

THE TECHNIQUES OF JOHN BUCHAN IN HIS NOVELS

By

LEMUEL W. MURRAY, JR.

Bachelor of Arts

Northeastern State College

Tahlequah, Oklahoma

1950

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of  
the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
August, 1959

FEB 29 1960

THE TECHNIQUES OF JOHN BUCHAN IN HIS NOVELS

Thesis Approved:

*David S. Berkeley*

Thesis Adviser

*Cecil B. Williams*

*James Swanson*

Dean of the Graduate School

438704

## PREFACE

John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir, began writing for publication in 1895, at the age of twenty years. During the next forty-five years, until his death in 1940, he published no fewer than fifty-two book-length works, including more than a score of novels of adventure and intrigue, four historical romances, several volumes of short stories, histories, biographies of noted literary and historical personages, his autobiography, several collections of addresses, and other types of literature.

Yet his writing was little more than an avocation practiced at odd moments snatched from his career as a member of the publishing firm of Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., and from the other diverse interests and occupations at which he was extraordinarily successful. During World War I he served on the staff at British headquarters; and, in 1917, he became director of information under Mr. Lloyd George. He was a Member of Parliament for the Scottish Universities from 1927 to 1935, when he was appointed Governor-General of Canada and was raised to the peerage, taking the title of Baron Tweedsmuir. He was Lord High Commissioner to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland during 1933 and 1934. In 1937 he was elected Chancellor of Edinburgh University.

The subject of the techniques of Buchan in his popular novels was suggested to me by Dr. David S. Berkeley, who has also been my major adviser. As I investigated the possibilities for a revealing study on this subject, I became increasingly interested in trying to learn just what there was in the plotting, portrayal of settings, characterization, and presentation of themes in these novels of Buchan's that gave them the popular appeal which made them best-sellers during the author's lifetime and which has kept them in wide circulation through almost two decades since his death. I wished to know why three of them--Prester John, The Thirty-Nine Steps, and Greenmantle--were successful to the extent that each has already appeared in more than thirty separate editions.

This study was undertaken as an attempt to determine, through an examination of the techniques used by Buchan in a few representative novels, the significant bases for the popular appeal of these works. Attention was given to the comparison of Buchan's adventure stories and romances with those of other romantic novelists, including Stevenson and Scott. An effort was also made to discover whether or not the techniques employed in the early Buchan romance, The Half-Hearted, are essentially the same as those used in his later novels--especially in The Thirty-Nine Steps and in Mountain Meadow, Buchan's final work of fiction.

Indebtedness is acknowledged and grateful appreciation is expressed to my thesis advisers, Dr. David S. Berkeley

and Dr. Cecil B. Williams, for their valuable assistance in organizing and completing this study. Sincere gratitude is also expressed to Dr. Hans H. Andersen, Dr. Agnes Berrigan, Dr. Loyd Douglas, and others of the graduate faculty members of the English Department at Oklahoma State University for the help and inspiration which I have gained from them during my graduate studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. BUCHAN'S PLOTTING . . . . .	1
II. BUCHAN'S CHARACTERIZATION . . . . .	19
III. BUCHAN'S SETTINGS . . . . .	40
IV. A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF JOHN BUCHAN AS A NOVELIST.	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	71

## CHAPTER I

### BUCHAN'S PLOTTING

In discussing his childhood in Pilgrim's Way, John Buchan says that his family was "a noted household for fairy tales" and that his father had "a great collection of them."<sup>1</sup> He also states that by the time he reached his early teens he "had read Scott."<sup>2</sup> As a student at Glasgow University, when Buchan began seriously to teach himself to write, he states that one of his models for his early writings was Robert Louis Stevenson.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter a presentation will be made of a study of the extent to which Buchan was influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by his early reading of the folk tales and of Scott and by his imitation of Stevenson in the plotting of his own novels.

In a treatise on the relationship between the novel and the folk tale, or fairy tale, Buchan says that there are no new plots. There are only rearrangements and combinations of those plots used by writers of fiction since ancient times:

---

<sup>1</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way (Boston, 1940), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

I believe there are only a very limited number of good plots in the world, though you have endless variations of them. That was more or less the idea of the Greek dramatists; it seems to have been more or less the idea of Shakespeare; and it is more or less the idea of the great novelists. It is curious, if you consider the classic novels, how limited is the number of motives. Moreover, I think you will find them all already in the folk tales.<sup>4</sup>

He then proceeds to list what he considers to be the most common types of motifs used in the construction of plots.

First of all he lists what he calls the "picaresque" motif:

. . . the story based on extension in space, on the fact that the world is very wide and . . . full of surprising things and that anything may happen to the adventurer.<sup>5</sup>

Buchan uses this type of construction to some extent in the plotting of such novels as John Macnab, Prester John, Salute to Adventurers, and the Huntingtower group of works which follow the adventures of the character, Dickson McCunn.

Next he lists the motif which "Aristotle . . . called Peripeteia, or Reversal of Fortune" which tells how "the mighty were brought low, and grace was given to the humble." This type of plot is utilized by most romantic novelists to some extent. It is easily recognized in Stevenson's Treasure Island and The Master of Ballantrae as well as in many of the novels of Sir Walter Scott. It is especially obvious in Buchan's novels which deal with the gangster-type villains, Lunley, von Einem, von Schwabing, Medina, Marka, and Caster.

---

<sup>4</sup>John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale (Oxford, 1931), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 8.



Another form of this same type is that which "Aristotle . . . called Anagnorisis or Recognition. Its common forms are "the child changed at nurse, the missing heir with the strawberry mark on his arm," and other similar instances.<sup>6</sup> A modern example of this type is Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper. Buchan as a novelist makes little, if any, use of this motif.

The third, and last, motif or plot theme which Buchan included in his discussion is what he calls "the Survival of the Unfittest," based on the "incurable optimism" of human nature. It involves the "victory against odds of the unlikeliest people," and it includes the type which is perhaps the most widely used by romantic novelists, the "escape against all reasonable odds."<sup>7</sup> I know of none of Buchan's romances in which he does not make use of this type of plotting. It is also very widely employed by Scott and Stevenson. The extent to which Buchan relied on the "escape against all reasonable odds" motif in plotting the adventures of his heroes is evidenced by such critical discussions as the following excerpt from Time:

In John Buchan's adventure stories, the brave and resourceful young Englishman so regularly and so thrillingly came through in the face of the direst subversive influences--and Author Buchan so obviously believed that he could and should--that to his Empire audience he and his heroes came to have a sort of Empire symbolism all their own.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>"Wee But Great," Time, February 19, 1940, p. 27.

Classified under this same motif would also be Buchan's plotting of his stirring accounts of hurried journeys which make up a major portion of the construction of such novels as The Thirty-Nine Steps and the other novels in the Greenmantle series, all the novels in the Huntingtower group, and many of the single novels, including such early works as The Half-Hearted, Salute to Adventurers, and Prester John. These accounts of hurried journeys are still a part of Buchan's plotting in the final novel, Mountain Meadow, but they are used sparingly and on a much more subdued level in that book. In 1922, Buchan published A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys, which contains accounts of exciting historical escapes and flights.

Usborne, considering one aspect of the hurried journeys in a discussion of Buchan's use of fatigue and exhaustion in his plotting, says:

If success is the strophe, the antistrophe is honourable exhaustion. The main Buchan story moves fast, from the problem to the clue (generally in cipher) to the chase, to the loom of tragedy, due on a day ringed in black on the calendar, to tragedy averted in the nick of time, to the success of heroes, to the villains scolded, to the happy ending. But virtue triumphs only through ardours and endurances.<sup>9</sup>

The concise statement of the Buchan theme offered by Usborne in this passage applies to most of Buchan's novels--the chief exception is Mountain Meadow. Usborne goes on to explain that, in the Buchan romances, exhaustion is an end in

---

<sup>9</sup>Richard Usborne, Clubland Heroes (London, 1953), p. 95.

itself and is not just the result of the endeavor necessary in any good tale of adventure:

Hannay three or four times managed to resolve a crisis (when he was absolutely stumped for a flicker of light in the darkness of the problem) simply by being so exhausted, with malaria or hunger or the sheer distance he had had to run, that his brain cleared and he became simple. In his simplicity he saw the light, solved the cipher, spotted the clue.

It was typical of the Hannay method that, in order to get the late Scudder's secrets safely into the hands of Scotland Yard [in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*], he dashed from Portland Place to Galloway in Scotland. He was well and truly chased every mile of the way, there and back.<sup>10</sup>

Buchan offers an explanation in *Pilgrim's Way* for his pre-occupation with the notion of hurried journeys. He points out that the description of a long journey, even for the best of purposes, may make dull reading when the journey is made at leisure. On the other hand, an account of the covering of a hundred yards may be a breathless business if only a few seconds are granted to complete it. He writes:

I was especially fascinated by the notion of hurried journeys. In the great romances of literature they provide some of the chief dramatic moments, and since the theme is common to Homer and the penny reciter it must appeal to a very ancient instinct in human nature. We live our lives under the twin categories of time and space, and when the two come into conflict we get the great moment.<sup>11</sup>

In many ways Buchan's plotting resembles that of the old folk tales. The likable characters in "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Cinderella," and "The Ugly Duckling" all succeed gloriously in spite of their humble beginnings and in spite

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>11</sup>John Buchan, *Pilgrim's Way*, p. 193.

of the efforts of the selfish "evil" characters who oppose them. Magic plays a part in "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Cinderella," but it is not used in "The Ugly Duckling."

In his plotting Buchan makes sure that his "good" characters accomplish what they set out to do, and as I have pointed out, they usually succeed against overwhelming odds. Sometimes, as in the case of Medina and his mother, the Blind Seer, in The Three Hostages, forces that are almost supernatural lend their influence to the action within the plot and control the characters in their decisions and movements. Hannay resents Medina's behavior because Medina "dabbled in an ugly brand of hypnotism"; and the reader's resentment toward the hypnotist is solicited by such passages as the following paragraph:

He looked at me with those amazing eyes of his, no kindness in them, only patronage and proprietorship. I think he was satisfied that he had got someone who would serve him body and soul.<sup>12</sup>

Buchan apparently held a strong belief that the successful novel must be patterned somewhat after the folk tale, for in stressing the relationship of the Victorian novel to the folk tale, he says:

. . . in a sophisticated society something more is wanted than the simple folk tale, and that something is the novel. My argument is that only in so far as the novel is a development of and akin to the folk and fairy tale does it fully succeed.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>John Buchan, The Three Hostages (New York, 1946), pp. 122, 128.

<sup>13</sup>John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale, p. 7.

