

TOPICS OF THE DAY

AN ECONOMIST'S EVIDENCE: OUR NEED FOR CRITICISM: SCHOOLS OF THE PAST: ANOTHER SIDE OF IMMIGRATION: ROOM FOR A HUMORIST.

RECENTLY, our protectionist press announced in headlines that a Canadian economist, a professor in one of our universities, had appeared before the Tariff Commission in Ottawa, to give "expert evidence" on behalf of a large manufacturing company who oppose a reduction in tariff on their product. The "expert evidence" caused a good many readers to rub their eyes. It was to the effect that a reduction in the tariff would increase the cost of the product to the Canadian consumers, increase it so much indeed, that the mischief would be beyond calculation. The "expert" also submitted the following list of annual profits made by the company:

1910.....	\$ 23,621
1911.....	32,954
1912.....	52,113
1913.....	50,692
1914.....	49,451
1915.....	39,532
1916.....	1,508,054
1917.....	2,781,400
1918.....	945,466
1919.....	415,282
1920.....	217,382
1921.....	254,750
1922.....	203,380
1923.....	248,195
1924.....	544,144
1925.....	644,762
1926.....	697,041

He said that the high profits of the years 1916-1918 were due to the company's engaging in the making of munitions, and the high profits of 1924-1926 to the successful investment of these munitions' profits. (Nothing to explain the remarkable advances shown in the pre-war years, nor why the returns on the alleged investments in outside interests should have behaved so strangely since the investments were made). The income of the company, he contended, must be considered a miscellaneous one, and their profits must not

be considered relevant to their tariff argument. Efficient administration alone had been responsible for the company's great success. With that success the tariff had nothing whatever to do.

Thus, beginning with the plea that a reduction in the tariff would make it more difficult for the manufacturer to do business in Canada—so that he would have to recoup himself by raising the price to the consumer—this expert economist ends by contending that the existing tariff has nothing to do with the success of that business!

Now, a newspaper insults the intelligence of its readers when it prints such stuff. But that this sort of thing should be published as "expert evidence", given on the authority of a Canadian professor of economics, who was once a pupil of the great Marshall of Cambridge, is really a serious matter. It is very disquieting that the one remaining refuge of critical and independent thinking should be invaded by the propagandists of "big business." Some of the manufacturing interests of this country have spent tens of millions of dollars in filling the newspapers with specious arguments and sophistries and mis-statements about the tariff; they have quite captured the politicians and the electorate. Those who saw through these mists have hitherto been called "academic", "economic theorists", and so on. Now, out of a quite unnecessary fear, so far as one can see, they are concerned to have the academicians and theorists on their side. If this was the first occasion of the kind, one might have imagined that the newspapers had confused names, or that the professor had lapsed temporarily, or even that one had dreamt it. But on a previous occasion arguments no better than these were advanced in the newspaper headlines, on the same "expert" authority.

On the morning following the second of these occurrences, newspaper headlines announced that another Canadian economist, professor in another university, had made a speech at "The Advertising Club Lunch". There he had whole-heartedly blessed that blatant, expensive, public nuisance which goes by the name of advertising. Even a person of so little economic training as Carlyle pierced the economic folly of this thing, in its incipient stages. In Britain, where there are so many nuclei of independent criticism, "advertising" has never succeeded in hypnotising the public; and I fancy it will be some time before it becomes a subject of study in Cambridge, or the London School of Economics. The shocking wastefulness of the business, as it is conducted in this country, and in the United States, and the enormous charge it entails *per diem* to the whole community, have, of course, been

exposed over and over again by economists, American, British and European. But now comes our economic, academic expert, and joins the circus-band. Imagine how our newspaper editors chuckled when they put him in headlines!

IN our politics at large, one discovers less and less power of criticism, less capacity for thinking of any kind. I cannot say, with any show of authority, that Sir Austen Chamberlain was not taken aside, at some place or other, during his recent sojourn among us, and informed with what apprehension many Canadians view the whole miserable imbroglio with France and the United States, for which he and his stop-gap, Lord Cushendun, are responsible. But our political leaders, in their public addresses to him, certainly gave no indication that they realise the seriousness of the situation. Our so-called Liberal and Conservative leaders are, of course, mere emotionalists, and they were probably much affected by the press photographs of the Foreign Secretary wheeled aboard ship at Liverpool, and by the press headlines about his gradual recovery, as he sailed the seas, visited California, and finally encountered our own bracing climate. But a patriotic Canadian can only pray that Sir Austen may at least never institute more mischief of the sort for the peace of the world, and the peaceful relations between this country and the United States in particular.

