

# A MERCHANT PRINCE OF THE MIDDLE AGES\*

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VISITORS to the famous old city of Bourges, in central France, are sure to be directed, first to the Cathedral of St. Etienne, and next to the "House of Jacques Coeur", said to be among the two or three most stately examples of the architecture of the French Renaissance applied to a private dwelling; and by far the finest to have been built by one who was neither royal nor belonging to the hereditary *noblesse*. To the tourist knowing nothing of this man's extraordinary career, yet possessing an observant eye, it is clear at once that the mansion carries out in carved stone the ideas of someone of originality and democratic independence, whose sharp insight and forceful will gave him a turn for irony and also the strength of indomitable courage.

Within, nothing is stereotyped, nothing is imitative. "Spacious, magnificent, and elaborate in all its parts, Jacques Coeur stamped it with his native force. . . . The house is pervaded with the spell of its owner's personality." The tower in the interior courtyard is sculptured with Oriental scenes, for it was Jacques Coeur who founded the rich trade between war-stricken France and the gorgeous Levant. Around the court, small bas reliefs commemorate the dignity of that labour upon which the state is built:—the spinner, the sweeper, the vine-grower, the pedlar, and many other such workers are depicted. On each side of the porte-cochère are carved not saints and crusaders, but the figures of two of the merchant's faithful servants who lean, as if from windows, watching for their master's return. High above the carven labourers is raised the equestrian statue of the famous banker himself, as if to indicate that properly-controlled finance gave nerves and strength to all these industries. Jacques Coeur was sculptured, seated upon no haughty charger, but on a comfortable mule, according to merchant custom. The hoofs of the animal were shod backwards, a hint that his rider considered discretion the better part of valour in regard to his far-stretching and ambitious plans. This is further carried out by a saying frequently repeated among the numerous mottoes enwreathed in the decorated carvings: "*Faire, Taire.*" (Do your deed, and hold your tongue about it.)

That much of the pseudo-chivalry of his day seemed to this keen-eyed bourgeois highly absurd, comes out in the subject of the

\* JACQUES COEUR, *Merchant Prince of the Middle Ages*. By Albert Boardman Kerr.

long panel carved above the chimney-piece of one of the reception rooms. This is a witty parody of a tournament, with shepherds and swineherds, mounted on donkeys and tilting with broomsticks. Several other such burlesques give a satiric picture of military glory in the fifteenth century. These mocking reliefs anticipate by a century and a half the humorous but incisive irony of *Don Quixote*. Indeed, it is highly probable that Cervantes, in the warfare and travel of his earlier years, may have seen this house, and during his fights and misfortune among Oriental lands he could hardly have helped becoming acquainted with this merchant's story.

When Jacques Coeur became *argentier*, or treasurer, for King Charles VII, it was, of course, needful that a title of gentility should be bestowed upon him, that he might take his place becomingly at the royal court. The independent trader would have no fantastic heraldic device produced for him; he chose instead for coat-of-arms an intermingling design of hearts and cockle-shells to illustrate his name. James was the patron Saint of the mediaeval pilgrim whose emblem was this shell; and the merchant had had much to do with Palestine, both as a reverent pilgrim and as a busy trader. Everywhere about the house this design appears, and its accompanying war-cry of the indomitable spirit who selected it—*Aux vaillants coeurs, rien impossible!* (To valiant hearts, nothing is impossible!) Mr. Kerr comments upon the strange irony of time; for the man who built this house did great and generous things for France and her king, and was rewarded by arrest upon trumped-up charges, and trial by iniquitous methods almost equal to those employed upon Joan of Arc. Now, during modern times, the house has become the *Palais de Justice* for the city of Bourges.

One can see that the details of this lawsuit, which dragged along for two years, and resulted in heaping upon the prisoner every penalty and ignominy that the ingenious mediaeval mind could invent, held strong fascination for the writer of this book. Albert Boardman Kerr is a middle-aged New York lawyer, who has been a partner successively in three noted legal firms of that city, a director in certain National banks, American Counsel for the Royal Bank of Canada (1905-18), Counsel for the Industrial Housing and Transportation Section of U. S. Dept. of Labor, and Director of Natural Resources (Coal and Iron).