He felt that a novelist should have "a dominant purpose, a lesson if you like, to teach, a creed to suggest";<sup>14</sup> and he denounced the modern psychological novels with their complex analyses. To stress the contrast between the great Victorian works and the analytic novels of this century, he writes:

I observe about these Victorian novels that in the first place they tell a good story--something which grips and enthral the reader, with true drama and wonder in it. . . . the story-teller is primarily interested in the events he has to tell of, and not in what the jargon of today calls his "reactions" to them. He does not stop to obtrude his own moods.<sup>15</sup>

Another way in which Buchan's plotting resembles that used in the folk tale is in his profound optimism. Insisting that optimism is a required ingredient of a good novel, he defends his stand:

The folk tale knows only too well the stubborn brutality of things; and, knowing this, it is still prepared to hope. Such optimism is far more merciless than any pessimism. Also it is far closer to reality. A tale which describes any aspect of life and makes of it nothing but a pathological study in meanness and vice is more fantastic than any fairy tale.<sup>16</sup>

There is one important aspect of plotting in which, it seems to me, Buchan falls considerably short of the composers of the folk tales and the Victorian novels--that of interpretation. He points out, "The Victorian novels and the

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

folk tales are not mere transcripts of life--they are interpretations of life."<sup>17</sup> He then explains the function of interpretation:

The business of art is to present life, the real point of life, and for that selection is necessary, since a great deal of life is off the point. It must clear away the surplusage of the irrelevant, the inessential, the inorganic. It must provide the only true kind of picture which is an interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, with the exception of his last novel, Mountain Meadow, Buchan's own romantic tales do not approach the level of interpretation which he so greatly admired in the folk tales and in the works of the great Victorians. It seems to me that, with regard to interpretation, a comparison of Buchan's plotting with that of the great Victorians would resemble the comparison of Scott's Peveril with the works of the French novelist, Alexandre Dumas, which Buchan offers in the following passage:

Take one of Dumas' Masterpieces; compared with its light and colour Peveril is like a muddy lagoon contrasted with a mountain stream; but there is never in Dumas that background of broad and sane intelligence, that lively interest in how life was conducted in past ages, that insight into the social environment, which redeem Scott's failures. The latter's characters may stumble dully through the parts, but their platform is a real world, while Dumas' figures dazzle and delight, but they move on a wooden stage amid painted scenery.<sup>19</sup>

However, in Mountain Meadow, or Sick Heart River in the English editions, Buchan has demonstrated, in my opinion,

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>John Buchan, Sir Walter Scott (London, 1932), p. 255.

that he is entirely capable of handling the matter of interpretation in his plotting, his characterization, and his settings on a level that compares quite favorably with that of the great Victorians or with that of the old ballads and folk tales.

For instance, the description of the journey of Leithen and his companions, Galliard, Johnny, Lew, and the two Hares, could well have been so written that it would have been merely a very exciting account of a long and trouble-ridden trip under extreme hardship into the heart of the frozen Northland and back. Then it would have been simply an addition to the long list of thrilling journeys that abound in Buchan's other novels; but the trip in Mountain Meadow exists as more than a thrilling journey. It is an interpretation of life; and I feel that each discerning reader, consciously or unconsciously, will quickly identify in each of the travelers a part of himself, a part of all mankind. If he considers the journey carefully, I believe that each reader will recognize in it a phase of his own passage through this earthly existence.

Moreover, the forces which are brought to bear upon the decisions that must be made by Leithen, regarding the sacrificing of his own life in order to save Galliard and the tribe of Hares, reveal a master's skill in the art of selection for interpretation, a skill which Buchan greatly admired in Scott and the Victorians.

Longaker and Bolles point out the superior quality of the construction of Mountain Meadow over that of Buchan's other novels:

Intensely masculine, conventional in their "sahib's" ideals, these stories seem superficially like others of their sort, only more cleverly contrived . . . . Taken altogether, though, they would be no more than a fine achievement in story-telling were it not for the last and best, Mountain Meadow. . . . In this book alone Buchan enters the company of the great romancers.<sup>20</sup>

All this is not written with any intention of downgrading Buchan's other splendidly captivating tales. Novels so popular with readers seeking relaxation and escape must certainly be accorded their place in our literature. A great amount has been written in defense of the type of romance which does not attempt to interpret life. In his Gossip on Romance Stevenson says:

There is a vast deal in life and letters both . . . where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral grounds, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build, upon this ground, the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales.<sup>21</sup>

Stevenson further asserts that the work of the novelist is not chiefly to interpret the realities of life, but to

---

<sup>20</sup>Mark Longaker and Edwin C. Bolles, Contemporary English Literature (New York, 1953), p. 367.

<sup>21</sup>Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Gossip on Romance," Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1918), p. 222.



interpret, rather, the longings and the day-dreams of mankind in general:

. . . the great creative writer shows us the realization and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps this belief of Stevenson's accounts for the atmosphere of unworldliness which lends a certain charm to much of his writing, particularly in such romantic tales as the children's classic, Treasure Island. This dramatic feeling of unworldliness is seldom found in the works of Buchan, but it does appear in the opening chapters of two of his early adventure stories, Prester John and Salute to Adventurers, where it is reminiscent of Stevenson. Like Treasure Island, Prester John has "become a school-reader in many languages"<sup>23</sup> according to its author in Pilgrim's Way.

A glance at the book's opening paragraph is sufficient explanation for its appeal to young readers:

I mind as if it were yesterday my first sight of the man. Little I knew at the time how big the moment was with destiny, or how often that face seen in the fitful moonlight would haunt my sleep and disturb my waking hours. But I mind yet the cold grue of terror I got from it, a terror which was surely more than the due of a few truant lads breaking the Sabbath with their play.<sup>24</sup>

From this beginning, Buchan proceeds to have the narrator, young Davie Crawford, relate the incidents of the adventure

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>23</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 195.

<sup>24</sup>John Buchan, Prester John (Boston, 1938), p. 11.

mentioned in the opening paragraph. As a lad in Kirkcable, on the rocky coast of Scotland, Davie, along with his band of friends, sometimes played truant from the Sabbath meetings conducted by his father, the parish minister. They spent the afternoons and evenings exploring caves among the rocky cliffs along the seashore. On one particularly eventful occasion they found their usual seaside haunt inhabited by a huge black man who walked round a fire with measured steps, stopping at intervals to raise both hands to the sky and bend his body in the direction of the moon. They recognized him as an itinerant preacher, currently visiting the local congregation of a sect known as the Free Church. He never uttered a word as he marched in his circle, and the lads were spellbound:

"It's magic," said Archie. "He's going to raise Satan. We must bide here and see what happens, for he'll grip us if we try to go back. The moon's ower high."

The procession continued as if to some slow music . . . There was something desperately uncanny about this great negro, who had shed his clerical garments, and was now practising some strange magic alone by the sea . . . As we watched, the circles stopped, and the man threw something on the fire. A thick smoke rose of which we could feel the aromatic scent . . . he took something from his belt and began to make odd markings in the sand between the inner circle and the fire. As he turned, the moon gleamed on the implement, and we saw it was a great knife.<sup>25</sup>

Soon the boys are discovered, of course, and they are forced to flee for dear life in a chase that lasts for several pages. Their escape is the first of many narrow ones for

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

Davie, for the remainder of the book follows his adventures into the interior of savage Africa where, as a representative of his uncle's mercantile firm, he again encounters the mysterious black preacher in the person of a leader of native uprisings. The book is filled with accounts of wild adventures, bitter struggles, daring escapes, and breath-taking chases. It is no wonder that young people love it.

Stevenson states the formula for this type of romantic fiction writing which has come to be associated with his name:

The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; and the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web.<sup>26</sup>

Stevenson continued writing this type of romance throughout most of his career as an author. As a result, he has attracted an audience in recent times made up largely of younger readers. It seems reasonable to suppose that he will continue to appeal to youth and thus enjoy a season of popularity with each succeeding generation. Buchan experimented with this type of romantic plotting in his early novels, but he soon switched to a less dramatic approach.

Buchan and Stevenson alike rely heavily on incident in their novels. Stevenson expresses the belief that the

---

<sup>26</sup>Stevenson, p. 224.

plotting of the incidents is of more importance than the development of the characters in the writing of a romance:

It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve. Something happens as we desire to have it happen to ourselves; some situation, that we have long dallied with in fancy, is realized in the story with enticing and appropriate details. Then we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience; and then, and then only, do we say we have been reading a romance. It is not only pleasurable things that we imagine in our day-dreams; there are lights in which we are willing to contemplate even the idea of our own death; ways in which it seems as if it would amuse us to be cheated, wounded, or culminated. It is thus possible to construct a story, even of tragic import, in which every incident, detail, and trick of circumstance shall be welcome to the reader's thoughts.<sup>27</sup>

Stevenson disdained the works of novelists who neglected incident in order to concentrate their attention on the construction of clever and witty conversations and other bric-a-brac:

English people of the present day /1882--Stevenson's footnote/ are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one . . . But perhaps nothing can more strongly illustrate the necessity for marking incident than to compare the living fame of Robinson Crusoe with the discredit of Clarissa Harlowe.<sup>28</sup>

Since Buchan, by his own admission, began his writing career as an imitator of Stevenson, it was only natural that he should accept that author's reliance on incident, as well as his dramatic prose style, as his own. Buchan says in

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

Pilgrim's Way, "I was trying to teach myself to write . . . . My models were the people who specialised in style--Walter Pater and Stevenson principally."<sup>29</sup> He points out that Stevenson, at that time, "was a most potent influence over young men, especially Scottish university students."<sup>30</sup>

The consequence of Buchan's imitation of Stevenson and others was that he "developed a slightly meretricious and 'precious' style, stiff-jointed, heavily brocaded, and loaded with philosophical terms."<sup>31</sup> However, as he grew older and assumed more and more responsibilities in governmental and church affairs, he dropped this exotic approach to romance writing. His plotting and his narrative style matured into the down-to-earth, practical, detective-story type of construction that is so widely recognized as his particular trade-mark. Scores of novels have appeared in recent decades in imitation of Buchan, and they are often referred to by reviewers as being written "in the Buchan manner."

When one considers the ease and rapidity with which he wrote his novels, it almost seems that Buchan must have possessed an innate ability for constructing interesting plots. He, too, suggests this theory in his explanation of why he became a "copious romancer":

---

<sup>29</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

I suppose I was a natural story-teller, the kind of man who for the sake of his yarns would in prehistoric days have been given a seat by the fire and a special chunk of Mammoth. I was always telling myself stories when I had nothing else to do--or rather, being told stories, for they seemed to work themselves out independently. I generally thought of a character or two, and then of a set of incidents, and the question was how my people would behave. They had the knack of just squeezing out of unpleasant places and of bringing their doings to a rousing climax.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps this dexterity in plotting accounts for the feeling of uncluttered simplicity in most of the tales. Usborne says, "Buchan's narrative style is of unassuming ease. Even when he stops the movement of his story to describe a numinous place or a successful man, he retains a quiet austerity."<sup>33</sup>

Buchan had a habit of writing his novels in bits and snatches, making use of odd moments of leisure on commuter trains, during week-ends at his country home, during periods of convalescence from illness, and even at night whenever he was bothered by insomnia. Regarding this last, a writer for Time, in an issue of that magazine which carried a portrait of Buchan on its front cover, found it amusing that tales written by one sufferer from insomnia should be read by others as a solace for their own sufferings from the same malady:

People who cite insomnia as their reason for reading John Buchan's romances and detective stories are flattered and disarmed by Lord Tweedsmuir's story that he also devotes his serious working hours to historical biographies, business,

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>33</sup>Usborne, p. 88.

trading and politics. Troubled with insomnia himself, he scribbles his novels in the wee hours to put himself to sleep . . . Lady Tweedsmuir, a moneyed kinswoman of the richest Duke (Westminster), burrows tirelessly in libraries, relieving her husband of much work, ever since he has been too busy himself to dig up details for his historical biographies and romances.<sup>35</sup>

The note of cynicism in this passage must be disregarded by any serious student of Buchan's works. The occasion for the cover story in the news magazine was the appointment of Lord Tweedsmuir as Governor-General of Canada; and the staff writer responsible for the article would scarcely be expected to spend hours of research in order to verify the accuracy of a paragraph that was, after all, merely an incidental to his story.

