

CANADIAN IMPRESSIONS

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THE bottom seems to have fallen out of that world of perorations, of dialectical escapades and forensic contention in which we, in the exuberance of our youthful verbosity, revelled across the Atlantic. Those few hectic weeks of kaleidoscopic appeals will prove a perpetual fund for reminiscence. Fêted as the future Lord-High-Everything-Elses of England, being treated as if our word was law when, in the case of our debates on Foreign Policy, our Law (International, at any rate) was mere "words," and giving interviews to the Press with assumed nonchalance as if the impressions were as difficult to part with as half-sovereigns and we sovereigns in the realm of casuistry ourselves, we indeed for all these reasons find a return to normalcy exacting.

Salutary and beneficial it may be to come back to the rôle of the penurious student, who in his solitary garret toasts his weekly bloater over the guttering candle which must also serve him as his midnight oil; but it is difficult. It is difficult to pass a train without a hankering after a "reservation", or was it a "drawing-room"? It is hard, too, to harangue three anxious friends and to whip oneself into the requisite state of mental exaltation, when "over there" thousands were at one's beck and call. It is shattering to the constitution to change one's pulmonary diet from the champagne air of Canada to the dense pea soup of Cambridge. There, was the sparkle of the morning's promise; here, the drab eve of convention droops slowly over the worn monuments of tradition, and one must perforce pause to think.

Reminiscences—they are indeed a joy before an open fire. We can picture ourselves in future years dipping in some secluded corner where Fate may have relegated us, dipping into the pie as did the legendary Jack Horner, and pulling out plums. The aim of this article should then perhaps be to give a foretaste of the ingredients of that pie, only a foretaste—a recipe—for the sultanas are new, and they must mellow and weld themselves together with the stirrings of advancing years. Then when the promise of the morning is proved by something more than the mere caressing adulation of the Zephyr of Welcome, then shall we be able to put in a thumb and say severally and individually "What a good boy

am I!" One consolation let us seize at once. When, in the future, the scions of our respective houses ask us "What did you do in the Great War, daddy?", we can reply, with the amplifications which that wizard Time will lend, "We went to Canada to taste the Peace, and we came back satisfied."

Now, several leading questions seem to have been raised in the rambling introduction to this discursive article. They seem to group themselves quite easily under two questions, "Are we pining?" and "Are we penurious students?" Were I to answer these two questions from the points of view of either side of the ocean (seen through my own eyes) I should at least be doing something towards justifying an invitation to produce an article on impressions.

Are we pining?—Now the very premises upon which one must base one's conclusions are false: for impressions are only so many grains of sand upon which the Edifice of Judgments must be built. A figure of speech, a picture in words, will in such an article as this form itself imperceptibly in the mind, ephemeral as some chance eastern mirage, out of the thousand facets of light, colour and action which flitted across the brain during some transient passage. Watch them pass—the thin crayon of the Cape Race Coast over the first calm sea for days, the strange anger of a New World storm, the unknown tinted allurements of the wild autumn woods, a blue sweep of the Atlantic with a rock-studded margin at Prospect, an elbow of harbour at Halifax and the rainy mystery of Cape George. These for light and colour and, too, a clear aquarelle day pulsating peacefully across the broad stretch of the embrace of Fundy. They cannot but be conducive to a lingering regret, a pining pregnant with surmise. The Germans it is who have a word "Schadenfreude" to express that most surreptitious of all sentiments, a joy in the misfortunes of one's friends; they must, too, have a word to express homesickness for a country other than one's native land. There are Britons who travel and Britons who do not. The latter in their self-sufficiency do not pine, but enjoy that most delectable feeling of all, misery, in indulging in "Schadenfreude" decently cloaked under the conventional demeanour of reserve. Those who travel, pine. They pine for England, and talk of her when they are away; they sight the white chalk cliffs again with homely satisfaction; they establish themselves, and then start to pine for what they have seen and where they have been. Every Englishman must perforce take to heart Montaigne's injunction to him who would travel, that he should let his experience appear in his discourse rather than in his raiment. Convention circumscribes the Englishman's exterior against all inroads of fancy.

Thus in moments of retreat we pine; in the open world we brag.

The Canadian brags in secrecy, and pines in public. He realizes what his Dominion can and will; before others he has doubts. He has inherited the mantle of convention, but he wears it inside out. Thus decked he will ask for criticism, and false indeed will be your observations if you are unfortunate enough to observe only the lining and not the rich hidden texture of his cloak. One must pry closely, seek out the hidden inspiration of his country, the shy genius of his people; one must ignore the bleatings of his journals that his resources and trade are weak in certain quarters, and realize the potentialities inherent in them which the more ready are already grasping. One must wave aside his excuses for some trait of national or family life whose novelty and vigour in his heart he admires, but which he would be foolish to rob of its originality by reducing it to the standards of a convention quite alien to his own. Thus do we pine. Differently, it is true.

It is pertinent here to ask why then this rift does not widen into a misunderstanding, but rather the reverse is the case. There are two reasons, one self-evident, the other based on experience. The first springs from the common inheritance of the race as distinct from the peoples. Convention is deep-seated in the race: it has been inherited in different forms, and this dissimilar similarity forms rather a bond than a point of friction, or difficulty of proper comprehension.