Mr. Kerr is a man of considerable wealth, and has of late years spent much time in France, where he owns a villa at Cannes. This book appears to be his first published volume. It is not hard to observe that this financier, lawyer, and practical servant of the

state in the twentieth century found a strong kinship between his own interests and those of Jacques Coeur in the fifteenth—the man who followed the sword of the Maid that freed France by a life-time of service with coins and ships, with building of factories and shops, colleges and churches, to the redemption of the shattered and enfeebled country. Charles VII was called, throughout Europe, “The Well-Served”, although a truer title would have been “The Ungrateful”. Those who served him soon saw that he was selfish, weak and ignoble; but, in the words of Joan, they “had pity upon the fair land of France.”

It was in Bourges that Jacques Coeur was born, grew up, married, and pursued the lucrative trade of a skilled goldsmith; in a castle near by, Charles the Dauphin held his feeble mimicry of a court; and in that city’s cathedral he first assumed the empty title of King of France upon his father’s death. Jacques Coeur was one of the directors of the Mint of Bourges, and assisted Joan in her efforts to capture Orleans from the English by making, patriotically if illegally, a large amount of light-weight coin to provide for her the sinews of war. For this, apparently done with the connivance or order of Charles, Coeur was formally pardoned.

He was a staunch friend to Joan during the three weeks she spent in Bourges, and is thought to have been one of the twelve mounted attendants who followed her at the coronation of Charles in Rheims Cathedral. Popular ballads of the time rank this man of the plain people second in importance only to the king’s cousin, the gallant Dunois. And his despairing enemies’ estimation of his influence comes out in the evidence that the Duke of Somerset offered tremendous bribes to a Scottish Archer of the French King’s Guard for betrayal to the English of four men, Dunois and Jacques Coeur first. It is thought probable that Coeur’s support of the Maid was the reason why, her friends being somewhat unpopular with the authorities after her death, he set out upon his first great expedition to the distant Orient. After many adventures, including shipwreck, and capture by Turkish pirates, he returned home to open up forthwith the rich trade of the Orient to France; to build a merchant fleet headed by a force of captains whom he had trained; to anticipate the methods of the Hudson’s Bay Company by establishing branch houses of business controlled by his 300 trusted Factors; and to gain so strong a personal affection not only from his three sons, his nephew, and the husband of his only daughter, Perrette, but over this body of sea-captains and Factors, that in the days of his unmerited distress they were promptly ready to offer him freely large sums of their money, and to risk the royal penalties upon themselves by aiding his escape from prison.

In the time of his prosperity, Jacques Coeur had used his great wealth with a splendid generosity. He had added a beautiful chapel and sacristy to the Cathedral of Bourges, where, later, his eldest son, Jean, was to become archbishop. In Paris he founded the College of Good Children and the Chapel Sainte Claire, besides other colleges at Montpellier and at Bourges. He bought vast estates from the penniless French nobles, who, although glad to obtain the gold they so sorely needed, hated him henceforth for occupying their inheritances. He was financier, broker, banker, manufacturer, trader, dealing in all the most lucrative goods,—jewels, furs, armour, brocades, and woollens. He held a complete monopoly of business, and lesser merchant lamented that they could make no profit on account of "that Jacquet!"

For nearly fifteen years, under one title or another, Jacques Coeur was royal treasurer, or *argentier*, and lent the king immense sums for the regaining of Normandy from the English. Just after this expedition had been successful, he was suddenly arrested by the orders of Charles, all his property confiscated, and himself brought up for trial upon a long list of ingenious charges, headed by the accusation of having poisoned beautiful Agnes Sorel, the king's mistress, who had died some two years previously. The merchant's jealous enemies were selected to conduct the case; the body of judges was composed either of his debtors, or those to whom some part of his forfeited estates had been granted.

Jacques Coeur defended himself with splendid energy; his friends stood nobly by him. The poisoning charge, and one after another of the invented crimes, had to be dropped, and his innocence was plainly manifest. But the king was convinced that it was simpler to confiscate the merchant's wealth than to borrow with the awkward result of being expected at some date to repay. This farce of trial (which interests the legal instincts of Mr. Kerr extremely) dragged on for almost two years. He was finally judged guilty, and sentenced to perpetual banishment; but, instead of being allowed then to depart from France, he was rather illogically confined for years in five successive prisons with the severest ill-treatment, while his sons and Factors were straining every effort for his release. At last, he made his romantic escape, and a party headed by his heroic sea-captain, Jean de Village, and two of his Factors, conveyed the old man after many hairbreadth adventures into Provence, where René, the painter-poet, who was then king, welcomed him cordially.