The point I wish to make is that, since the writing of fiction was, with Buchan, only an avocation or hobby practiced during short intervals of time sandwiched between the performance of his duties as a politician and statesman, his numerous speaking engagements, and various other activities, it was only natural that he should choose for such writing the method of straightforward, uncluttered plotting described in this chapter.

The resulting credibility which this type of plotting lends to Buchan's thrilling adventure stories may well be the vital ingredient that has attracted vast audiences of readers to these novels. In any case, it seems reasonable

---

<sup>35</sup>"New Viceroy," Time, October 21, 1935, pp. 20-21.

to conclude that the skillful plotting is of much greater importance than are the characterizations, settings, or themes in Buchan's success as a popular romancer.

What type of plotting he might have used under other circumstances can only be a matter for conjecture. There has been a considerable amount of speculation on the theory that had he devoted his full time to his writing, the majority of Buchan's novels would have been of a more serious nature; and as a result he would have attained a standing of far greater significance in literature than has been accorded him. However, the works of any author must be judged for what they are--not for what they might have been; and Buchan's rank among English novelists will be determined finally from the appraisal of his thrillers and of his last noble bid for greatness in Mountain Meadow.



## CHAPTER II

### BUCHAN'S CHARACTERIZATION

The critics who have written about Buchan's novels have not been in agreement on the qualities of his characterization. Richard Usborne says that when he re-read these "thrillers" before writing his book, he found that he "had forgotten practically everything about them except that they were rattling good yarns." His explanation for this is that "Buchan failed in character-drawing."<sup>1</sup>

Usborne's argument in support of this allegation is that Buchan's people are "dull, heroes and villains." Of the heroes he says they "had no amiable weaknesses"; and he adds that "the villains were never really juicy friends."<sup>2</sup> This reasoning seems to indicate that he found the characters in the novels of which he was writing not highly individualized and therefore unsatisfactory.

Usborne's discussion covers eighteen books, including the Greenmantle series, the Huntingtower group, and the single novel Sick Heart River, which was published in America

---

<sup>1</sup>Richard Usborne, Clubland Heroes (London, 1953), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

as Mountain Meadow. He also included in his book discussions on two other novelists, Sapper and Yates. For his title he chose Clubland Heroes because, he writes, the heroes of the books which were being examined "were essentially West-End Clubmen, and their clubland status is a factor in their behaviour as individuals and groups." He finds it unusual for fictional "men of action" to be "recruited from the leisured class."<sup>3</sup>

Typical of the critics who present a more favorable view of Buchan's characterization is Howard Swiggett, whose "Introduction" appears in the Houghton Mifflin edition of Mountain Meadow. Swiggett, concentrating his attention on essentially the same books that Usborne was to review later, finds the characters realistic and adequately individualized. He feels that it is the essential reality of "the characters of the men themselves" which gives the books their "fascination."<sup>4</sup> He says of them:

They are worldly men. If they are romantic, they are nonetheless realists and I submit that it is their sense of realism rather than their romanticism which affects their decisions.<sup>5</sup>

Buchan's leading heroes in these books are all fundamentally of the same type. Hannay, Leithen, Clanroyden,

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Howard Swiggett, "Introduction," Mountain Meadow, by John Buchan (Boston, 1941), pp. vi-xii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. xxvii.

Roylance, and Palliser-Yeates are all men of means. How they became men of means does not enter into the action of the novels in which they appear, as they are wealthy before the action begins. With the exception of Sir Edward Leithen, the lawyer, they are men with a great deal of leisure time on their hands.

All of them are one-sided idealists. They reveal their sterling qualities in every situation; but their faults are minimized. Yet their faults are there. They are selfish and egocentric. For all their one-sidedness and egoism, however, they are appealing characters. Perhaps their appeal is to the romanticist in every reader. Which of us does not like to picture himself in his dreams as a member of the leisured class, and whose heart does not warm to the thought of himself as an exciting adventurer? Stevenson says that the triumph of romantic fiction is when the reader "condescends" to take an active part in fancy with the characters. "This," he writes, "is the triumph of romantic story-telling: when the reader consciously plays at being the hero, the scene is a good scene."<sup>6</sup> That Howard Swiggett found Buchan's men the type with which most readers could readily identify themselves is indicated by the following passage:

. . . here is a company of adventurers whose lives seem to give you a promise that a chance will come for you, amidst

---

<sup>6</sup>Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Gossip on Romance," Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1918), p. 231.

the dullest prose of life, to make the same wild dedication of yourself.<sup>7</sup>

These heroes succeed in their ventures against all odds. When Hannay stumbles into the hands of the Germans in their hide-out in The Thirty-Nine Steps, he just happens, by the beneficent coincidence which Buchan uses so freely, to find a quantity of lentonite (a slow-acting explosive) stored in a cupboard and to escape by blowing the house apart. In Greenmantle, Hannay and his South African Boer friend, Peter Pienaar, travel unscathed, as British espionage agents in time of war, the length and breadth of Germany, the country of the enemy. Then, together with Clanroyden, the American Blenkiron, and a little band of Turks, they fortify the top of a small hill and defend themselves against the German Army until help comes from the Russians. In Mountain Meadow, Leithen and Johnny Frizel search for the lost Galliard until practically all hope is gone, and then he wanders into their camp. There is a super-human quality about them which will not allow them to fail where ordinary mortals would fail. They seem to fit perfectly Buchan's description of the heroes of the old folk tale or fairy tale:

Its heroes are so full of vitality that no giant or dragon or wicked stepmother manages to hamper them in the long run. They go their appointed course with a divine carelessness. They are immortal until they have fulfilled their purpose.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Swiggett, p. vi.

<sup>8</sup>John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale, The English Association Pamphlet No. 79 (Oxford, 1931), p. 11.

Finding this creed admirable, Buchan practiced it in most of his novels. In defending it he stated, "The power of creating a figure which, while completely human, seems to soar beyond humanity, is the most certain proof of genius."<sup>9</sup>

Periodically, in the leisure of their comfortable surroundings, Buchan's heroes become bored. Hannay, at the beginning of The Thirty-Nine Steps, "was the best-bored man in the United Kingdom."<sup>10</sup> Three of them--Leithen, Palliser-Yeates, and Lord Lamancha--are so bored at the start of John Macnab that they do not wait for the usual admirable opportunity to risk their lives in a fight against evil to present itself, but enter into the less admirable adventure of poaching. When boredom overtakes them, they get the feeling that their privileges can never be paid for in full and that, before they can fully enjoy those privileges, they must earn them time and again by facing danger and discomfort.

These characters never change basically, with one exception. The only considerable character growth in any of them is to be found in Leithen in Mountain Meadow. In that novel Leithen's venture in search of Galliard soon becomes relatively insignificant in comparison with his search for his own soul. In this struggle for spiritual growth Leithen becomes, according to Longaker and Bolles, "the symbol of

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>John Buchan, The Thirty-Nine Steps, in Adventures of Richard Hannay (Boston, 1939), p. 11.

the Old War generation desperately seeking the cure of its sick heart."<sup>11</sup>

The extent to which Buchan's heroes are based on actual persons--the author himself and his acquaintances--has been discussed rather fully by Buchan in Pilgrim's Way and by Usborne and Swiggett in their respective works cited earlier in this chapter.

The villains in Buchan's novels resemble each other almost to the same degree that the heroes do. Ruthless workers of evil schemes, they appear brilliant and influential in their deformities. Writing at a time when Hitler was a powerful force in Europe, Swiggett saw a resemblance between Buchan's ambitious gangsters and that dictator:

Buchan seems to have foreseen in amazing clairvoyance the gangster-rule of the world--Lumley, von Einem, von Schwabing, Medina, Castor, all propose and to a degree succeed in what Hitler has done so thoroughly.<sup>12</sup>

These villains seem to possess strange intellectual powers which enable them to hold almost hypnotic sway over others not so gifted. Medina and his mother, the blind seer, in The Three Hostages, are in fact expert hypnotists who use their powers to work their evil schemes. To satisfy his intense vanity, Medina resorts to kidnapping, blackmail, and intrigues that threaten to throw the world into war merely

---

<sup>11</sup>Mark Longaker and Edwin C. Bolles, Contemporary English Literature (New York, 1953), p. 367.

<sup>12</sup>Swiggett, p. xlvii.

for the purpose of increasing his own popularity and his reputation for brilliantness and genius. The Turkish super-woman, Hilda von Einem, also tries to mesmerize Hannay the first time he meets her in Greenmantle. The German Colonel Stumm, in Greenmantle, and the Germans in The Thirty-Nine Steps are not portrayed as dealers in the occult; but they are pictured as the type of ruthless, scheming foreigner who dealt extensively in espionage and whose rise to power for a time threatened Britain's existence. Castor, who climbs to power in Western South America by using a drug made from a poisonous South American plant to reduce the people of the working classes, including the Indians, to slavery in The Courts of the Morning, and the Russian General Marka, who attempts an invasion of India in The Half-Hearted, are of the same type. However, Castor and Hilda von Einem are presented somewhat differently in that they are humanized more than Buchan's other villains. To give these two characters a more normal human appearance than the other villains, he allows them to fall in love with two of the admirable characters--Castor with Janet Roylance and Madam von Einem with Sandy Clanroyden. Both are violently killed by their own comrades in evil; but before his death, Castor undergoes a complete change in personality, repenting and turning against his former companions. An entirely different type of villain from the ones previously mentioned in this chapter is portrayed in the two colored scoundrels, Prester John in the

novel of the same name and Muckle John in Salute to Adventurers. These two are drawn by Buchan as psychotic fanatics who gain their influence over others simply by proclaiming their fanaticism to simple peoples who accept it in their ignorance.

Buchan's lesser characters often reveal more insight into human nature than do the almost single-faceted heroes and villains. Buchan was as much at ease among the people of the lower levels of the social strata as among the members of the upper class. In Pilgrim's Way he says:

My upbringing had made any kind of class feeling impossible. I was one of the poor myself without a penny behind me, compelled to make my way in the world from nearly as bare a start as the lad from the plough-tail or the loom.<sup>13</sup>

After he became a Conservative candidate for Parliament in 1911, Buchan and his wife spent a great deal of time visiting "twice every hamlet, farm, and cottage in the two shires" of Peebles and Selkirk for which he stood. Of these visits Buchan writes:

Since I spoke their own tongue and knew most men by their Christian names, those visits gave me a chance of entering into the pastoral life of the uplands, as Sir Walter Scott entered into it in his quest for ballads.<sup>14</sup>

Some of Buchan's heroes, outside the Greenmantle and Huntingtower groups, are drawn from the lower classes.

