious awards.

Our suggestion is that publishers should abandon all such house prizes granted to books in whose success they themselves have an interest, and leave their publications to take a chance with the rest in competing for the various prizes which are granted by organisations whose interest in the publishing industry extends only to the excellence or otherwise of its productions. If they should still wish to benefit authors, they would surely gain more credit and do more good by establishing funds to be awarded in their names — but not necessarily to authors from whom they profit—by the Governor-General's Awards Board or some similar and wholly independent body of judges.