From Provence, Jacques Coeur made his way to Rome, where he became the trusted and honoured friend of two successive popes,

Nicholas V and Calixtus III. By the latter, the exiled French banker, with his faithful ship-captain, William Gimart, was put in command of a fleet of sixteen galleys sent to the relief of Rhodes, hard pressed by the infidel Turk. Upon this expedition, Gimart was killed in action, and Jacques Coeur died from wounds shortly after. He was buried in the Church of the Cordeliers in the Island of Chics, and the old chronicle remarks, "The Genoese there paid unto him the highest honours, as though to one of the great ones of Genoa." The sole epitaph upon his monument reads—

"Lord Jacques Coeur, Soldier, Captain of the Church against the infidels."

Upon his deathbed, the merchant had written a last appeal to the King of France on behalf of his children. This, with the support of the Church, and the stress of public opinion, had its effect even upon Charles VII. Within a year, he restored to the sons of Jacques Coeur a considerable part of their father's property, and during the next reign they held high positions at the French court. Madame de Staël, the celebrated wit and "blue-stocking" of the days of Napoleon, was proud to trace her descent from Jacques Coeur; and Albert Gallatin, Swiss refugee, American finance minister and ambassador to France, delighted also in his remote connection with the great *argentier* of the fifteenth century.

Mr. Kerr has written a book of extraordinary research and detail. Every item is supported by authorities from old French chronicles, from consultation of charters, letters and laws preserved in city guildhalls, from readings in the great Library of the Vatican, and in the National Library at Paris. He has rigorously restrained his imagination from highly-coloured painting of the dramatic and vivid scenes at which he hints, endeavouring to state only that which can be absolutely proved. This tremendous amount of information, not only about this merchant, but about all the life of that century, makes his book one that no student of European history can afford to miss reading.

Albert Boardman Kerr has ploughed and harrowed, garnered and ground the full grain of the historic narration; it remains for the writer of fiction to compound the rich plum-cake! Some later author is bound to seize upon this magnificent material, and write a novel glowing with vitality, heroism and adventure, so touched with the light of imaginative romance that the story of Jacques Coeur will not only attract the historian, but will become for the world "a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney-corner", by the intrepid spirit of that cry, "To valiant hearts, nothing is impossible!"

Before attempting to outline the calendar proposed in the place of the present one, it is well to make clear the fact that the defects of our own calendar cause vast trouble and expense to almost every class of the community. Business, which in one way or another involves us all, suffers considerably. The accountant, the bookkeeper, the actuary, and the banker must constantly be performing feats of mental gymnastics to take into consideration the varying periods of time with which they deal. Although figures of two months or of two different given periods of time may be superficially compared, in reality the not-apparent difference in the number of days and working days and holidays makes a true contrast impossible. An entirely new financial story is often told when these confusing discrepancies have been taken into consideration.

The variation in the number of weekly pay days in a month is felt as much by the wage-earners as by the wage-payers. Bills, instalments, premiums, and a legion of other financial burdens come due at certain intervals; and when pay cheques are not received on a similar basis, a hiatus, an alternate feast and famine, is brought about. Trouble of this nature is most often encountered when collections or payments are made on a monthly basis, and salaries are received on a weekly basis.

To ameliorate the woes of those of us who have to count "Thirty Days Hath September" on our fingers, to overcome the shortcomings of our present calendar, and to substitute for it a system of time-division that will redound to the benefit of the majority, the new International Fixed Calendar has been evolved. Therein the year, with its 365 days, is divided into 13 months of 28 days each, the new month named "Sol" being inserted between June and July. This leaves one day over, which is especially called "Year Day." This is observed as an extra Sabbath without having any week-day name, and is added to the end of December. When, "once in four," leap year comes, the extra day is tacked on to the end of Sol, becoming the 29th of that month. "Leap Day," like "Year Day," is a nobody's baby, and is not counted as a week day. Erratic Easter would be firmly fixed for April 8th.