David Crawford in Prester John and Andrew Garvald in Salute

---

<sup>13</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way (Boston, 1940), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 146.



to Adventurers both are introduced as poor Scotch lads setting forth to earn their way in the world. However, most of the poor folk in the Buchan novels are minor characters. They are extremely likable, and their essential characteristic is their innate goodness. Indigent peoples, close to the land and traditional in their manners of life, Buchan finds to be "good." In characterizing them, he portrays their human faults, but these are always carefully overbalanced by their good qualities. Even the savages--the Bada-Mawidi tribes of Northern India in The Half-Hearted, the African natives in Prester John, and the American Indians in Salute to Adventurers and Mountain Meadow--are more good than bad. In Huntingtower Buchan introduces a group of ragamuffin boy scouts, the roughest of street urchins, yet in their pathetic and faithful efforts to copy the practices of more fortunate scouts, they win the heart of every reader and do much to humanize the story. In the "pot boilers" these poor folk are essential to the action, as they often aid the wealthy heroes in evading their enemies. In several instances they nurse those stalwarts back to health from dangerous injuries or illnesses. Thus, in The Thirty-Nine Steps, after he is injured in the lentonite blast by which he escapes from the Germans, Hannay wearily makes his way back to the door of the cottage of Turnbull, the road mender, for his coat and for Scudder's all-important little black book. He collapses, and Turnbull, like a true friend in need, puts him to bed

and takes care of him for the better part of ten days, never bothering him with a question. Then, as Hannay grows stronger and takes his leave at the earliest possible moment in order to be in time to intercept the plot of the Germans, Buchan skillfully adds the finishing touches of goodness in his characterization of Turnbull:

I made Turnbull accept five pounds for my lodging, and a hard job I had of it. There never was a more independent being. He grew positively rude when I pressed him, and shy and red, and took the money at last without a thank you. When I told him how much I owed him, he grunted something about "ae guid turn deservin' anither." You would have thought from our leavetaking that we had parted in disgust.<sup>15</sup>

Buchan is less sympathetic in his treatment of the middle class. To some extent, the character Hannay may have been speaking for Buchan when he said:

A man of my sort, who has travelled about the world in rough places, gets on perfectly well with two classes, what you may call the upper and the lower. He understands them and they understand him . . . But what fellows like me don't understand is the great comfortable, satisfied middle-class world, the folk that live in villas and suburbs. He doesn't know how they look at things, he doesn't understand their conventions, and he is as shy of them as of a black mamba.<sup>16</sup>

Buchan often satirizes the middle class, especially the parvenu elements within it, as social climbers. This, however, is more true of the earlier novels than of the later ones. An example of this is the treatment of Mr. Stocks, the liberal politician in The Half-Hearted. Though befriended by the titled Manorwaters, he scarcely fits into their way of

---

<sup>15</sup>John Buchan, Adventures of Richard Hannay, pp. 156-157.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 216-217.

life. He reveals his ambition to climb the social ladder in the following bit of conversation with Lady Manorwater concerning her nephew, Lewis Haystoun:

"How did the family get the land?" he asked. It was a matter which interested him, for, democratic politician though he was, he looked always forward to the day when he should own a pleasant country property, and forget the troubles of life in the Nirvana of the respectable.<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Andrews, in the same novel, receives even worse treatment in the young Buchan's hands. A persistent name dropper, she is exposed as phony when she is confronted with and fails to recognize Lady Julia Heston, with whom she had boasted of being on the friendliest terms. The great people are too well-mannered, or too priggish, to take notice of the flaw in her character; and she goes blissfully on her simpering way. Her worst fault is that of attempting to build up her own prestige by destroying that of other people. An illustration of this fault can be seen in the following excerpt from a conversation between Mrs. Andrews and Mr. Stocks concerning Lewis, of the ancient house of Haystoun:

"I like him," said Mr. Stocks dishonestly. "He fought like a gentleman."

"These people are so rarely gentlemen," said Mrs. Andrews, proud of her high attitude. "I suppose his father made his money in coal and bought the land from some poor dear old aristocrat. It is so sad to think of it. And that sort of person is always over-educated, for you see they have not the spirit of the old families and they bury themselves in books." Mrs. Andrews's father had kept a crockery shop, but his daughter had buried the memory.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>John Buchan, The Half-Hearted (London, 1925), p. 45.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

In The Thirty-Nine Steps Buchan was still dealing harshly with the middle class. Marmaduke Jopley, the "blood stock-broker" and "scandalmonger," appears briefly and is described as "an offence to creation" who "would crawl a mile on his belly to anything that had a title or a million."<sup>19</sup>

In his later novels Buchan deals more kindly with the bourgeoisie. Mr. Duncan Dott, the likable town-clerk in The Free Fishers, is allowed to enter boldly into the action of the story and to play a considerable part in defeating the villains; and Mr. Dickson McCunn, a retired grocer, becomes one of the heroes in the Huntingtower group of novels. If McCunn is of the leisured class, he is a latecomer to it; and Buchan regards him essentially as the solid middle-class businessman; for he has Saskia, the Russian princess in Huntingtower, tell Alesha that she does not understand McCunn, since he has no equivalent in their country. Alexis replies:

"No . . . You will not find him in Russia. He is what we call the middle-class, which we who were foolish used to laugh at. But he is the stuff which above all others makes a great people. He will endure when aristocracies crack and proletariats crumble. In our own land we have never known him, but till we create him our land will not be a nation."<sup>20</sup>

McCunn has many admirable human qualities, not the least of which is shown in his adoption of the tatterdemalion group

---

<sup>19</sup>John Buchan, Adventures of Richard Hannay, pp. 112-113.

<sup>20</sup>John Buchan, Huntingtower, in Adventurers All (Boston, 1942), p. 309.

of scouts, "the Gorbals Die-Hards," as his "bairns."<sup>21</sup> He is the greatest and most deftly drawn of Buchan's bourgeois characters.

Buchan's greatest creations from the other two classes emerge in Mountain Meadow, completed a fortnight before his death. His compassionate poor folk reach perfection in two guides: the half-Cree, half-Scotch Johnny Frizel and the taller of the Hares, Big Klaus. In their simplicity, their purity is consistent. At no time do they put self before others, and at no place do they fail to lend a helping hand when one is needed, never counting the cost to themselves.

In the long search for Galliard, Johnny mercifully accommodates his pace to Leithen's dragging steps, and in camp he renders services beyond the ordinary duties of a guide in caring for the sick man. Johnny's concern for his brother Lew, when it becomes clear from the signs of the trail that the latter is pressing relentlessly on in his obsession to find the Sick Heart River, is clear in the following passage:

Lew came into every phase of Johnny's recollections. He had said this or that; he had done this or that; he seemed to be taken as the ultimate authority on everything in heaven and earth. But Johnny's attitude was something more than the admiration for an elder brother, or the respect of one expert for a greater. There was uneasiness in it. He seemed to bring in Lew's name in a kind of ritual, as if to convince himself that Lew was secure and happy.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>22</sup>John Buchan, Mountain Meadow (New York, 1953), p. 66.

When the signs tell him that Lew has shaken loose from his companion and moved on alone, Johnny is cruelly torn between the need to go after his last living relative and the need to stay and find Galliard, but he never questions Leithen's decision to stay. When Galliard is found, Johnny takes over his care with the efficiency of a hospital nurse.

Leithen urges him then to go after Lew and bring him back. There is a "stubborn, sagacious dutifulness" in the half-breed's reply:

"Nothin' doin'. You can't finish this hut. The Hares are willin' enough, but they've got to be told what to do . . . you're sick--God-awful sick--a whole lot sicker than the feller [Galliard]. So I say, Nothin' doin', though I'm sure obliged to you. We've got to carry on with our job and trust to God to keep an eye on brother Lew."<sup>23</sup>

Leithen becomes obsessed with the idea that he should go himself after Lew, with one of the Hares to help him. His purpose, ostensibly, is to find Lew, "persuade him to be reasonable and bring him back."<sup>24</sup> Actually, he seems driven by a selfish, urgent desire to reach the unexplored, and presumably Utopian, Valley of the Sick Heart where he, like Lew, hopes to discover some magic panacea for the human soul.

He sets out, accompanied by Big Klaus, and in the following pages Buchan develops the character of that good and simple Indian. Another Johnny, drawn to a smaller scale, "He was a merciful man, and kept turning in his tracks to

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

look at Leithen, and when he thought he seemed weary promptly dropped his pack and squatted on the ground."<sup>25</sup> Like Johnny he has a worried mind, and he tells Leithen of his concern for his people:

It had been a melancholy summer, for it had been foretold /from the shape of a caribou's shoulder-blade/ that many of the Hare people would presently die, and the whole tribe had fasted and prepared for their end. The manner of death had not been predicted--it might be famine, or disaster, or a stupendous storm.<sup>26</sup>

Big Klaus is an efficient camp-maker and guide, and he has a great store of primitive wisdom. Like Johnny he reads the frozen Northland like a chart:

"It will be very cold," said the Hare, sniffing towards the north like a pointer dog.<sup>27</sup>

This enables him to make provisions for his weary companion's comfort. The night grows bitter cold indeed, and the fragile Leithen is hard pressed to keep the warm spark of life within him; but Big Klaus sees him through:

Some time towards dawn he fell into an uneasy sleep. When he awoke Big Klaus was tending the fire, white as an icicle and bent double against the fury of a northwest wind. Snow was drifting in flakes like a pigeon's egg. With a bound winter had come upon them.

Movement was impossible, and the two men lay all day in the tent, Leithen half in a stupor, for the sudden onrush of cold seemed to have drained the remnants of his strength . . . The Hare split wood and rose every hour or so to tend the fire; for the rest he dozed, but he had a clock in his brain and he was never behindhand in his stoking.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

Lew Prizel is a far more complex figure than Johnny and Big Klaus. While they are constant in their goodness, the many-faceted Lew grows in stature under Buchan's deft pen. He is basically good, but he wages a continuing battle against a darker, more selfish, side of his nature. In disillusionment in the Sick Heart Valley he tells Leithen of his struggles:

"My father was bedrock Presbyterian, and I took after him--not like brother Johnny, who was always light-minded. There was times when my sins fair bowed me down, and I was like old Christian in The Pilgrim's Progress--I'd have gone through fire and water to get quit of 'em. Then I got the notion of this Sick Heart as the kind of place where there was no more trouble, a bit of the Garden of Eden that God had kept private for them as could find it. I'd been thinking about it for years, and suddenly I saw a chance of getting to it and finding peace forevermore.--Not dying--I wasn't thinking of dying--but living happily ever after, as the story-books say. That was my aim, fool that I was!"<sup>29</sup>

As soon as Lew finds that the Sick Heart is not a River of Life but is rather a place of death, his sanity returns; and the cruelty and selfishness, which caused him to desert Galliard in the wilds, vanish completely. He takes charge of Leithen's treatments and nurses him so carefully that the sick man's recovery of physical strength becomes miraculous.

More important than Leithen's returning bodily vigor, however, is his growth in spiritual strength and well-being. In the face of death and the vast, mysterious North there is a falling away of the narrowness and superficiality of the former Leithen of The Power House, John Macnab, The Dancing

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 118.



Floor, and The Gap in the Curtain. A new and greater Leithen is shaped by the powerful humanizing elements in his new-found friends and in the great Northland itself.

He had moved under selfish motivation when he decided to leave the comforts of home and old friends to search for Galliard, a total stranger. Facing certain death like a stoic, he was seeking, nevertheless, a way to find peace for his soul before death should overtake him; and, like Lew, he hoped to find it in the lonely North.

The same selfish motive presses him to leave the tender care of Johnny and set out with the Hare in search of Lew, who seems, in his madness, about to discover his Sick Heart River and fathom the mysteries of life and death. Leithen feels impelled to join him in that discovery. In the desolate Valley of the Sick Heart, they find no balm for the soul; but they do find a realization of the futility of seeking peace of mind in external nature outside the realm of human relationships. Humbled and purged, and having attained the goodness of Johnny, they return to his camp and do what they can to help Galliard gain mental stability. Presently all six members of the tiny encampment move off to the camp of the Hares in their noble effort to save that disaster-ridden tribe from annihilation.

In reaching his decision to help save the Hares, Leithen meets life's greatest test. No longer facing imminent death, he sees prospects, through a careful hoarding of his growing

supply of strength, for recovered health and many pleasant years among his old friends in England. But a hoarding of his strength would require selfishness, and he no longer is willing to be led by selfishness.

