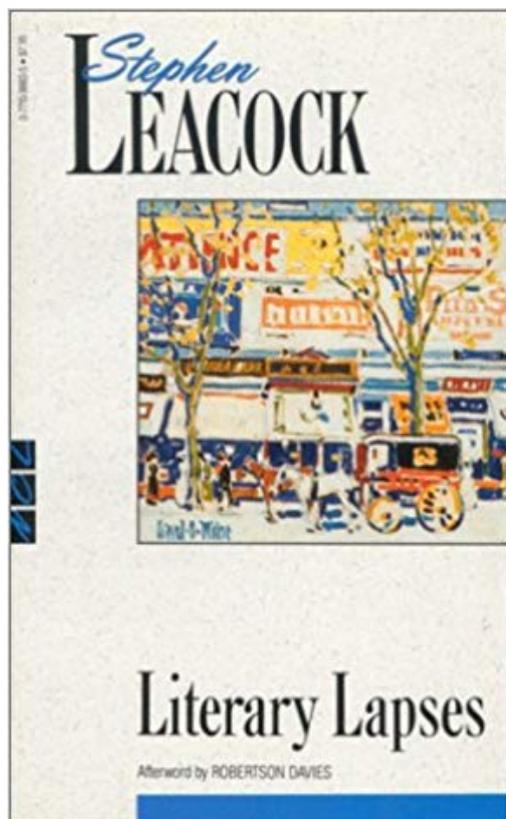


Literary Lapses (New Canadian Library) by Robertson Davies, Stephen Leacock



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The humour, irony, and wit of Stephen Leacock have never been shown to better advantage than in *Literary Lapses*, his first collection of comic writings. Within its pages are such classic stories as the man who is seized by fear as he opens a bank account; the awful case of the young man who dies because he cannot tell a lie; the astonishing tale of the baby who ate thirteen Christmas dinners, and many other tales that have become part of the world's comic literature. When *Literary Lapses* first appeared in 1910, it was an instant critical and popular success. Within a few years of its publication, Leacock was acknowledged as the English-speaking world's most beloved humourist.



Reviews of the Literary Lapses (New Canadian Library) by Robertson Davies, Stephen Leacock

Dandr

Stephen Leacock was a tremendously well regarded humorist in the early part of the twentieth century, (no less an eminence than Robertson Davies declared him a true "genius"). And, thankfully,

his gently mocking and ironic pieces are as fresh and entertaining today as they were when published. It's a shame that this great Canadian writer is no longer appreciated in the U.S. As a consequence of that, though, careful Kindle searchers will find that many of Leacock's works are in the public domain and are available as perfectly readable and well-formatted Kindle freebies.

Leacock reminds me a great deal of other "everyman" humorists, from Thurber through Art Buchwald, and even up to writers like Dave Barry. Just a bit of exaggeration or mild hyperbole, with a wink and a smile, sets up the best pieces. Appearing to be effortless exercises, the pieces in fact display great craftsmanship and artistry. This is sometimes slapstick and sometimes subtle, but always witty and just slightly pointed stuff that is both entertaining and rewarding.

I'm always looking for interesting Kindle freebies, and my best find to date has been the Leacock works in general and this collection in particular. A nice book to recommend.

Ance

A truly wonderful collection of pieces, ranging from silly to savage, by the Canadian equivalent of Robert Benchley. I say Robert Benchley because, like Benchley, Leacock has a wide range of interests that include poking fun at himself (the first essay, where he makes a fool of himself opening a bank account, is a classic for a reason), poking fun at social trends (the then-new fitness craze, the then-new obsession with doctors and medicine), and--at his best--sheer lunacy. (Like Benchley, he will launch into storytelling mode in order to mock entire types of stories--such as one about a nobleman's secret, which builds up the suspense and then ends with no one caring about the secret after all.) While some of his obsessions have dated, these pieces are almost perfectly constructed: they are all very short and efficient so as not to wear out their welcome. And from a construction point of view, not a line is out of place, not a single joke feels less than perfectly aimed. It's truly impressive and wonderful; humor collections this strong are rare. If you like the writers of the Algonquin Round Table, his Canadian equivalent is also their equal. I can't see anyone regretting owning this.

Snowseeker

This book contains a collection of ironically satirical essays. Satire is not my favorite form of humor, so it took me a few essays to get "into the swing" of the book, but I can say that once I came around to the appropriate frame of reference, I quite enjoyed the book. When reading this book, you must also remember that it was originally published in 1910; the humorous themes of the essays have aged well, but some of the settings have not.

As I read the essays, I kept having the nagging thought that the author's style reminded me of a contemporary author. Once I reached the "How to Make a Million Dollars" essay, it hit me: I would not hesitate to call Stephen Leacock the Dave Barry (Miami columnist and author) of the early 1900s. They both have the same sort of perverse logic to their points of view. Thus, if you can picture Dave Barry writing in the early 1900s, you can get some idea of what reading this book of essays would be like.

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Stephen Leacock was a funny man. I've read several of his collections and like this one the best so far.

black coffe

This is for those who love that dry English humor. I love this book! It mocks so beautifully stupidities, naivete, and human anxieties. If you like slap stick humor, please look somewhere else.

Mr.Champions

I think this man is hilarious. The language is a little dated but there are many points that can still have you laughing your head off. Here is an article that says it better.

[...]

Rivik

Reading Stephen Leacock is very much an acquired taste; if you like dry English satire from the

early 1900's or so, or think you might, this is a great introduction to the form. Stephen P. H Butler Leacock, FRSC (30 December 1869 - 28 March 1944) was a Canadian teacher, political scientist, writer, and humorist. Between the years 1910 and 1925, he was the most widely read English-speaking author in the world. He is known for his light humor along with criticisms of people's follies.

Two of his best works include *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and

Arcadian Adventures With the Idle Rich.

A representative [if that word can ever apply to Leacock] sample from this work is attached.

I confess to a Leacock addiction; try him yourself and you may be too. (This liking may be hereditary; my Grandmother Ada Ross had a copy of "*Arcadian Adventures*" in a collection of her books I inherited.)

Robert C. Ross
February 2015

"Boarding-House Geometry," by Stephen Leacock:

Definitions and Axioms

All boarding-houses are the same boarding-house.

Boarders in the same boardinghouse and on the same flat are equal to one another.

A single room is that which has no parts and no magnitude.

The landlady of a boarding-house is a parallelogram -- that is, an oblong angular figure, which cannot be described, but which is equal to anything.

A wrangle is the disinclination of two boarders to each other that meet together but are not in the same line.

All the other rooms being taken, a single room is said to be a double room.

Postulates and Propositions

A pie may be produced any number of times.

The landlady can be reduced to her lowest terms by a series of propositions.

A bee line may be made from any boarding-house to any other boarding-house.

The clothes of a boarding-house bed, though produced ever so far both ways, will not meet.

Any two meals at a boarding-house are together less than two square meals.

If from the opposite ends of a boarding-house a line be drawn passing through all the rooms in turn, then the stovepipe which warms the boarders will lie within that line.

On the same bill and on the same side of it there should not be two charges for the same thing.

If there be two boarders on the same flat, and the amount of side of the one be equal to the amount of side of the other, each to each, and the wrangle between one boarder and the landlady be equal to the wrangle between the landlady and the other, then shall the weekly bills of the two boarders be equal also, each to each.

For if not, let one bill be the greater. Then the other bill is less than it might have been -- which is absurd.

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