The list of advantages of the 28-day months is an impressive one. These, as given in a pamphlet in support of the movement, so illustrate the scope of its effect that we can do little better than to quote the points verbatim. It gives an almost depressing weight to an argument to tabulate it, but we shall have to run the risk of it here.

"The benefits," reads the pamphlet, "... will be shared by all classes of society—by those engaged in business affairs, by church

authorities, in the professions, by women, by farmers, by school directors who can equalize educational periods, and others. These benefits may be summarized as follows:

1. All the months would be equal, having exactly the same recurring 28 week days.
2. The day of the week would always indicate the monthly date, and conversely, the monthly date would indicate its week-day name. Both day and date could be recorded on clock and watch dials.
3. The complete four weeks would exactly quarter all months, harmonizing weekly wages and expenses with monthly rent accounts, etc.
4. Pay days would recur on the same monthly date, which would facilitate both business and home life.
5. Each week day would recur on its four fixed monthly dates, thereby making more regular all weekly and monthly work, payments, production, etc.
6. All periods for earning and spending would be either equal to or exact multiples of each other.
7. Holidays and other permanent monthly dates would always occur on the same week-day.
8. Every month-end would coincide with the week end. Fractions of weeks at month-ends would cease.
9. The month of exactly four weeks would obviate many of the adjustments now necessary between four and five week months. All months would be comparable without any adjustments being made for unequal days or for unequal number of weeks.
10. All holidays would be placed on Monday, with advantage both for industry and for workers.
11. Easter could be fixed, which would be of benefit to churches, to certain industries, and to schools.
12. As there would be 13 monthly settlements during the year instead of 12, there would be a faster turnover in money; the same volume of business could be handled with less money. This would result in considerable saving throughout every country as a whole.
13. There would be a saving of money in printing calendars, and of time in referring to calendars.
14. For women, the 28-day lunar month is Nature's regulating unit, which constantly times their physical periods of 28 days, and the 280 days of developing motherhood. Half of humanity is composed of women, every one of whom will be greatly benefited by the 28-days per month calendar in their personal reckonings of exactly one month and 10 months.
15. Special attention is called to the advantages to industry if all holidays are placed on Monday. Great saving will be effected by having a holiday on Monday instead of the middle of the week. There is even a greater advantage to labour to have this arrangement that gives the worker two or three days together whenever holidays occur.

One cannot really blame the present calendar for possessing the peculiarities it does, as they are legacies from an ancient line of reprobate ancestors. The Egyptians, as far as we know, started the thing. They came fairly close to the mark, evolving 12 months of 30 days each, with five supplementary feast days. But this was not quite close enough, and a day was lost every four years, with the result that a complete revolution of the seasons was brought about with the passage of time. The same curious change of seasons occurs more strikingly with the Mohammedan calendar, which is based on a lunar year. A month in this may run the gamut of every season in the course of about  $32\frac{1}{2}$  years.

As with the Greeks, the Egyptian month was divided into three periods of ten days each, a system that was attempted by Revolutionary France. Its balance was somewhat disturbed by Julius Caesar, who, not content with dividing Gaul into three parts, divided the five extra days of the Egyptians among the months, giving some of them odd numbers, which latter were favoured then as lucky and auspicious quantities. The calendar evolved by the Romans really forms the basis of our present system. The first is ascribed to Romulus, and consisted of ten months beginning with March and ending with December, January and February being added later by Numa. As the Roman system consisted of alternate 29 and 30-day months, their year numbered only 354 days, which they extended to 355 for the sake of having a lucky odd number. This left them ten days short each year, so an extra month was interlaced in February every two years, this numbering 22 or 23 days as was felt necessary.

The calendar, in short, was wrenched this way and that, pieced and patched, and a wretched affair it became. Until the time of Caesar the control of the calendar rested with the pontiffs, who made full use of their unique power, and lengthened the year to suit their friends and shortened it to spite their enemies. With the help of an Egyptian astronomer, Sosigenes from Alexandria, Caesar fixed the average length of the year at  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days, and set a leap year of 366 days for every four years.