When kindly Big Klaus reports, "My father is dead,"<sup>30</sup> and slips back into the dusk that the others might not witness his grief, Leithen knows what his decision will be and that it will cost him his life; for "The tall Indian's cry rang in his ears like a knell."<sup>31</sup>

The realization that, in helping the Hares, he will at the same time be helping Galliard to overcome his terror of the North and take the last step in his journey back to sanity, clinches Leithen's decision:

It would be no small thing to release this man from ancestral fear and gird him for his task in the world. In making his own soul, he would also give back Galliard his. He would win the world, too, for now the great, shining, mystic universe about him was no longer a foe but a friend, part with himself of an eternal plan.<sup>32</sup>

The extent to which Leithen was able to help Galliard in his recovery is shown in the extract from the journal of Father Duplessis after Leithen's death. As they worked among the Hares, says Father Duplessis, Galliard became "a right hand" to Leithen and seemed "to draw strength from his presence, as the mistletoe draws strength from the oak."<sup>33</sup> In

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

the last quiet chapter of the book, the fully recovered Galliard takes time off from a busy and useful life to visit, with Felicity, his wife, the little mountain meadow atop the Northern divide which Leithen had loved and where Galliard had insisted that his friend's body be interred. In that peaceful setting "by the well of the Clairefontaine stream," they speak of Galliard's old fear and his new-found peace:

"You don't fear it any more?"

"No. It has become part of me, as close to me as my skin. I love it. It is myself. You see, I have made my peace with the North, faced up to it, defied it, and so won its blessing. Consider, my dear. The most vital forces of the world are in the North, in the men of the North, but only when they have annexed it. It kills those who run away from it."<sup>34</sup>

Of Buchan's other heroes, it seems to me the one nearest Leithen in clear-cut character development is Lewis Haystoun, who was created during the author's early twenties in The Half-Hearted. Haystoun, like Leithen, seeks spiritual peace; and both, after an inner struggle, find it magnificently in their decisions to lay down their lives for their friends. Usborne saw Haystoun as a significant forerunner of the other leisured-class heroes; for, of The Half-Hearted, he says:

It is in some ways more revealing of the Buchan 'decent-fellow' ethic than any other till the last, Sick Heart River. Buchan hadn't quite found his wave-length for the adventure story when he was twenty-five. (Youthfully, he gave The Half-Hearted an unhappy ending.) But he had found his main character.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>35</sup>Usborne, p. 85.

Usborne makes the assertion early in his book that Buchan's major hero is Hannay.<sup>36</sup> If by major hero he means most important, or most clearly drawn, hero, I cannot agree that Buchan's best characterization is found in Hannay. I can second a statement near the end of the same book, concerning Leithen: "as Buchan's character par excellence he is really the most interesting of the lot."<sup>37</sup>

Considered allegorically, Leithen in his search for the symbolic Sick Heart River resembles Christian in his search for the Land of Beulah in Pilgrim's Progress and, in some respects, Captain Ahab in his search for the white whale in Moby Dick. Although I feel that this resemblance is worth noting, I would not suggest that Leithen approaches either of those characters in greatness.

Buchan says in Pilgrim's Way, "It was huge fun playing with my puppets."<sup>38</sup> It is huge fun reading of them, too; and, as long as people continue to read novels for pleasurable escape or relief from the wearisome grind of life, it seems certain that these characters of Buchan's will find a lasting popularity. However, with the few exceptions discussed in this chapter in which character development and growth are apparent, Buchan's stereotyped characterizations

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>38</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 196.

appear relatively insignificant in comparison with his plotting or even with his settings.

## CHAPTER III

### BUCHAN'S SETTINGS

Stevenson says in A Gossip on Romance that "there is a fitness in events and places." As examples he points out the fact that one place may suggest work whereas another suggests idleness, and he adds that some places are particularly appropriate for the occurrence of specific events: "Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck."<sup>1</sup>

Buchan felt this same relationship of setting to event, for in Pilgrim's Way he writes that he "felt the clamour of certain scenes for an interpreter."<sup>2</sup> That Buchan was extraordinarily successful in the interpretation of those scenes has been demonstrated by numerous critics in such passages as the following from Swiggett's Introduction to Mountain Meadow:

. . . one of the joys of the [Buchan's] books is to open them and find another morning, another moor, sea, or mountain seen and described with the delight with which Shakespeare saw Warwickshire in his youth.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Gossip on Romance," Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1918), pp. 222-223.

<sup>2</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way (Boston, 1940), p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Swiggett, "Introduction," Mountain Meadow, by John Buchan (Boston, 1941), pp. vi-xii.

In the matter of the interpretation of scenes, and especially in the matching of place to event, by the medium of the printed word, the great difference between the master and the novice lies in the quality of selected details. The true artist in either literature or painting is able to choose those few vital and pertinent details that reveal the exact nature of a scene or an atmosphere as he wishes to portray it and to exclude all that is irrelevant. One of the bases for Buchan's profound admiration for Scott is the highly discriminating power of selectivity which Scott possessed. In discussing "the selective power of art" Buchan writes:

The Victorian novel is often prolix but it is never confused. The main lines of development are always crystal clear. Scott, for example, is fond of pouring the contents of an antiquarian's memory into his pages, but when things begin to happen there is no prolixity. He selects infallibly the details which print a great scene eternally on the memory. So, too, with the folk tales. They never fumble. The right details are unerringly selected.<sup>4</sup>

Buchan's own selective power is considerable, even in his less serious novels. In The Thirty-Nine Steps there is a scene in which Hannay gives material for the writing of a romance to a young, literary innkeeper at whose inn the hero found temporary refuge from his German pursuers. In one sentence he pictures a whole countryside:

I pictured a flight across the Kalahari to German Africa, the crackling, parching days, the wonderful blue-velvet nights.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale, The English Association Pamphlet No. 79 (Oxford, 1931), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>John Buchan, The Thirty-Nine Steps, in Adventures of Richard Hannay (Boston, 1939), p. 65.

In the hurried journeys by which he seeks, in the same novel, to elude the Germans, Hannay covers an astonishing amount of ground in England and Scotland, passing through scene after scene, each distinctively and clearly presented. Deliberate color shadings are used, and appeals are made to the senses of hearing, smell, and touch. Usually the description of each scene requires no more than a brief paragraph or two, or a few single sentences introduced at intervals throughout the account of some event.

Typical of these scenes is the "tablecloth of a place"<sup>6</sup> to which Sir Harry, with whom the hero had found a brief period of shelter, directs Hannay, as he awakens him and sets him on his way on an old bicycle at two o'clock on a starry morning:

I pedalled diligently up steep roads of hill gravel till the skies grew pale with morning. As the mists cleared before the sun I found myself in a wide green world with glens falling on every side and a faraway blue horizon. Here at any rate I could get early news of my enemies.<sup>7</sup>

When Hannay realizes that this "vantage ground might be in reality a trap," as there is "no cover for a tomtit in those bald green places," he hides the bicycle and prepares to stay where he is. "If you are hemmed in on all sides in a patch of land--there is only one chance of escape. You must stay in the patch, and let your enemies search it and not find

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-96.



you." The question is how to manage this, and Hannay is stumped until, through one of the wonderful coincidences that occur so often in Buchan's novels, he finds the roadman "in a tiny bight of road, beside a heap of stones."<sup>8</sup> Seeing that the roadman is incapacitated for his work as a result of too much imbibing at the celebration of his daughter's wedding on the previous evening, Hannay sends him home to bed and then disguises himself to take the man's place and perform his duties during the day. When his enemies stop to question him in their search, they find only an ordinary-looking and incredibly ignorant road mender.

To describe the monotony of that day's toil and to create the atmosphere of loneliness which pervades the scene, Buchan writes:

Still nothing appeared on that long white road.

Now and then a sheep wandered off the heather to stare at me. A heron flopped down to a pool in the stream and started to fish, taking no more notice of me than if I had been a mile-stone. On I went trundling my loads of stone, with the heavy step of the professional. Soon I grew warm and the dust on my face changed into solid and abiding grit. I was already counting the hours till evening should put a limit to Mr. Turnbull's monotonous toil.<sup>9</sup>

When finally, nearing the end of his evasive journeys, Hannay leaves Scotland and returns to England, the change in setting is briefly accomplished: "Presently I was in a land of lush water-meadows and slow reedy streams."<sup>10</sup> Leaving the

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

train, he sets out on foot, and the description continues:

The road led through a wood of great beeches and then into a shallow valley with the green backs of downs peeping over the distant trees. After Scotland the air smelled heavy and flat, but infinitely sweet, for the limes and chestnuts and lilac-bushes were domes of blossom. Presently I came to a bridge, below which a clear, slow stream flowed between snowy beds of water-buttercups. A little above it was a mill; and the lasher made a pleasant cool sound in the scented dusk. Somehow the place soothed me and put me at my ease.<sup>11</sup>

This passage contains examples of Buchan's way of appealing often to the sense of smell and the sense of hearing in his descriptive writing.

Buchan made extensive use of weather in his settings. Swiggett calls this portrayal of the elements Buchan's "gift for weather." As an example, the following excerpt from The Half-Hearted evokes an atmosphere of sleep-inducing heat on a midsummer noon in rural England:

It was the utter burning silence of midday, when the man who toils loses the skin of his face, and the man who rests tastes the joys of deep leisure. The blue airless sky, the level hilltops, the straight lines of glen, the treeless horizon of the moors--no sharp ridge or cliff caught the tired eye, only an even, sleep-lulled harmony.<sup>12</sup>

For a description of the opposite extreme in weather, the passage from Mountain Meadow which follows interprets the fierceness of a winter night in the far North:

He fell asleep early, and awoke after midnight to a changing world. The fire had sunk, but it was still fierce around the point where the spruce trunks intersected. The moon had set and the sky was hung with stars and planets--not inlaid, but hung, for the globes of sheer light were

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>12</sup>John Buchan, The Half-Hearted (London, 1925), p. 127.

patently suspended in the heavens, and it seemed as if the eye could see behind them into aboriginal darkness. The air had suddenly become bitterly cold, cold almost beyond bearing. The shudder which had for some days lurked behind the sunlight had sharpened to an icy rigour. Frost like a black concrete was settling over everything, gumming the eyes and lips together.<sup>13</sup>

Buchan relied heavily on rustic and pastoral landscapes in his settings. Perhaps this resulted largely from his childhood experiences with rural Scotland. Near the "little grey manse on the Fife Coast" where he lived with his parents there was a small woodlot of which Buchan writes in Pilgrim's Way:

Looking back, I realise that those woodlands dominated and coloured my childish outlook. We were a noted household for fairy tales. My father had a great collection of them . . . and when we entered the woods we felt ourselves stepping into the veritable world of faery, especially in winter, when the snow made a forest of what in summer was only a coppice.<sup>14</sup>

During vacations from school, "from early summer until some date in September," the Buchan children "dwelt in the Borders" with their maternal grandparents; and of these summers Buchan writes:

It was a complete break, for there seemed no link between the Tweedside hills and either the woods or the beaches of Fife. In those weeks we never gave our home a thought, and with bitter reluctance we returned to it. The Borders were to us a holy land which it would have been sacrilege to try to join on to our common life.<sup>15</sup>

Buchan was an ardent participant in the sports of fishing and

---

<sup>13</sup>John Buchan, Mountain Meadow (New York, 1953), pp. 102-103.