The second reason should be writ large; it is enthusiasm, a genuine and real feeling of affection. In Canada enthusiasm is as manifold as the aspects of Nature to which I have referred, and—what is best—an unmistakable imperial enthusiasm. One should go to Canada to hear a true and proper rendering of the National Anthem. To support this personal observation with another culled in this country, to prove that these sentiments are reciprocated, I shall take a personal instance. I was able to land in England on the eve of the poll in the recent election, the outcome of which has been a stable and enduring Imperial government for England in the broadest sense. By a judicious choice of transport I was enabled to address a mass meeting in the old constituency of the Isle of Ely in Cambridgeshire. Election issues were flat and stale, and all the assembly would listen to was Empire, undiluted Empire—preamble, right through to peroration—and all observations culled in Canada.

Thus enthusiasm and a common inheritance breathe the breath of interpretation into dissimilarity, and make us rather glad we

pine, for that is human. *Humani nihil a me alienum puto.* We must be students nowadays properly to savour Terence's tag; and if I remember aright, we were to ask ourselves as our second question "Are we penurious students?" That is again, through atmosphere, a figure of speech. It will serve however to focus the next sequence of remarks under a comprehensive attempt at estimating the rival points of view of the students of Canada and England who wear the academical gown rather than the mantle of convention. In the university world another paradox sums up the situation; the English undergraduate wears his gown more, and becomes less entangled in it; the Canadian student wears his gown less, and becomes more entangled in the winding mesh of its metaphorical restrictions and regulations.

The Englishman, at heart proud of the atmosphere and imbued with the traditions of his university, in the outside world tries to make himself as little academically connected with it as possible. He must be a gentleman-at-large, a wandering minstrel, a thing of shreds and snatches. It is humorous to notice in England the perpetual fleeing from, and shame of, the word "student". A student is necessarily dull, but an undergraduate tolerable, a graduate dignified. There is here no great rift between the junior dons and professors and the undergraduates; no broad gulf of awe divides them. A don mellows like vintage port of age; at first he is brought out frequently, and later he is to be appreciated on rarer occasions as his time goes on. Thus he is an expedient and soul-warming accessory. He melts slowly into the true perspective of respect; there never was any perceptible moment of cleavage. In their own eyes they, the undergraduates, are, and run, the university. The numerous clubs and societies are thus conducted entirely by them, the Union Society being the most conspicuous example. In games there is a more independent attitude. Here, too, the coach is a useful accessory. In the incidental matter of work, the perspicacious learn to appreciate the true position and worth of the dons, and profit by them.

It seems that "over there" students let themselves be regarded too much as "Examination Fodder"—an indeed unenviable position. That is because there is a great cleavage between the professorial category, young and old, and the student category. It is a pity, and accounts for the awe in which the former are held from the very beginning. We were appalled by the way student organizations allow themselves to be directed; but then it is all owing to that one regrettable gulf. Its widening jaws may be seen gradually devouring many aspects of university life; this can be remedied

chiefly by a reaching up from below, and a relaxing only of the disciplinary directional authority from above. The method of conducting debates may be well mentioned under this head. Rough and tumble and "making a fool of yourself" before your fellows makes debating and speaking; direction can only foster and prune oratory.

Thus on each side we are students. On the one, mimicking the world and its figures, and using the university and its beauties of tradition, of form and of locality, to help us, on the other, concentrating on the university, drinking in what it gives and then applying that to the outside world. The results are not dissimilar, and, frequent intercourse taught us, far from unpleasing!

In conclusion it may well be asked—has the student any provocation or incentive to thrust himself forward more independently into the world just now? Youth is the time of calculation and doubtful conjecture, and in this mood we may all unite to close. With Stevenson we may retire to some distant and wild region of Nature, and what more beautiful than the Scottish North of Nova Scotia? R. L. S. tells us how in the Isle of Earran he sat with a companion and reviewed the vast uncharted desert of the future, and how he met that friend at a later date, portly and advanced in years, and compared conjecture with reality. Well may we hope that in the future we may have an opportunity of joining together again in discussion, to see if the world's rough varnish will have left still showing any signs of the patine of a university education of which we are now so justly proud.

Even now we can prove the power the universities may have. Co-ordination of student thought and ideals has been our object in England in forming a national movement, and the Continental folk too have realized their heritage and responsibilities. A true securing of what we all have in mind can be assured only if a movement comes from the bottom, and what better organs are there than the universities? What better exponents of this new feeling than the youth there assembled?

Perhaps what struck me most on the whole tour in Canada was the collection of crests of the universities of the Empire and of the allied nations arranged in the Hart Hall of Toronto. The building, itself symbolistic of Canada's many rising edifices, contains the vast arsenal of the future. Longfellow could sing the mystery and power of this new Springfield; he could tell the great force of those symbols and devices there collected, and such an appeal should make us realize whither and how that force should be applied.

Rupert Brooke, writing before the war, from America, said that the breezes had no memories. They have one memory now for all "over there", which comes wafting now and then to fan the ardour of those who can barely remember. To us here those breezes seem to bring us many things which we cannot forget.

"THE DEAR ILLUSION"

E. J. PRATT

Dusk with a gray and silent sea,
The fading outline of a shore,
A bittern's cry, and evermore—
The lonelier cry of memory.

Night and the lifted clouds afar,
And yonder near a little hill
A cross above a form so still
Holds vigil with one raying star.

Sleep falls and lo! the gift of dreams;—
He comes again, I clasp his hands,
Death's bars are broken, and he stands
As once he stood;—or so it seems.