Although this was a vast improvement over the old and a close approach to the present system, the calendar did not escape unscathed for long, as Augustus—to have his birth month, Sextilis, in its length equal to that of his illustrious predecessor and to imprint his own name on the calendar—transplanted a day from the end of February and called the month August. That is why two long months, July and August, are together. The seven day week ordained by Mosaic Law, together with the seventh day of rest,



both of which were observed by the early Christians, were put into force through the instrumentality of Constantine the Great in 321 A. D. The month was divided before into Calends, Nones, and Ides.

It is useless to record the legion of petty errors and corrections that were alternately suffered by the calendar, and we skip ahead well into the Christian era to the time of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. By this time the calendar had got ahead of the seasons, and by a Papal Bull ten days were annulled, October 5 was declared to be October 15, and matters were set aright. This had come about by reason of the fact that the Julian year was some eleven minutes and 14 seconds too long. To obviate a repetition of this, it was declared that the centurial years should not be leap years, except when they were divisible by 400, as 1600 and 2000.

The Gregorian Calendar, as it is called, is now in vogue, having become adopted throughout practically the whole civilized world. Prejudice of a religious variety held England back until 1752, when the readjustment was enacted, although not without great complaint upon the part of the populace who felt their life had been shortened, and that they had been robbed of eleven days. This gives rise to the occasional reference found in histories and biographies of such and such a date early in the eighteenth century, “old style” and “new style.”

Audible agitation on behalf of contemporary calendar reform and in the promotion of the International Fixed Calendar was made many years ago by the originator of the new thirteen month calendar, Moses B. Cotsworth, of whom more hereafter. Dissatisfaction has been felt for many years, and many organizations have used auxiliary or substitute thirteen period systems to facilitate their internal administration. Until the facilities offered by the machinery of the League of Nations for the co-ordination of international effort were created, little progress was made towards furthering it. Various international religious, economic, and industrial assemblies had studied the matter of calendar reform before the Great War, but this intervened, and it was not until 1923 that anything further of importance was effected. At the request of the International Chamber of Commerce, the League of Nations appointed a sub-committee of experts, including Cotsworth, to investigate and report upon the question of calendar reform. No fewer than 185 proposals were sifted, and in the report presented to the Assembly of the League in 1926 three solutions to the problem, the most outstanding and favoured of which was that of Cotsworth, were submitted.

Of the three plans the International Fixed Calendar has proved to be the most popular, as its benefits have at once been apparent and have appealed to persons in every walk of life. The first of the other two schemes consisted of a redistribution of the number of days in each month, to the extent of equalizing the quarters and having two months of 30 days and one of 31 days in each quarter of the year. This disturbs the least the traditions associated with the calendar, but at the same time effects so little real good that a change would be scarcely worth while. The second scheme embodies twelve months of 30 and 31 days, and a "blank" day—with two "blank" days every leap year—and, although it achieves a certain desirable element of repetition and perpetuity, does so less harmoniously and smoothly than the 13 month plan. I champion, frankly, the new 13 month plan, and, with the foregoing explanations, will leave the other two to pine in company within the covers of sundry technical looking pamphlets.

Approving of the report of this sub-committee of experts representative of every religious, economic, commercial, scientific and other element interested in the question of calendar study, the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1927 conveyed the information to the various nations of the world, and requested that national committees be formed to look into the question. The object was to interest authorities and enlighten public opinion throughout the world, and bring about an International Convention from which some definite action one way or another might result.

In the United States a National Committee on Calendar Simplification is now in existence which, although it is not official, is regarded favourably by the Government. Working energetically and efficiently, this body may bring about some serious consideration of the matter in their own country, and give helpful impetus to the movement in other countries. In Great Britain an International Fixed Calendar League is in operation, which, similarly, may be able to bring about some action on the part of the British Government. With both these bodies Moses B. Cotsworth is actively associated.

