

THE FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE *Review*

THE EDITOR

WITH THIS ISSUE the *Dalhousie Review* enters its fiftieth year. It is the privilege of the present editor to offer a survey of its origin and history, and to pay tribute, from experience going back almost to the beginning, to the first editor, Dr. H. L. Stewart (1882-1953). Without Dr. Stewart's vision and initiative, and his varied practical experience and ability, it would not have been possible for a university of moderate size, even for the 1920s, to establish a reputable critical and general review. Nor would it have continued without his direction for a full quarter-century, during which it became accepted without question and remained, through subsequent rapid developments in all fields of communication, as one of the three best known general university magazines in Canada. To make such a beginning, Dr. Stewart had a unique combination of talents. Although his academic specialty was philosophy, he was widely read in many fields of recent literature and exceptionally well-informed on public affairs; he wrote with ease and precision himself, and he had sound critical judgment on the substance and style of others; he had abundant energy and a wide acquaintance both near and far from home. These were the days, it should be recalled, when it was routine for professors to teach four classes, at least one of them large, without assistants or secretaries. But if burdens were often greater, distractions were fewer and energies were generally less diffused. The dozen Arts professors at Dalhousie occupied or shared rooms along a single corridor, and they were frequently consulted on points of fact, opinion, or expression, while others in science and the professions were near at hand.

Active interest was shared by the executive side of the publication, and the present editor recalls many stimulating conversations, as a junior teacher and contributor, with chairmen of both the governors of the university and

the directors of the *Review*. In some ways, it was a family affair, but Stewart was the head of the family. As was pointed out in an appreciation (Volume XXVII, no. 1):

To prove that THE DALHOUSIE REVIEW was an act of faith, it is necessary to recall that its first number appeared barely nine months after THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE, a joint venture of three universities, Dalhousie, McGill and Toronto, had ceased publication with the second number of its 19th volume in April, 1920. Obviously, it needed strong faith to attempt alone what three universities had grown disheartened in doing; but this faith, though not shared by many of his colleagues, was professed and effectively propagated by Dr. Stewart.

As has already been suggested, however, it was not quite fair or correct to say that Stewart's faith was not shared by many of his colleagues. There were several, often without official status, who assisted with various stages of editing and production, and others who contributed articles and reviews among the best in various issues. Notable among these latter was Archibald MacMechan, whose energies were already more than fully occupied in other fields, but who contributed several of the essays of which an appreciation appears elsewhere in this issue.

In his "Salutation" (Vol. 1, no. 1) the Editor declared "Our project is one of university extension. We do not aim at adding to the list of technical learned journals . . . nor do we mean to produce yet another magazine of mere literary entertainment." And in "The First Year of the *Review*" he made a modest appraisal: ". . . the *Review* has been so widely and sympathetically welcomed as to make quite clear that in some degree at least it meets a real need." The path between erudition and entertainment is a difficult one to follow without straying into superficiality on the one side or dullness on the other; but lines laid down at the beginning have been those that the *Review* has attempted to follow ever since.

Although contributors, subjects, and subscribers were at first drawn largely from the immediate area, the *Review* was never parochial. On making prospective general inquiries in England about Dalhousie, the chief information that the present editor could obtain was that the university had just established a promising quarterly. In more recent years, reports from academic conferences around the world name the *Review* as the undertaking by which Dalhousie is best known in the Humanities. To quote again from the

first editor, repeating his original declaration in "The Silver Jubilee of the *Review*" (Vol. XXV, no. 4): "We avow . . . a nationalism that is not prejudice, and a patriotism that is not narrowness." At the same time, an obligation to the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland was not neglected: in one hundred numbers, approximately eighty-five papers dealt with provincial interests — from agriculture and trade, geography and settlement, to folklore and ballads. The original dedication to public affairs, literature, and Maritime Province history was re-affirmed a year later in the "Valedictory" (Vol. XXVI, no. 4). The same interest has been continued, and the *Review* has been a useful source of material for histories and anthologies devoted to Canadian and especially to North Atlantic interests. In a projected volume of critical opinions on a major Canadian writer, for example, it is proposed to include five reviews and two articles from various issues of the *Dalhousie Review*. Many articles have been reprinted, some in large numbers, over a wide area, and occasionally in translation. Many writers of prose and verse have included their contributions in their own collected volumes or have had them reprinted in university textbooks and general anthologies.