<sup>14</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

mountain climbing, and he seemingly could not resist bringing these sports into his settings. Buchan's friend and publisher in America, Ferris Greenslet, in a discussion of Buchan's "sterling novels of adventure," says:

It pleased him and his most devoted reader that in the pursuits and hurried journeys that fill these books, there is always a trout or salmon river to be followed, a mountain to be climbed.<sup>16</sup>

Usborne points out that Buchan was thoroughly familiar with Scotland and the Cotswolds, his favorite scenes for his "stay-at-home" books, and that he knew the Swiss Alps, America, and Canada well enough to place on paper from memory; but, Usborne further asserts, Buchan "did not need memory to hold the door. He became just as adept, and almost more felicitous, in describing places he did not know."<sup>17</sup>

The accuracy of this assertion can be verified from the following extract from Pilgrim's Way:

Early in 1914 I wrote Salute to Adventurers, the fruit of my enthusiasm for American history. In that book I described places in Virginia which I had never seen, and I was amazed, when I visited them later, to find how accurate had been my guesses.<sup>18</sup>

To further illustrate Buchan's felicity in describing scenes unknown to him from first-hand experience, there is a goose-shooting scene near the beginning of The Man from the Norlands.

<sup>16</sup>Ferris Greenslet, Under the Bridge (Boston, 1943), p. 202.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Usborne, Clubland Heroes (London, 1953), p. 87.

<sup>18</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 194.

or The Island of Sheep in the English printings, which pictures a January dawn on the Norfolk Coast. Both Swiggett and Usborne cite the effectiveness of the passage. Swiggett writes: "That chapter, for men who love birds and sea-marshes, the chill hunger of the hunter before dawn is one of the most glorious ever written."<sup>19</sup> He adds in a footnote that the boy in the scene is a likeness of one of Buchan's sons. Usborne says, also in a footnote:

It could stand in any anthology of the prose and poetry of wildfowling. Buchan's eldest son, the present Lord Tweedsmuir, told me that East Anglian goose-shooting was not a sport his father had ever taken part in. He had worked up that wonderful evocation of sight and sound and weather from some facts of such an experience that his son had given him in a letter.<sup>20</sup>

He adds that Buchan could "paint a memorable landscape from an imagination electrified by a conversation with somebody" or, as he suspects, from "ten minutes reading in encyclopaedia or gazetteer."<sup>21</sup>

Greenslet states that Buchan "had the two best gifts for the historical novelist, the love of place and the sense of wonder." He selects two historical novels, Witch Wood and The Blanket of the Dark, as Buchan's most serious fictions; and, regarding the historical settings, adds:

In these stories, as in his biographies of Montrose and Cromwell, he seemed to have conquered time and become the

---

<sup>19</sup>Swiggett, p. xlii.

<sup>20</sup>Usborne, p. 88.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

contemporary of the three hundred years of British history of which he wrote.<sup>22</sup>

Buchan thought of Witch Wood as the "best" of his four historical novels over which he says that he "took a great deal of pains." In telling of the writing of Witch Wood, The Free Fishers, Midwinter, and The Blanket of the Dark, Buchan says:

Being equally sensitive to the spells of time and of space, to a tract of years and a tract of landscape, I tried to discover the historical moment which best interpreted the ethos of a particular countryside, and to devise the appropriate legend.<sup>23</sup>

In a review of Midwinter in The Bookman, J. P. Collins tells of that novel's "high vein of descriptive writing" and states that the "gipsy scenes in the green shaws of the Cotswold forest country have the authentic quality of Robin Hood."

He continues:

Where the book excels is in its fine landscape work--enchancing pictures of the Cotswold country in all its homely, kindly beauty, such as will go to colour and adorn many a prose anthology for years to come.<sup>24</sup>

A significant part in Buchan's construction of settings is played by his descriptions of houses. Most of the novels contain several such descriptions. Swiggett cites an example from The Power House, the paragraph which describes the house called High Ashes. He feels that much of the "unique charm

---

<sup>22</sup>Greenslet, p. 206.

<sup>23</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup>J. P. Collins, "Midwinter," The Bookman, Vol. LXIV, October, 1923, p. 24.

of these tales" is illustrated by that paragraph and others which "might well have come out of Cranford or Mansfield Park."<sup>25</sup>

Another example, in which Buchan used the description of a house to create a mood, is his portrayal of the "old world dwelling" of Glenavelin in The Half-Hearted. This passage, which follows, produces an atmosphere of absolute peace:

Here in the soft sunlit afternoon sleep hung like a cloud, and the peace of centuries dwelt in the long avenues and golden pastures. Another turning and the house came in sight, at first glance a mere jumble of grey towers and ivied walls. Wings had been built to the original square keep, and even now it was not large, a mere moorland dwelling. But the whitewashed walls, the crow-step gables, and the quaint Scots baronial turrets gave it a perfection to the eye like a house in a dream.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after the World War of 1914, to satisfy his "longing for rural peace," Buchan sold his house in London and purchased the "little manor house of Elsfield," four miles from the city of Oxford.<sup>27</sup> Greenslet says that the "country boy, walker of hills and wader of streams . . . found his perfect setting" at Elsfield; and it was not unlike Fosse Manor, the happy, bird-haunted retreat in which Hannay is discovered in the opening chapters of The Three Hostages.<sup>28</sup>

One thing about Elsfield which attracted Buchan particularly was the presence there of an upland clearing. "Our

---

<sup>25</sup>Swiggett, p. xiv.

<sup>26</sup>John Buchan, The Half-Hearted, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 183.

<sup>28</sup>Greenslet, p. 200.

ridge," he says in Pilgrim's Way, "was old forest land and it provided one of the two types of landscape which have always had a special charm for me." The two types to which he had reference are "the mountain meadow and the woodland clearing."<sup>29</sup> They appear early and frequently in the settings for his novels. He apparently favored the natural clearing over the artificially produced type. In Salute to Adventurers, when he described an area in America which he had never seen, he dotted the mountains of Virginia with these small, natural clearings. Similarly, he scatters them liberally over the face of the continents of Europe, Africa, and South America; and eventually one of them becomes the basis for the American title of the last of his novels, Mountain Meadow.

In writing of Buchan's "vivid presentation of scene," Longaker and Bolles declare, "At rare times particular scenes approach the stark power of old ballads."<sup>30</sup> One such powerful scene occurs at the end of The Half-Hearted, when Lewis Haystoun holds the narrow crevice of a pass on the Indian Border against the invading Russian Cossacks and the fierce Bada-Mawidi savages, taking a terrible toll of enemy lives and giving up his own life in order that his friends in India may be warned in time to defend the Border against

---

<sup>29</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 192.

<sup>30</sup>Mark Longaker and Edwin C. Bolles, Contemporary English Literature (New York, 1953), p. 367.



the Cossacks and crush the rebellion of the tribesmen. As this stirring account of Lewie's heroic stand ends with the marching of the enemy troops over the young hero's body, Buchan in the following paragraph sets the peaceful stage for that final quiet, moving scene in which Marka, captain of the Cossacks, and grizzled old Fazir Khan, leader of the Bada-Mawidi, admit defeat and pay homage to the dead Haystoun before leaving the pass. The opening paragraph of that quiet ending reads:

Dawn came with light and sweet airs to the dark cleft in the hills. Just at that moment, when the red east was breaking into spires and clouds of colour, and the little morning winds were beginning to flutter among the crags, two men were standing in the throat of the pass. The ground about them was ploughed up as if by a battery, the rock seamed and broken, and red stains of blood were on the dry gravel. From the north, in the direction of the plain, came the confused sound of an army in camp. But to the south there was a glimpse through an aperture of hill of a far side of mountain, and on it a gleam as of fire.<sup>31</sup>

The gleam is from a beacon that is the signal of an awakened empire and the final proof of failure for the Cossacks and the Bada-Mawidi.

Buchan, in his autobiography says that he "knew Thomas Hardy fairly well."<sup>32</sup> In his Sir Walter Scott, which Longaker and Bolles call "the best since Lockhart,"<sup>33</sup> Buchan makes a comparison between Scott and Hardy, with regard to

---

<sup>31</sup>John Buchan, The Half-Hearted, pp. 315-316.

<sup>32</sup>John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, p. 148.

<sup>33</sup>Longaker and Bolles, p. 367.

the way in which each author handles the setting in one of his novels. Of Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor he writes: "The landscape is artfully managed, and becomes, like Egdon Heath in Mr. Hardy's The Return of the Native, almost a protagonist in the tale."<sup>34</sup>

Buchan's Northland in Mountain Meadow seems to me fully as much a protagonist in the novel and equally well handled as either Hardy's Egdon Heath or Scott's Lammermoors. Buchan's men, in their journey through the bleak wilderness of the North, are involved in a continuous struggle against the terrain and against the elements. The exertions necessary to maintain human life under such unfavorable conditions are so rigorous that they purge from the men their selfish motives along with all their petty conflicts and unite them in one intense battle against their surroundings. Soon after Leithen employs Johnny Frizel to be his guide and they set out with the two Hares, Big Klaus and Little Klaus, in search of Galliard, the half-breed informs Leithen that "winter's a fine time to travel if you know the ways of it." He assures the hopelessly sick man that he will be "snugger" in a hole in the snow at forty below than in an apartment house in Winnipeg, and "a darn lot healthier"; but he adds, ". . . you've got to watch your step in the Northland." He tells of experiences of his own to show the cruelty of the

---

<sup>34</sup>John Buchan, Sir Walter Scott (London, 1932), p. 194.

wilds, yet he is always careful to explain that his misfortunes were due to his own folly in not remembering to be careful.<sup>35</sup>

Johnny picks up the trail of his brother Lew and the missing Galliard and follows it at as fast a pace as Leithen is able to maintain. To place a subtle emphasis on the North as a land of contrasts, Buchan has them encounter first such harmless animals as the ptarmigan and willow grouse and the big Arctic hares "just getting into their winter coats"; and then they begin to observe the "dim shapes" of the great timber wolves and their little grey cousins. To indicate the extreme changeableness of mood of which the Arctic region is capable, Buchan offers the following contrast of the delicate brightness of the aurora borealis to the fierce blackness of the wolves:

One night, too, when Leithen could not sleep, he got up and watched the northern heavens where the aurora flickered like a curtain of delicate lace wrought in every tint of the rainbow. It lit up the foreground, across which stalked a procession of black forms like some frieze on a Greek urn.