Cotsworth has devoted his life to calendar reform, and about his efforts to promote the fixed scheme there is not a little that is romantic and interesting. Born near York in England in 1859, he entered the employment of the Northeastern Railway in the office of the chief traffic manager. In this service he later became a special investigator and advisor to the general management of the company. It was in this work of comparing monthly returns of earnings and expenses that he first experienced and

appreciated the statistical vicissitudes caused by the present irregular calendar. In 1888 he took up the study of calendars, and after several years of research produced in 1902 a book entitled *The Rational Almanac*. When he had moved to Victoria, British Columbia, his recommendations came to the attention of the Royal Society of Canada, before whom he was invited to lay his proposals. At the request of Sir Sanford Fleming, pioneer in standard time, he read a paper before the Society which received its hearty and unanimous indorsement. The resolution passed at that time expressing approval of the fixed calendar and urging the British Government to take the matter into consideration—as it was their opinion that it “might be a further benefit of the utmost importance to the whole world”—found its way as far as the Colonial Office, and there languished neglected for 18 years. Canadians may take a justifiable pride that not only was a countryman of theirs—Sir Sanford Fleming—instrumental in promoting standard time and an initial common meridian, but also that the Royal Society of Canada recognized the virtues of the new calendar and gave it their early assistance.

Although gaining many supporters and carrying his doctrine with success into many fields, Cotsworth had by 1924 spent all of his personal means in his undertaking, and had been forced to sell his valuable collection of paintings to maintain himself. By a stroke of good fortune the man and his work came to the attention of George Eastman, the wealthy American camera magnate. Sympathetic and interested, Eastman inquired into Cotsworth's plan, and became eventually his backer and sponsor of the movement in the United States. It is undoubtedly largely due to the public spirit and humanity of this famous multi-millionaire, as well as to the genius and perseverance of the inventor of the fixed calendar, that the movement of calendar reform has gained as great headway as it has done both in the United States and the world at large.

In Canada the business of investigating the calendar and reporting upon public sentiment thereto as requested by the League of Nations suffers from apathy, a factor which will probably prove one of its greatest obstacles. Initiative of late has come from the League of Nations Society, a Canadian organization of considerable importance. This society, which has its headquarters at Ottawa, may encourage the Government to take action of some sort, and it is likely that within the next few months the subject will be of current interest. In addition the Prime Minister, who, after his experience at Geneva and Paris, has been a warm and outspoken supporter of the League of Nations and its various activities, has

been recently approached by Cotsworth himself. What will happen, remains to be seen.

The year 1933 is already spoken of as a convenient time to alter the calendar, January First falling upon a Sunday, upon which day the first of each month and each year, under Cotsworth's system, would commence. Although there is time for little delay if such is to be the case, no drastic or confusing upheaval would be necessary to put the new calendar into effect. Following an international conference where concerted and coincident action could be decided upon, legislation would be enacted by the various Governments fixing the new calendar to start upon a certain future date mutually agreed upon. A table of conversion of dates from the old to the new system could be incorporated in this, making all matters legally due upon dates under the old system automatically valid upon equivalent dates according to the new system.

The industrious supporters of the new International Fixed Calendar have gone into their subject so exhaustively that not only have they prepared a case that appeals at once as a common sense proposition to the average man, but they have also studied the especial needs of various classes and proved that some astonishing and unsuspected benefits would result for their particular good in every case. They have delved so deeply and technically into the matter that they have proved that it is not only a boon to commerce, finance, industry, and transportation, but also an aid to labour, to agriculture, to science, to education, to women, to statisticians, and to a host of other individuals and enterprises. They have compiled a truly impressive array of favourable opinions from the hierarchy of accounting, advertising, banking, industry, insurance, trade, newspapers, transportation, and various organizations. Among the Canadian indorsers are to be found Mr. E. W. Beatty, chairman and president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Sir Henry Thornton, president of the Canadian National.

Mr. Beatty's opinion, which upon any subject generally carries weight with us, is worth quoting. "The economic advantages that would follow upon the general adoption of the proposed Cotsworth calendar," he writes, "are clearly evident. Business operation, and particularly accounting, would greatly benefit. And this must necessarily apply to railroading as being an industry in which rapid and informative accounting plays a large part. Another important effect of the proposed calendar reform would be found in the fixing of holiday dates. Many of the annual national and religious holidays of Canada are moveable, and they are the less convenient of observance by the great mass of the people.

Were these holidays fixed to occur on various Mondays throughout the year, they would be more generally taken advantage of and, being extended by the addition of the week-end rest, would provide considerably enlarged opportunities for rest and recreation."