The year of Dr. Stewart's retirement coincided with the end of two sections that had been published continuously from the first number — "Topics of the Day" and "Current Magazines". Both were victims of the increase in numbers and frequency of discussions of immediately contemporary news and opinions in monthly and weekly publications and on the new medium of radio, on which Dr. Stewart himself was a regular commentator. "Current Magazines", a "review of reviews", was written by the first editor from his first to his last year. "Topics of the Day" dealt "editorially", independently, and often provocatively, with major subjects of discussion. Writers included W. E. Maclellan, President Carleton Stanley, the present editor, Dr. J. S. Thomson, and J. A. Stevenson. The limitations of quarterly publication and a wider spread of circulation, with a corresponding lack of personal approach, combined to take the gloss from discussions that had at first an immediate and individual impact. War and politics in the 1940s could not bear weeks of gestation. The greater intimacy of earlier years was marked by the signature of "Topics", as of book reviews by members of the Editorial Board and regular reviewers, by initials only — a practice that was not discontinued until the present regime.

After twenty-six years, Dr. Stewart transferred his responsibilities to

Dr. Burns Martin (1948-1951) Professor of English at King's, with whom he had been in close touch during his later years as editor and commentator. Dr. Martin was followed by the late C. Fred Fraser (1951-1952) and W. Graham Allen (1953-1957), now News Supervisor for the Maritime Provinces with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Halifax. Both were experienced journalists and editors who retired from the *Review* on leaving administrative positions at the university. During a transitional period, before and after the present editor took over in the summer of 1957, the positions of assistant editor were held, separately or together, by Dr. Allan Bevan and by Dr. M. G. Parks, who continued for some years as associate editor. The present endeavour has been to maintain the pattern and tradition while continuing to adjust to changes in the academic world, in publishing, and in the interests of a gradually changing list of subscribers. The number of critical and academic journals in the English-speaking world, as well as the number of more popular journals, has greatly increased. Local interests have been more widely served by other media, and there has been an increasing change from provincial to Canadian, American, and Commonwealth subscribers, especially in university and public libraries, with not a few in a wide range of European countries.

After some hesitation, with no agreement on a satisfactory substitute, it was decided to discontinue the sub-title "A Canadian Journal of Literature and Opinion". While "literature" and "opinion" are neither mutually exclusive nor completely descriptive of the interests of the *Review*, they did serve to give as accurate a general impression as could be devised of the original intention, and it has proved to be not far off the mark as events have shaped the later course of the *Review*. The original format, appropriately patterned after those of the Scottish quarterlies, has been modified, conservatively, with a change of cover to the colours and modest stripes traditionally associated with Dalhousie, and a smaller but well-spaced, legible, and more modern "family" of type has been used throughout. The section, always important, devoted to book reviews probably best reflects the continuous change from a more intimate and regional to a more impersonal and international publication. It also reflects the growth of general publishing, especially in Canada, and of scholarly publication by university presses. Headings of reviews are now more complete, and more consistent with scholarly practice, and initials, as already noted, are no longer sufficient to identify even the most regular reviewers. It is to the book review section that many readers turn first, and it is here that the *Review* has endeavoured to reach most accurately and completely its objective

of providing enlightenment on subjects of interest to the intelligent layman, written by specialists but not for specialists. There are, in general, fewer papers in an issue than in earlier years, chiefly because shorter sketches are no longer appropriate. The preferred length of 4000-5000 words, though sometimes exceeded, has proved most effective, as in the past, for developing a thesis. Growing competition has drawn off some writing that might once have been the special preserve of the *Review*, and the academic rule of "publish or perish" sometimes confronts an editor with papers that are better suited to the learned journals. These have occasionally been useful to balance an issue, but the policy has been to encourage the writing of papers that deal with the broader aspects of people, subjects, or problems of reasonably wide general interest. Like begets like, and there has continued to be a sufficient number of contributors and readers to find a place for their particular interests — no such publication can expect to meet every interest on every page — on the sometimes uncertain path along the narrow terrain that continues to lie between the popular and the merely entertaining.

Thanks to the support of the University to a theoretically independent venture in publishing, and to the loyalty of contributors, reviewers, and a band of readers evidently more numerous and widely dispersed than the number of subscribers would suggest, the *Review* has continued in its quiet way to justify into its jubilee year the founding editor's modest initial claim "that in some degree at least it meets a real need".