He found Johnny at his side. "That's the North," he said solemnly. "The wolves and the aurora. God send us a kind winter."<sup>36</sup>

Here I think it is significant that the dark part of the scene is in the foreground with the brightness in the distance beyond. This would seem to emphasize the theme of hope beyond misery and despair, symbolic of the maddening

---

<sup>35</sup>John Buchan, Mountain Meadow, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

hope that obsessed Lew and eventually Leithen in their relentless drive to reach the Sick Heart Valley. When Lew's trail leaves the beaten path and strikes off to the northward through rough country that is new even to Johnny, Leithen's tiny party comes upon the scene pictured in the following excerpt which presents another powerful contrast of darkness near at hand and lightness in the distance:

In the foreground the land dropped steeply into gorges which seemed to converge in a deep central trough. But they were very unlike the mild glens through which they had been ascending. These were rifts in the black rocks, their edges feathered with dwarf pines, and from their inky darkness in the sunlight they must be deep . . . But it was not the foreground that held the eye, but the immense airy sweep of the snowfields and ice pinnacles up to a central point, where a tall peak soared into the blue . . . the central mountain must compete with the chief summits of the southern Rockies. But unlike the Rockies the scene was composed as if by a great artist--nothing untidy and shapeless, but everything harmonised into an exquisite unity of line and colour.<sup>37</sup>

As Leithen's eyes drop from that beautiful skyline to the rugged foreground and the dark vastness of the deep-cut valley in the middle distance, he shudders with the feeling that "somewhere down there" he will "leave his own bones." Johnny stares spellbound at the scene; and at last, drawing a deep breath, he says:

"Them's the biggest mountains in the Northland and only you and me and Lew and his pal has seen 'em, and some Indians that don't count. But it's goin' to be a blasted country to travel. See that black gash? I reckon that's where the Sick Heart River flows, and it'll be hell's own job to get down to it."<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

As they make their treacherous descent into the first gorge, there is a change in the weather. The "cold blue sky" dulls to "a colder grey," and all light seems to go out of the landscape. It is like "the coming of the Polar Night . . . the inexorable drawing-down of a curtain upon the glory of the world." Snow begins to fall, and soon there is "nothing but white round them, except the tops of the little gnarled firs."<sup>39</sup>

Galliard, left behind by Lew in his frantic haste to reach the Sick Heart, stumbles into their camp in a delirious condition, and his care requires the constant attention of Johnny. As Leithen, obsessed by the same phantom hope that draws Lew like a magnet to the mysterious Valley of the Sick Heart, sets forth on Lew's trail accompanied only by Big Klaus, the full advent of winter seems eminent. There is a "shuddering undercurrent of cold." The sun still shines weakly and there is no wind. The landscape appears peaceful enough; but that peace seems unnatural, as if the place were "destined for strife." This "cold, raw, hilltop world" was not made for peace; and its "temporary gentleness" seems "a trap to lure the unwary into its toils."<sup>40</sup>

Through all this stark setting, from the start of the journey until the return to the camp of the Hares, Buchan

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

allows a theme of Death to run like a leitmotif. For example, the following passage pictures the arrival of Leithen's small party at a spot where the trail passes beneath the body of a dead chieftain that has been wrapped and suspended in a tree after the manner of the Hares:

At the head of a little pass Johnny halted, though the march had only been going for twenty minutes. The Hares, when they came up, set down their packs and broke into a dismal howling, which seemed to be meant for a chant. There was a big jackpine with the lower branches lopped off, and some fifty feet from the ground a long bundle was lashed to the trunk, something wrapped in caribou skin tanned white.

Johnny removed his disreputable hat. "That's a chief up there. Good old scout he was--name of Billy Whitefish. . . . Passed out last fall."<sup>41</sup>

In the last days before Leithen and Big Klaus finally reach the Valley of the Sick Heart, Leithen's strength ebbs to the point where he looks for death to claim him almost momentarily. He grows almost oblivious of the landscape, for:

Every hour he was looking at marvels of natural beauty and magnificence, but they did not affect him. Life now awoke no response in him, and he remembered that some wise man had thus defined death. The thought gave him a queer comfort. He was already dead; there only remained the simple snapping of the physical cord.<sup>42</sup>

In this condition, assisted by kindly Big Klaus, he comes suddenly to the rim of the Sick Heart Valley and finds himself staring breathlessly "not up, but down into a chasm nearly a mile wide and two thousand feet deep." From his feet the ground falls away "in scree" to a rib of black

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

rock, below which, "in a blue mist very far down," are the links of a river, and beyond that meadows and woods of very tall timber. Again, it appears as a place of light hues set in the dark surroundings:

The valley bottom, so far as he could see it, seemed to be as orderly as a garden. The Sick Heart was like a Highland salmon river, looping itself among pools and streams with wide beaches of pebbles, beaches not black like the enclosing cliffs, but shining white. Along its course, and between the woods, were meadows of wild hay, now a pale russet against the ripple of the stream and the evergreen of the trees . . . There must be hot springs, he thought, natural in a volcanic country; that would explain the richness of the herbage.<sup>43</sup>

However, when the two manage to reach the floor of the valley, by falling the last part of the way down, they find Lew; and he informs them that what appears to be a beautiful place of life is, in reality, a place of death:

"One thing I know--this is the River of the Water of Death. You can't live in this valley. There's no life here. Not a bird or beast, not a squirrel in the woods, not a rabbit in the grass, let alone bear or deer."

"There are warm springs," Leithen said. There must be duck there."

"Devil a duck! I looked to find the sedges full of them, geese and ducks that the Eskimos and Indians had hurt and that couldn't move south. Devil a feather! And devil a fish in the river! When God made this place He wasn't figuring on humans taking up lots in it."<sup>44</sup>

Momentarily it appears that the North has won its battle against the three men trapped in the valley apparently to die of starvation; but the weary Leithen, with his skill in mountain climbing, makes his way to the top of the cliffs

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-102.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-116.

and fastens a rope for the use of the other two before he drops senseless in the snow.

This victory over the frozen Northland seems to awaken a new interest in life for Leithen; for when he next regains consciousness in a spruce-lined pit in the snow "as warm as if he were in bed at home," he finds that the "fit of utter apathy" has passed. He ponders the strangeness of this cache in the snow, this "midwinter refuge in a world inimical to man." He feels a new awareness of his surroundings as if the "bitter diamond air, like some harsh acid," has "stung him back to . . . a feeble response to life."<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the rest of that long winter, back at Johnny's camp, Lew carefully nurses Leithen back to a miraculous recovery of health and strength. During his long convalescence, Leithen has ample time to reflect on the effects of the North upon the men who inhabit it, and to try to discover a remedy for the sickness within the mind of Galliard:

Leithen brooded over that mysterious thing, the North, a part of the globe which had no care for human life, which was not built to man's scale, a remnant of that Ice Age which long ago had withered the earth . . . The Galliard family for generations had . . . gone out to wrestle with it, and had not returned . . . He was bound to the North by race and creed and family tradition; it was not hard for the gods of the Elder Ice to stretch a long arm and pluck him from among the fleshpots.<sup>46</sup>

The humanizing effects of the Northland upon Leithen have been discussed elsewhere in this study, in the chapter on

---

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 153.



characterization. Once he has come to friendly terms with the North, Leithen sees his companions in their true relationship to the setting in which they move; and he recognizes his own ability to be of help to them in meeting the challenge of the vast Arctic region:

He saw the Indians as tenuous growths, funguses which had no hold on the soil. They existed on sufferance; the North had only to tighten its grip and they would disappear. Lew and Johnny, too. They were not mushrooms, for they had roots and they had the power to yield under strain and spring back again, but were they any better than grassy filaments which swayed in the wind, but might any day be pinched out of existence? . . . And Galliard? He had deeper roots, but they were not healthy enough to permit transplanting . . . Compared to his companions Leithen suddenly saw himself founded solidly like an oak. He was drawing life from deep sources. Death, if it came, was no blind trick of fate, but a thing accepted and therefore mastered. He fell asleep in a new mood of confidence.<sup>47</sup>

When the news comes of the terrible and helpless plight of the epidemic-stricken Hares, he quickly makes his decision to go to the aid of the Indians at the risk of the almost certain loss of his new-found health and of life itself.

He is aware that the Hares respect him almost as one restored from the dead because of his remarkable recovery from the dreaded tuberculosis which has taken such a heavy toll in lives among the members of the tribe. He knows that he alone in all that great wilderness can restore their desire to live and their will to face the challenge of the North which are so necessary for the maintenance of human existence in the frigid Arctic area. He also recognizes that in enlisting the

---

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-170.

aid of Galliard among the ailing Indians, he will be helping him mightily in his recovery of full sanity and self-confidence. He succeeds both with the Indians and with Galliard; and, although he loses his life in the efforts, he does so willingly; for he has come to realize that, whatever befalls him, he is "once again in love with his fellows," and that the "cold, infernal North" magnifies instead of dwarfing humanity.<sup>48</sup> He seems to have attained the peace of mind which he sought.

Longaker and Bolles state that the "art by which the story is lifted chapter by chapter to its austere climax is simple and sure." They point out that, in its evocation of the fascination and terror of the North, the book is "a masterpiece." In this novel alone, they contend, "Buchan enters the company of the great Romancers."<sup>49</sup>

With regard to its contribution to the success and popular appeal of his novels, it appears from the study introduced in this chapter that Buchan's skill in selecting details for and in portraying settings ranks next in order of importance to his skill in plotting. In their variety and vividness of presentation, his settings reveal a greater proficiency or adeptness on the part of the author than do the largely stereotyped characterizations and themes.

---

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>49</sup>Longaker and Bolles, p. 367.

## CHAPTER IV

### A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF JOHN BUCHAN AS A NOVELIST

In his biography of Sir Walter Scott, Buchan theorizes that in the study of a practitioner of an art so rapidly developing as that of fiction, it is useless to "attempt to devise a calculus of merit or to fix his exact rank in a hierarchy." He explains that there is "one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon." Since the novel is "the world" as seen through the "temperament of the novelist," the fiction writer's success depends upon the depth of his insight and the richness of his temperament. In other words, his success depends on the "twin powers of perception and interpretation." He continues:

In assessing his [the novelist's] value the points which concern us are his competence as a student of life; the nature of the technique by which he presents his conclusions; and in the last resort his power of transforming and sublimating his world, that "stellar and undiminishable something" which was Emerson's definition of greatness.<sup>1</sup>

As Buchan said he was doing, in his evaluation of Scott, I shall "offer in this chapter modestly and tentatively my own conclusions."<sup>2</sup> I feel that it is still too early to

---

<sup>1</sup>John Buchan, Sir Walter Scott (London, 1932), p. 336.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

determine, with any degree of authority, exactly what importance should be placed on Buchan's work as a novelist. Opinions are still in the process of being formed and expressed. It is my belief that Buchan will draw more and more attention from scholars as Mountain Meadow comes to be more fully appreciated. In my opinion, those people who have dismissed that novel thus far as merely another Buchan "thriller," should take a closer look and discover the quality of the selection and interpretation used in it.

Longaker and Bolles stress the superiority of Mountain Meadow over Buchan's other adventure stories, as I have discussed in the chapters of this study on Buchan's settings and his plottings. According to them, it is only in this "masterpiece" that "Buchan enters the company of the great"; though they also ascribe considerable merit to the historical "fantasy," The Path of the King, which they describe as "sombre and intensely moving." This book, they contend, read together with Mountain Meadow, leaves the conviction that, "Buchan missed his calling--though that seems an absurd thing to say of so successful a man." They conclude that, if a writer to whom fiction was little more than an avocation of his lighter moments could produce two such books as these, he would "certainly," had he given himself wholly to it, "have been one of the greater Georgian novelists."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Mark Longaker and Edwin G. Bolles, Contemporary English Literature (New York, 1953), p. 367.

However, the exciting tales of high adventure by which Buchan gained such wide popularity with the reading public must not be underestimated by anyone attempting to form an estimate of him as a novelist. Swiggett asserts that to those who have come "under the spell of these romances" there is "nothing to equal them." He says that there is a "great story-telling gift" at work in these books, but even more important than that in giving the tales their fascination are "the characters of the men themselves."<sup>4</sup>

In Pilgrim's Way Buchan states that during his undergraduate days he tried his hand "at historical novels" and that he had then some ambition to "write fiction in the grand manner." He explains that this ambition "waned," and apart from a few short stories he "let fiction alone" until 1910. At that time, "being appalled" as a publisher by the dullness of most boys' books, he wrote one of his own, based on his South African experiences. The result was Prester John which, he adds, has since become "a school-reader in many languages." Salute to Adventurers followed early in 1914. Then, he continues, while confined to his bed during the first part of World War I, he "invented a young South African" called Richard Hannay, who "had traits copied from many friends." The first of the novels about Hannay's adventures, The Thirty-Nine Steps, "had an immediate success," and Buchan was

---

<sup>4</sup>Howard Swiggett, "Introduction," Mountain Meadow, by John Buchan (Boston, 1941), pp. v-vi.

