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Historical Literature on Canada's Participation in the Great War

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

REVIEW ARTICLE HISTORICAL LITERATURE ON CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE GREAT WAR • The fifteen years since the armistice have witnessed publication of much material relating to the war in all countries which took an active share in the great struggle. For this literature the official histories, though by no means necessarily superior to other records, furnish a sort of measuring rod to indicate roughly the amount of study devoted to the events of the war in each case. The fine German series of monographs prepared by the Reichsarchiv and published by Gerhard Stalling, Oldenburg, has now reached the operations of September, 1918; the not-so-readable general staff history is still concerned with 1915. Austria-Hungary's *Letzter Krieg* drags behind with part of 1915 completed. The British official historian, having dealt with the opening of the struggles on the Somme (July 1, 1916), is postponing the rest of 1916 and 1917 in order to record the open-warfare operations of 1918. The French official history has concluded the Somme battles; the Belgian

general staff is yet engaged with the events of 1914. Most of the British dominions are well to the fore in respect of war history. South Africa, New Zealand, Newfoundland have published complete official records. The one which may best be compared with Canada is, of course, Australia. From the beginning of the war, the Australian government took great pains to secure a satisfactory record of their dominion's participation in the struggle. They chose a competent man, Mr. C. W. Bean, as official historian, and allowed him a free hand. Mr. Bean acquired first-hand knowledge from his experiences in Gallipoli and in France; and since the war he has enjoyed full access to the official documents. He has utilized German records even to those of obscure Bavarian and Wurtemberg units; he has studied the British and French accounts of actions in which the "Aussies" shared, and he has paid close attention to the recollections of individuals. In consequence, his work conforms to all the standards of historical writing. He is now engaged with the opening months of 1918 and bids fair to complete his task within two years. With these examples in mind we may, perhaps, take stock of what has been done in Canada to record the story of Canadian participation in the war. During the struggle itself, Canadians were eager to read something. Professor Kerr has tried to make the bibliography which appears at the end of the article as complete as possible since it is hoped that it will be a basic work of reference for future students of the subject. A supplementary list will be published in our next issue. Suggestions for it may be sent to the Review or to Professor Kerr at the University of Buffalo (ed.). The author desires to express his thanks to the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, and to the Canadian Military Institute, Toronto, for the use of their libraries; and to the Historical Section of the General Staff, Ottawa, and to Mr. R. C. Fetherstonhaugh of Montreal for assistance in making out the list.

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of the experiences and achievements of their soldiers. A number of books accordingly made their appearance to describe, in so far as conditions permitted, the work of the Canadian divisions in the field. Most important of these are the two volumes by Sir Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) who acted from 1914 to mid-1916 as record officer to the Canadian combatant units: *Canada in Flanders: The official story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*. These volumes give the first authoritative account of Canadian participation in British battles from Second Ypres to Sanctuary Wood. Their author had some first-hand knowledge of events; and he had a gift of style which tunes his writing to the pitch of a clarion call. In the circumstances of the time he could not avoid striking a note of pride, stressing successes more than failures, and obscuring with magnificent phrases the errors of organization among the Allies which rendered futile the efforts of two battalions during April 23, 1915. He was, of course, restrained by the necessities of war from relating all he knew and analysing the causes of events to any serious extent; and he used material incomplete by present-day standards. Yet these little volumes must be taken into careful consideration by all students of the early battles in which Canadians shared. Lord Beaverbrook abandoned his work in the summer of 1916 and left to Dr. C. G. D. Roberts the task of producing the third volume of *Canada in Flanders*, covering the last actions in the Salient and the whole of the fighting on the Somme. Major Roberts had no story of triumph to record; he dealt with one successful operation (Courselette) and the series of tragically costly assaults on Mouquet Farm, Fabeck Graben, and Regina Trench. He makes the failures quite...

REVIEW ARTICLE

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