Into the general demerits of the Foreign Secretary and his policy we need not go very fully here. They have been pretty completely exposed by the British Conservative, as well as by the British Liberal papers. Last spring the Geneva Conference, from which so much had been hoped, ended in complete failure. The American politicians, smarting under rebuffs abroad, and stung by their imperialists at home, proposed a gigantic naval programme. Pacifist American opinion, led by the *New York Times*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and Mr. Borah, asserted itself and slew the giant. Even at this distance one could hear the sigh of relief that rose from Britain. Then, for whatever reason, Chamberlain, Cushendun & Co. occupied themselves with this Anglo-French pact, for which no defence has yet been discovered. If it had been designed to get the French out of the Rhineland, as a *quid pro quo* for soothing French military vanity in other directions, or if it could possibly have succeeded in checkmating American economic supremacy, something might have been said for it. At any rate the actual result has been that the French diplomatists have had the laugh, as usual; Germany has once more been needlessly affronted; and the imperialists and

steel interests of the United States have had their chance. The huge navy programme, according to Mr. Coolidge and others, is again the order of the day. An irony of the situation is that these American cruisers, which can be directed only against Great Britain, would be built largely out of funds paid by British taxpayers.

Now, it is in Canada of all places that Sir Austen should be cautioned against action that leads to friction between Britain and the United States. In reply to his assertion in Ottawa that Canadian interests were ever dear to his heart, it would have been altogether polite and proper in our Premier to hint where our interests lay. Mr. King indulged in fulsome flattery instead.

RECENTLY there have been published—unfortunately in serial form, in a little-known educational magazine—the school reminiscences of a former Dalhousie professor,¹ memories which have to do with Hamilton schools, and which stretch back to a period more than sixty years ago. It is a very interesting and illuminating document. Like most exceptional students, the author thinks that his schooling was exceptional. Of some of his masters he speaks with such praise as to indicate that they were of unusual excellence; in certain subjects his schooling amounted to individual instruction; at times it was self-training, with occasional assistance. He contents himself, therefore, with tentative comparisons only. But such comparisons as do emerge are significant.

“I congratulate myself that it was my good fortune, during the six most critical years of my life (11 to 17) to attend what seemed to me as a boy, and still seems in retrospect, a good school—one in which the attempt was made really to educate; not to prepare for examinations, or merely to fill the mind with information useful or otherwise, but to give us some intellectual stimulus and intellectual interests, to impart good habits, especially that of doing our own work and facing our own difficulties, without undue dependence on help and spoon-feeding by our instructors.”

“I judge that the staff had a much freer hand in determining what subjects were to be taught, and what time was to be given to each, than is now the case; the supervision of the (Education) Department was much less close.”

It is generally believed that much more attention is now given to scientific studies than formerly. Yet we find that the

1. W. J. Alexander: “Memories of Schools Sixty Years Ago.”
(*The School*, published by Ont. College of Education, Toronto)

examinations designed for all the variety of schools to be found in Ontario are not satisfactory tests of the most desirable results of teaching; they tend to militate against the best work of the teacher, and, in so far as they are kept in mind by the pupils, have a bad influence on their methods and aims in studying. Second, the most serious criticism against our school—as it is the most serious criticism against the good Ontario schools to-day—is that it failed to produce scholarship equal in accuracy, solidity and extent to that which is produced in a shorter time by the good schools of Britain, of Germany, or of France.”

THE other day an enthusiastic, but thoughtful, young Canadian said to me: “Can nothing be done to save for the common stock the culture (this was his word) that comes into this country among our immigrants?” He instanced to me a clever young Montenegrin, who had been highly educated for a professional career, now working twelve hours a day, for a mere pittance, behind the scenes in a “departmental store”; and a young Italian, the graduate of a university, who is occupied in cleaning the streets of Montreal. My Canadian friend had met the one casually, and through him learned of the other, and haled them off to the Y. M. C. A. as a refuge at least from the cold unfriendliness of the streets and cheap doss-houses. But in a twinkling he had divined, through all the gratitude of the two uitlanders, that to men of their cultivation and intellectual interests the Y. M. C. A. was as cheap and tawdry as the rest. A litter of vulgar coloured papers and magazines, the tinkle of jazz on the piano, the shouts and talking of our illiterate Canadian youth! What they craved, he said, was music, books, the conversation of men as well educated as themselves. “Now”, he went on eagerly, “there is a small educated class in Canada, men and women of conversation and reading, with interests in music, politics and affairs—especially European affairs. Can this small class afford not to admit into its own circle the very quickening it needs?”

He then fell away from enthusiasm into thought, and began to point out difficulty after difficulty. When he got as far as the Canadian mothers of marriageable daughters in this enlightened circle, I saw that he had pretty thoroughly faced the whole problem he himself had raised. Here, I thought, is someone who is thinking of our immigrants in terms of chemistry. And yet, it seemed to me, there was one important historical truth, which had quite missed him.

If one follows out his train of thought, someone at least who is well read in history, such phrases as "the spread of civilization", "the fusion of cultures" and so on, become more and more inane. When has civilization ever spread? The history text-books and the shallow analysts, such as James Harvey Robinson, point to the Macedonian conquest of the East, and of Egypt. They say that Greek engineers brought another province of Egypt under cultivation. Even so Alberta has been brought under the European plough. That Euripides was played in Eastern courts. So Mr. Balfour (as he was at the time) has been known to address a Montreal audience. That Greek philosophy influenced Oriental religion, purified it, and made it acceptable to the Occidental mind. Such a nebulous and undocumented statement is not worth refutation. The trained historian, who knows his field, does not commit such wide errors. Our optimistic advocates of immigration into Canada, even of British immigration, should read the early chapters of G. M. Trevelyan's *History of England*. There the fact emerges that every wave of immigration, even when it was of like human substance to the wave before, was followed by a Dark Age. But it may be argued, each succeeding wave, in this case, consisted of a less civilised stock, and so civilisation was diluted. True of the Danish invasions, perhaps, but what of the Normans? Did Normans and Saxons add their cultures together to form a new sum? The student of history believes no such thing.