"encouraged to continue." During the next quarter of a century, until his death in 1940, states his American publisher, Ferris Greenslet, "forty titles, running to more than fifty volumes" by Buchan, "appeared on the Park Street List" of Houghton Mifflin Company.<sup>6</sup>

Greenslet writes that many of the "sterling novels of adventure" for which Buchan is best known to the wider public were "set down on a pad held on his knees" during the daily round trip of three hours between Oxford and the publishing offices of Thomas Nelson's Sons where Buchan was a partner. Concerning the quality of these books, Greenslet adds that "one has only to compare them with the numerous tales described as 'in the manner of Buchan' to see their individuality and preeminence." He feels that "they strike a note of poetry and high courage" which "set them above other contemporary work in the field."<sup>7</sup>

On this matter it seems to me that Greenslet should be well qualified to speak with authority, since he states that, in the twenty-year period between 1910 and 1930, he read in manuscript "all the books we published except Westerns and juveniles, and many that we didn't." From his extensive readings, he concludes that the "printed matter came to be selected more and more for pleasure and escape."<sup>8</sup> It is

---

<sup>6</sup>Ferris Greenslet, Under the Bridge (Boston, 1943), p. 201.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-202.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

understandable, then, why so many readers chose to buy Buchan's novels. It is my opinion, from study and personal observation, that most people who read novels still continue to select at least a part of their books on that same basis--for pleasure and escape. I have observed, in the Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library, that Buchan's novels are still widely circulated. It seems to me that any novelist who maintains a wide reading audience for almost half a century must be accorded some degree of significance as a writer of fiction, although I do not wish to suggest that Buchan is a major author in that field. Perhaps a good indication of the degree of popularity attained by some of the Buchan novels may be gained from a study of the number of editions through which each has passed since its first printing.

Hanna's bibliography on Buchan, published in 1953, lists ten editions of The Half-Hearted, including seven in England, two in America, and one in Holland; thirty-two editions of Prester John, including editions in Dutch, French, Italian, Swedish, and Spanish, and also including "Classic" and "Famous Book" editions; twenty-six single editions of The Thirty-Nine Steps, plus at least nine other editions in combination with other novels (There is also a motion picture based on this novel and with the same title.); eighteen editions of Salute to Adventurers, printed separately, plus two others in which it shares a volume with other novels; thirty-one single editions of Greenmantle, including printings in Czech,

Swedish, French, Italian, and Spanish, plus at least six in combination with others; thirteen single editions of Mr. Standfast, including one Czech, plus two combination editions; thirteen printings of The Path of the King; thirteen of Huntingtower, plus combinations; fifteen of Midwinter, including one in Czech and one in Gaelic; fourteen of The Three Hostages; eleven of John Macnab; nine of The Dancing Floor; seven of Witch Wood; eight of Castle Gay; eight of The Gap in the Curtain; nine of A Prince of the Captivity; seven of The Free Fishers; twelve of The Island of Sheep (The Man From the Norlands), including one in Swedish; eight of The House of the Four Winds; and six printings of Sick Heart River (Mountain Meadow).<sup>9</sup>

In The Novel and the Fairy Tale, Buchan says that it is "a salutary thing" to remind oneself that the judgments of posterity may be different from our own; but he adds that he thinks it permissible to "claim endurance for things which have the qualities that hitherto have endured--things that are close to the tap-root of humanity." Implying that his romances, and those of Scott and certain other novelists, are "related to" the folk tales, he says that "any form of literature" that is "inspired by the same creed, close to the earth and yet kin to the upper air, will have the same immortality." He continues:

---

<sup>9</sup>Archibald Hanna, Jr., John Buchan, 1875-1940, A Bibliography (Hamden, Connecticut, 1953), pp. 3-64.



To-day we are sometimes told that Scott and Thackeray and Dickens, and even Thomas Hardy, are back numbers, that they practised a superseded form of art, that the novel of the future will be a far more recondite thing, tremulous with meaning, profoundly 'aware', surcharged with subtle psychology, and that the old crude business of story and character and moral preference and a cheerful philosophy is only for the amusement of children. I take leave to doubt that forecast.<sup>10</sup>

Buchan apparently felt that the trend toward the psychological novel and away from reliance on plot, character, and moral in fiction was only a literary fad which would enjoy popularity for a time and then die, while the best of the romances, patterned after older forms of literature, would last. In an address published in Canadian Occasions, he expresses his opinion of literary fads in the following passage:

I wish someone would write a history of literary fads and heresies, merely to show how short-lived they are. In the past century in Britain we had the Dellacruscans in the beginning, and the Spasmodics in the 'fifties, and the Decadents in the 'nineties, and after the War we have had the dismal exponents of anarchic pessimism. Where are these coteries to-day? Dead as Queen Anne and scarcely remembered even by the historian. Time is the true winnower of wheat from chaff, and what remains from that winnowing is a possession for ever.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the judgment of posterity may be regarding Buchan as a novelist, he can scarcely be disregarded by historians as one of the most talented and hard-working individuals of his generation. Greenslet tells of visiting him when Buchan was convalescing from an operation and of finding

---

<sup>10</sup>John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup>John Buchan, Canadian Occasions (Toronto, 1941), p. 256.

him "doing, characteristically, four things at once." He says that "writing was as natural to him and as constant as breathing."<sup>12</sup>

Greenslet states that toward the end of his eight years in Parliament, Buchan "came to occupy a peculiar position of triangular liaison between the two elements of the National Government and the Crown." He adds that all three "valued his historical learning, his Scottish good sense and discretion, his human touch." As Governor-General of Canada, says Greenslet, Buchan "made quite literally a million friends"; for his friend found that in Ottawa, the week of Buchan's death, "porters, conductors, small shopkeepers, men in the street, spoke of him with broken voices."<sup>13</sup>

During the last few months of his life, Greenslet continues, Buchan as usual "was writing three books at the same time," Pilgrim's Way; his "perhaps even more autobiographic" Mountain Meadow; and his book of Canadian legends for young readers. The last words that came to Greenslet "from that tireless pen" were the conclusion "of an excursus on the prose of mortality" in the manuscript of the two unfinished chapters of Pilgrim's Rest, the "fishing book" he had begun immediately upon finishing Pilgrim's Way, the month before his death. Greenslet's concluding tribute to his friend reads:

---

<sup>12</sup>Greenslet, p. 160.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 206-208.

Surely it was of himself, as well as of Sir Edward Leithen, that he was speaking in the last sentence of Mountain Meadow, written a month before: 'He knew that he would die; but he knew also that he would live.'<sup>14</sup>

In an article following Buchan's death in February, 1940, a writer for Time praises the Briton's multiple achievements and indicates the degree of interrelationship between his writing and his political activities. Buchan's "brave and resourceful" young heroes, he says, "came to have a sort of Empire symbolism all their own. He adds that "coupled with his yeoman political and patriotic services," this gained for Buchan "a place on the list of Britain's patriots not far down the line from Winston Churchill."<sup>15</sup>

In this study I have attempted to present a reasonably thorough analysis of the techniques used by Buchan in a few of what I consider to be his most representative and most significant novels. An examination of Buchan's techniques in plotting, presentation of settings, and characterization indicated that these components of his novels should be arranged in that order to be ranked according to their importance in determining the popular success of the Buchan romances. Brief comparisons between Buchan's techniques and those used by such other romancers as Stevenson and Scott have been presented, and similarities and differences have been discussed. Attention has been given to some of the

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 210-211.

<sup>15</sup>"Wee But Great," Time, February 19, 1940, p. 27.

criteria by which novelists are classified as either major or minor writers of fiction. In conclusion I have offered a critical estimate of Buchan as a novelist, based on my findings in this study. Sufficient evidence was not found for suggesting that he should be regarded as a major writer of fiction. However, my findings do indicate that Buchan's accomplishments in that field are great enough--especially in Mountain Meadow--to insure him a place along with Scott and Stevenson as one who has written the adventure story and the romance on a level worthy of the ballads and the folk tales.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Buchan, John. Adventurers All /Containing Huntingtower, John Macnab, and The Three Hostages/. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Adventures of Richard Hannay /Containing The Thirty-Nine Steps, Greenmantle, and Mr. Standfast/. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Augustus. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Canadian Occasions. Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1941.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Castle Gay. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Courts of the Morning. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1931.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Dancing Floor. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Free Fishers. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1936.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Half-Hearted. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Homilies and Recreations. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_. John Macnab. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Julius Caesar. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Lost Lady of Old Years. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1922.

- \_\_\_\_\_. The Man from the Norlands. New York: The Sun Dial Press, Inc., 1939.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Montrose. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Mountain Meadow /With an Introduction by Howard Swiggett/. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Mountain Meadow. New York: Bantam Books, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Novel and the Fairy Tale /The English Association Pamphlet No. 79/. Oxford: The University Press, 1931.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Oliver Cromwell. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Pilgrim's Way. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Prester John. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Salute to Adventurers. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1919.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sir Walter Scott. London: Cassell and Company, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Three Hostages. New York: Bantam Books, 1946.
- Buchan, Susan Grosvenor. The Lilac and the Rose. London: Duckworth, 1952.
- Canby, Henry Seidel. "John Buchan." The Saturday Review of Literature, XXI (February 17, 1940), 8.
- Church, Leslie Frederic. "John Buchan--Happy Warrior." The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, CLXXII (July, 1947), 294-296.
- Collins, J. P. "Midwinter." The Bookman, LXIV (October, 1923), 24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Idealism of John Buchan." The Bookman, LXII (September, 1922), 239-240.
- Greenslet, Ferris. Under the Bridge. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943.
- Hanna, Archibald, Jr. John Buchan, 1875-1940, A Bibliography. Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1953.

- "Hard Working Britons." The New York Times (February 14, 1940), 20.
- Hodge, David. "John Buchan." The Bookman, LI (October, 1916), 7-11.
- Longaker, Mark, and Edwin C. Bolles. Contemporary English Literature. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953.
- "New Viceroy, The." Time, XXVI (October 21, 1935), 20-21.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. "A Gossip on Romance." Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918.
- "Tweedsmuir." Newsweek, VI (November 9, 1935), 28-29.
- Usborne, Richard. Clubland Heroes. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1953.
- "Wee But Great." Time, XXXV (February 19, 1940), 27.

VITA

Lemuel W. Murray, Jr.

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Thesis: THE TECHNIQUES OF JOHN BUCHAN IN HIS NOVELS

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born near Cameron, Oklahoma, April 15, 1926, son of Lemuel W. and Mary Tennie Murray.

Education: Attended grade school at Williams, Oklahoma; graduated from Cameron High School in 1944; attended Poteau Junior College in 1944-1945; received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Northeastern State College at Tahlequah, with a major in English, in May, 1950.

Professional experience: Entered the teaching profession in the autumn of 1946, and has taught each year since that time in the public schools of Oklahoma, with the exception of an extended period of illness in 1954-1955, making a total of eleven years of teaching experience to date. Commissioned as a notary public in and for the State of Oklahoma on May 22, 1958.

Member of Alpha Chi National Honorary Society, O. E. A., and U. B. E. A.