

VERSCOYLE BENSON BLAKE and RALPH GREENHILL. — *Rural Ontario*, University of Toronto Press, 1969, 173 pp.

LORIS S. RUSSEL. — *A Heritage of Light: Lamps and lighting in the early Canadian home*, University of Toronto Press, 1968, 344 pp.

RALPH GREENHILL and THOMAS D. MAHONEY. — *Niagara*, University of Toronto Press, 1969, 184 pp.

All three of these books on the social history of Canada are products of the widening interest in Canadian life in the past that has been so conspicuous in the last decade. They are, perhaps, not to be described as academic books: they are addressed to an audience wider than specialists or students, and their tone is more affectionate than analytical. It is, however, entirely appropriate that all three are issued by the University of Toronto Press, which has had a remarkably good record in publishing, and selling, academic books. University of Toronto Press books command respect, and they do so mainly because of the care with which they are wrought. They are often well written, and they are also, almost unfailingly, copy-edited with singular care by a remarkably responsive and responsible group of editors. They are often superb in typography and design. All three of the books under review fall in this category.

*Rural Ontario* is not only a handsome book; it is as sound as it is handsome. It is a blend of good design, a delightful personal taste, and real expertise on our domestic architecture. It is the book in the group that this reviewer would be the most reluctant to give away. The long essay on Ontario settlement patterns, and on Ontario architecture, by Verschoyle Blake (Edward Blake's grandson, by the way) is a gem: condensed, sober, knowledgeable, with just the right touch of the idiosyncratic. It should be read *pari passu* with the pictures, to which it frequently refers. It documents, as nothing else published so far has done, the glories of Ontario rural houses. We have all seen them, and have never been quite able to classify their manner or style systematically, or even to represent to ourselves just why we liked them. Everyone will have their own favourites in this book; this reviewer was especially struck by the Wolverton House (No. 31), for some peculiar reason not indexed. (That index, by the way, should include place names.) Wolverton is a lovely little place, very much off the beaten track, at least when I last saw it in 1953, not far west of Paris, Ontario. It has an unpaved main street, overhung with ancient maples and elms, awash with flowers and quiet. The Wolvertons were the second generation of a prosperous lumbering family who had lumber mills on the Nith River. They built the Wolverton house in the 1850's; and it is still one of the finest in the province.

It would then have been lit by candelabras and chandeliers. But by the 1860's kerosene lamps would have come, giving a strong, rather masculine touch to a room, with their bright, steady light instead of the more volatile,

guttering candle. It is a nice question whether whale-oil lamps, or to be more precise whale-oil, reached very far into this part of Ontario.

Loris Russell's *Heritage of Light* has one preeminent virtue: it is written by an author who has attempted to light, and usually succeeded, every type of lamp he writes about. He begins his book with methods of starting a flame, from flint and steel and tinder to various forms of matches. He has tried all those, too. Then comes his long study of rushlights, candles, whale-oil lamps, gaslight, kerosene lamps, and finally to electricity by the 1880's. He comes to a stop with the end of the nineteenth century. It is not really an antiquarian's book; while he likes his lamps for their own sake, for some charm of past elegance or design, he has a refreshing sense of the reality of their practical purpose. It is salutary to read his comments on the physical problems of each type of lighting.

The last book, *Niagara*, is a history both in text and pictures, but it strikes a note that is somehow antiquarian. This reviewer, at least, missed a hard grasp of present reality. One effective reproduction of any good, contemporary government survey map of the Niagara region would have been invaluable. An 1846 map of the Falls only sharpened one's sense of omission here. And a splendid picture or two of Niagara Falls as it is now is needed to sharpen up contrasts and bring the whole setting up against the twentieth century. The book has fine colour illustrations — something the other two books do not have — but, notwithstanding, one is left with a rather hollow sense of opportunities missed, both in the history and in the pictures. For example, Mackenzie's crossing of the Niagara River, in December, 1837, is so good a story that one wonders how it could have been passed over with just a mention. An attractive subject presented in a handsome format, this book does not, to this reviewer's peculiar taste at least, quite come off.

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MICHELINE D'ALLAIRE. — *L'Hôpital-Général de Québec, 1692-1764*, Montréal, Fides, 1971, XXXIV, 251 p.

Par son essai, Micheline D'Allaire veut enrichir l'historiographie canadienne d'une page d'histoire sociale en étudiant la « population soignante » de l'Hôpital-Général de Québec « sous l'angle social ». Dans ce but l'auteur considère successivement l'origine des religieuses, leur œuvre ainsi que leur vie interne et externe. Filles en majorité issues de « l'élite de fonction et de dignité » ou d'« entrepreneurs », les religieuses de l'Hôpital-Général de Québec, conformément à l'œuvre que leur a confiée leur fondateur, M<sup>gr</sup> de Saint-Vallier, prenaient soin des pauvres, des vieillards, des infirmes, des faibles d'esprit, des