The matter has been fathomed: without examining it minutely, we have turned it this way and that. Manifestly the old system is unsatisfactory, and a new one is called for. Sentiment alone handicaps us in giving it our unequivocal approval. Such an element has been taken into consideration by the promoters of the new calendar, but they are inclined to dismiss the thought with a laugh, and tell us that we are too rational and practically minded to be prejudiced by sentiment. But we won't be laughed or be-devilled out of our little sentimental protest. If they insist that standardization is essential these days, we will rise in our wrath and say we have no desire to become standardized robots, and be governed by a mechanical and colourless calendar. The idea of having the dates of the anniversaries of our births, marriages, and deaths altered we will not take in a kindly fashion. Nor will we be pleased to have all the charming traditions stored in our Book of Days lost in the oblivion of the new cut-and-dried arrangement. It will cut us to the quick to observe Christmas on December 22nd, new style, and not on the 25th, even though the former may be the precise conventional anniversary of the birth of Christ.

There will be loud and prolonged wails of protest around the world when the change is suggested, and the objections that will be raised will be as senseless as those raised in England in 1752 when the Georgian calendar was adopted. But the new calendar will probably be put into effect withal, and, in the end, we shall all be probably much the better for it.

One more point—a small one—is worrying us. If the new calendar came into force, there would be thirteen Friday-the-thirteenth's in a year. The Romans altered their calendar often because of superstitions, and we have yet to find out whether the world has advanced very far from such homely but deep rooted prejudice.

# CHANGING QUEBEC

CARLETON W. STANLEY

THE Province of Quebec has long been famed as the great conservative stronghold of North America. A French settlement, it has remained French while other parts of the continent, originally Gallic, have been submerged in the Saxon idiom. Catholic in the seventeenth century, it has retained a seventeenth century Catholicism while Catholic Europe has changed repeatedly from one phase of Christianity to another. In legal code and popular custom it has been extremely tenacious of the past. Historical accident has caused most of its politicians to call themselves Liberal; and in the case of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, for example,—who was deeply read in nineteenth century British history—this was not a misnomer. But for the most part the proverb is justified: “No Tory like a Quebec Liberal”.

Yet changes are coming about. For a long time the French Canadian basis of society has been more purely agricultural than perhaps that of any other part of North America, and the race still prides itself on its tenacity to the soil. But the past two decades have seen an unprecedented industrialization in the more rural parts of Quebec, connected with water-power development. Not only towns, but even villages, have grown into manufacturing places over-night, as the capitalists have brought electric energy to hitherto untapped labour supplies. Few industrial revolutions have been more sudden. “Economic historians” of the future will doubtless point to this in the days to come, as the solvent of the old régime. They will say, too, that the change was not deliberate. It is to another change, in my belief a very deliberate one indeed, that I wish to point—a radical and far-reaching change in French Catholic education.

Readers of André Siegfried, whose brilliant book on Canada appeared a little more than twenty years ago, will remember his picture of French Canadian schools and colleges as the very bulwark of conservatism. “The University (in French Canada)”, he said, “instead of being a centre for new ideas and the evolution of the future, is a potent instrument of conservatism”. He pointed out, at length, that most French Canadian students were devoted to the study of dead languages and of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose

philosophy is taught in Latin; that the French universities and colleges at Quebec, Montreal and Winnipeg could turn out priests, lawyers and doctors, but no good business men; that French school-teachers were underpaid; that class-rooms were sombre and old-fashioned, and teaching methods outworn; that no attempt was made to keep abreast of methods in France; that French Canadian educators were only half-hearted about the study of English; and in general, that while there was "something venerable and poetic" about these institutions, "for signs of progress we must look elsewhere".

Canadians as a whole owe a great debt to M. Siegfried's penetrating and salutary criticism of our politics, and of our Protestant as well as our Catholic institutions. I would not have it thought that I am one of those who object to Europeans "takin' notes" among us. As to his notes on French Canadian education, it must be admitted that the gravamen of M. Siegfried's indictment was that it was clerical. With that I have at the moment nothing to do. Further, conditions about which he complained partly continue to exist. But I wish to relate certain recent experiences, which I shared with many other English-speaking Canadians, to show that a most striking improvement has been made, in the last decade or two, in equipment, methods, subjects taught, and indeed in the whole outlook in French Canadian education, both of men and of women.

