BOOKS, LITERARY NOTES, ETC.

(By WINNIFRED EATON REEVE)

"The Twenty-first Burr," by Victor Lauriston, is one of the best mystery stories published during the past season. An one who enjoys a yarn full of suspense and tension should read this story. The author is an interesting young man who not so long ago was in Calgary investigating the oil situation. He is a chum and fellow townsman of Arthur Stringer, and may, at this time of writing, have joined his friend in New York. Like Stringer, Mr. Lauriston's heart is in Canada, but with the new restrictions of the copyright law and the discouraging outlook for the author in Canada, Lauriston is unwillingly expatriating himself in order to make a living at his writing. For some time Mr. Lauriston has been connected with the Chatham Daily News, doing a literary column that has been widely copied in other newspapers over the country because of its scintilating observations on things literary and because besides being an author of books Mr. Lauriston is also one of the best known of the younger critics in Canada.

We were recently amused by the naive statement of the president of the women's club who referred to a certain new novel as being a success because it had had a sale of 2000 copies. A sale of 2000 copies would net an author about $100. Perhaps less than that, and perhaps a bit more, according to the percentage. But in any event it would barely pay for the cost of printing. A sale of 10,000 means only mediocre recognition. A sale of 50,000 does not make an author rich. When one touches the 100,000 sale class then one may speak of success. That is, so far as the sale part is concerned. Many books, however, earn something almost as precious as mere sales for the author, namely, prestige. If a first book wins that for the author, he has done well, since if he can follow up with something better than his first book, his chances are excellent.

Some authors are what is known as "one book" authors. That is to say, they produce one book into which they pour all that they have to give. They cannot follow up because they have given of their best. Their critics demand that they maintain the standard they have set, and when their following productions do not measure up to the first they soon disappear into obscurity. They are a flash in the pan. That is why swift success for an author is bad for him. His head is turned by injudicious praise before he has found solid ground. I know of any number of such cases, and the results have been painful. Time and hard work have a chastening and indeed inspiring effect upon the writer that in the end is invaluable to him.

Charles Major, author of "When Knighthood Was in Flower," once told me that he wished that he had written his novel, "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall," before he had his "Knighthood," for the latter book had a tremendous vogue and immense sale. The result was that the publishers paid him for "Dorthy Vernon" $60,000 for the rights, and the book barely sold at all. Mr. Brett, publisher, of MacMillan and Co., told me of the disappointment in the sale of the second book, which, however, at this late day, is now likely to come into its own, at least through the medium of the films.

Some disappointed authors disparage the films as a literary medium. Privately they seek the film companies and try to induce them to accept their work, but when it is turned down they are loud in belittling the value of motion pictures. Minnie Maddern Fiske, America's greatest actress, with the possible exception of Maude Adams, once said to me that she considered motion pictures an even higher form of art than the stage. She based her opinion upon the fact that it would survive when the dramtic productions were passed. She said: "Suppose we could see Rachel, Booth and other great actors in the film today! One hundred years from now fancy seeing Bernhardt or Duse! Suppose we could see today in the films the shadow reproductions of ancient Greece."

And Mrs. Fiske said that she thought that no picture painted by the hand of man could excel some of the magnificent masterpieces of the silver-sheet. No story of the written page has the sheer poetic merit of certain lovely things done upon the screen.

It is a pity that the greater number of film plays—sensational and preposterous—have, in a way, debauched the entire art of the motion pictures; for, of course, it is an art—an immense and vital one. There have, however, been certain productions that justify its enthusiasts in the claim that it is a medium that cannot be surpassed for artistic expression.

The plays by D. W. Griffith have more literary merit than the average written story; Elmer Clifton's "Down to the Sea in Ships" is a classic of the sea. Some of the French and German productions are terrific realism.

I am not a movie fan, but I am of those who smile when I hear people disparaging the films, and claim it is a low form of expression. It can, in fact, be anything—low or high, and therein lies its real greatness—its immense range.

It is often said by those who do not know, that it is as easy as fishing to write for the movies. Anyone can do it. Those who do, however, are wont to declare, with a sigh, that it is about as easy to "break into the ffims" as for the rich man to slip through the proverbial needle's eye. However, the common notion that writing for films is an easy remunerative employment prevails, and is fostered also by many agents and concerns that thrive and have their being by teaching the "young" ideas how to shoot through the films. Remunerative it is, in fact, to him who "makes the grade," but not many get beyond the outer portals. Arthur Stringer speaks lightly of $5000 for a short story in the films and $30,000 or $40,000 for a large film play. Arthur Stringer is not exceptional. The rewards for the successful writer of film plays are indeed immense. On the other hand there are a great many would-be writers expending strength and energy and heart-rending mental effort in attempting to accomplish the impossible feat of wedging a way in. Not only is this true of the writers, but of numerous folk who have been deluded by the utterly preposterous suggestion that anyone can write for the screen.

An example of the type of "authors" trying to write for the screen may be gained from the following epistle, which was recently written to a well-known "Fillum Corportion":

"Dear sir I am a sking for a little empmashion do you buy photoplays if so I have one written contains 30,000 words I sent the play to a company they say it is alright but to send them $60 to reconstruck and type write it for me to find a buyer they want guarantee a sale for my play and I cant afford to send my money when I don't know wether I get it back.

"it seems like they want to crook me.

"they still have my play but they will send it back for 52c in stamps.

"what I wont is to get in with a company that buys photoplays an produces them ready for the screen.

"now my play contains 5 persons the names as follows:

"herbert young, an railroad foreman.

"ruth Jones, herbert's sweetheart.

"mr. Jones, ruth's father.

"grace foster, herbert's married sister.

"dave hanlon, an outlaw leader.

"the title of the play is (at tenpting bride)

"an I have many other plays in mind I could write. Now if you don't buy plays you send me the address of a company that does buy plays

"answer soon

yours truly ———."

THE REFEREE

FOREVER

Another sure sign of spring—William Jennings Bryan, the hardy quadrennial, noow 64 years old, announces that he would "consider the matter if the Democrats decide to 'draft' him as their presidential candidate."

He is receiving so many letters, uring him to run, that he has had to print a form letter to answer them. Neither party has a shrewder politician. He has manifested his shrewdness by his comparative silence in the last few years. As a candidate he