There would be no need to deal in such truisms were it not that a ridiculous notion of culture—as a commodity that can be bought with money, or acquired by foreign travel—has sunk so deeply into our minds. Culture, or Civilisation, if the terms be rightly used, is a thing which a race acquires, or rather earns for itself, over centuries of outward rest and equilibrium (whether it is engaged in war or not) and of inward striving and discontent, during which centuries it is not at any time completely overflowed by alien thought. Civilisation means stability, self-development, orderly growth; it means, in Walter Bagehot's phrase, that society grows itself a crust, and ferments within. This is why the title of a recent book by Charles and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, is a complete begging of the question.

Reduce it, for a moment, to terms of individuals. A young Italian, versed in history and archaeology even, well read in modern and classical literature, speaking French and English with ease, looks about for cultured society in Montreal. He has fled from Fascist terrorism, and is wholly dependent on whatever wages he can compass. Music has been part of his life. There is no music in

Montreal that such a stranger could by any chance discover; and if two or three times a year music "comes to Montreal" (to use the eloquent local phrase), he could not afford to listen to it. Again, there is not, in this largest Canadian city, a public library. But suppose he is a pertinacious young man, who feels that there must be some few people in the city with his own interests. Suppose, also, that a long chain of accidents brings him among them. He will find that these Canadians are interested in European art and literature in a manner totally different from his own. They will have a hard, intolerant outlook that he will never be able to understand, any more than they will be able to enter into his moral code. Even with unusual sympathy on both sides, he will never be able to lose the suspicion that their indifference to music is barbaric, and they will continue to wish that there were more realism in his politics, more practical sense in his view of life. Each will miss the other's excellence. Such diversities cannot fuse. If Italian and Canadian continue to meet, certain subjects are tacitly dropped from their conversation—art and politics, religion and serious literature—everything, in short, except a special interest (Etruscan archaeology, let us say) that holds them together. But upon such a narrowness of common interest no community of thought can be constructed. There is no common denominator, that matters, of diverse cultures. When two cultures meet, it means that by the second generation everything of importance in each of them has been lost. Whether the iron goes to the pitcher, or the pitcher goes to the iron, it is bad for the pitcher.

If the greatest care be exercised, and if one is content to await the lapse of a few generations before pronouncing that anything has been achieved, it is conceivable that some of the incoming culture may be preserved. I think it could be demonstrated, for example, that the interest shown in music in Toronto in the last twelve or fifteen years is due to the circumstance that Toronto is almost on the edge of a large German colony that settled in Western Ontario two generations ago. These people have not intermarried, to any great extent, with other Canadians; they have adhered to their Lutheran faith and German speech; they have, in short, cultivated themselves as well as their farms. It has often been lamented that they are not good Canadians. What does a good Canadian mean? Some one who loses spine and character, and learns to sing the *Maypull Leaf*? These men have been good farmers, excellent organisers of industry in their little villages and towns, efficient and honest administrators in municipal politics, and they have tried to foster, without any ostentation, the European culture

they brought with them. When I was familiar with their towns, twenty years ago, their public libraries put to shame anything else of the kind to be found in Canada. In music their community has been a green and grateful oasis; and from this community there has been an overflow of population into the factories and professional callings of Toronto, not without result.

IS there not room for a humorous weekly in Canada? No dearth of matter to laugh at! Is it that we have forgotten how to laugh, or that we are afraid of being laughed at? We used to give scope to several good cartoonists, but the newspapers have substituted alleged "comic sheets." I suppose the cartoonists could not be kept away from the really funny things, such as the politicians, and the various luncheon societies, and I am told that these people do not like to be laughed at. But why not consider the feelings of the cartoonist, once in a while? And the pent-up feelings of the humorist? A great deal of light verse passes about in private circulation; why not give these wit-snappers an outlet? The solemnity of our advertisers and our educators, the uproarious humour of many a scene in Ottawa, to say nothing of some of the provincial capitals, the comic shapes we take in our scramble for wealth and social distinction, the conversation of some of our fellow-citizens on their return from round-the-world cruises—these and a thousand other things would make a Sheridan out of a Bishop Wilberforce! But, like Queen Victoria, we are not amused. Would not the witty Italian call us a joke in search of a jester?

I would make no apology for laughter but laughter itself. Even the much-quoted "Je me presse de rire de tout, de peur d'être obligé d'en pleurer" has always seemed to me to ring a little false. Among Englishmen it might do for Thomas Hood, but it would not cover the laugh of Sydney Smith, and sometimes I should like to be permitted to laugh as loudly as ever did that reverend gentleman. And if I were the object of the mockery, it would cause me to lose no sleep. Having to do with education, and writing in the august pages of a University quarterly, I grow a little solemn myself.

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