It will hardly be believed, outside Canada, how separate in education French-speaking and English-speaking Canada have remained, and how ignorant of the other's schools each part is at the present day. Even within the Province of Quebec itself most English-speaking people,—unless it be the lawyers, whose practice of French civil law with French Canadian colleagues affords them special opportunities for information—have only the vaguest notion of French schools. True, all Canadian educators who have tried to make comparisons, and to find out precisely what is going on in Canadian schools, have long known that in knowledge of Greek and Latin the French Canadian is much more proficient than the English Canadian. The idea of a "classical education", which has nearly gone out of the English schools in Quebec and other provinces, has as much sway as ever it had with French Canadians. It has been generally felt, however, that this discipline and literary education was conducted in a somewhat circumscribed way—taking no account of the more recent archaeological work of classical scholars, for example, and in particular with no very real historical background. It was admitted, too, that the discipline

in this matter also, air had blown through the school. There was not a sign of stereotyped imitation anywhere in the large, well lighted gallery which contained paintings, drawings and clay models—entirely the work of students. Even the most immature and badly drawn work showed signs of originality. There were one or two examples of real humour, and some of the students at least had caught the countenance of French Canada. Another room contained really admirable china and porcelain which they had painted. Music-rooms, sitting-rooms, study-rooms were as unlike the ordinary Protestant conception of a Catholic institution, not to say a convent, as could be imagined. In Tenos the dormitories had suggested a barracks, and one of the sisters there had pointed with pride to the sheets, hung on wires, which separated the beds. Here we saw individual bed-rooms, cheerful and neatly furnished. I am sure the girls sing and shout when they rise in the morning!

I will confess, and those who wish to qualify my main thesis may make the most of it, that in one seminary we heard a class in the Thomist philosophy, conducted in Latin, and opened with prayer. Now, of course, only those who have studied mediaeval logic will admit that it affords a discipline of any consequence, and nearly all of these would say that for intellectual training the time were much better spent on mathematics. Yet, in the same seminary, after the philosophy class, we were conducted (through a large billiard-room) to a class in physics. Different experiments were there carried out in spectroscopic analysis. This physics laboratory was the only ill ventilated room we saw anywhere, and the scientific apparatus had a makeshift appearance. But the teaching was well done, step by step, and the explanations and conclusions were very lucid. I noticed that the text-book followed was of recent issue, and one which is used in France. This seminary lies in grounds noted for their beauty, and the wide prospect they command. The buildings themselves, and the philosophy class, had indeed that old-world atmosphere of the Catholic institutions of France which M. Siegfried had so often noticed on his visit to Canada. I found myself thinking of the pictures Stendhal has left in *Rouge et Noir* of the training given to priests. But how did physics fit into it? And the up-to-date French text-book?

We went to a seminary in a small town sixty miles from Montreal. There 425 boys are educated, by nearly fifty instructors. We were taken first of all into a large and well-arranged theatre where the school was assembled; and while we took our seats, a boys' orchestra of about thirty pieces made music. We were welcomed, in English, by the Superior, and told something of the



aims of the institution. The claims of science in modern education were especially dealt with, and generously allowed; at the same time it was urged that science should be taught with no mechanical method or purpose, nor must science be allowed to shut off our modern youth from culture. Indeed, it was contended a youth could not truly understand modern science unless he knew the story of the past; above all, our youth must learn our debt to Greek and Roman civilization. The school marched out and we chatted with the instructors, and presently shared with them a Gargantuan luncheon in the refectory. Here the atmosphere was old world to be sure—most enjoyably so! Afterwards we were taken to a class in chemistry. On our way we passed through room after room containing scientific apparatus of the most modern kind. The chemistry laboratory was well-equipped, with every convenience for ventilation, and especially for the expulsion of fumes. Obviously neither money nor care had been spared. A class of about two dozen boys, after some directions from their master, set about a complicated experiment with ammonia, and worked with enthusiasm. The scientists among the visitors were delighted with everything they saw. Here again the text book used was of recent issue in France.

I spoke here with a very cultivated young instructor in Latin. Readers of M. Siegfried will remember his lament that French Canadian teachers and professors do not come to Paris, after graduation in Canada, but attend the more Catholic institutions at Louvain and Fribourg, or go to Rome itself, where they keep by themselves in a Canadian school. This young instructor, I discovered, had been at Louvain for a year, but had also spent two years in Paris. I found that he was responsible for the tuition in Latin of only twenty of the boys, so that he had ample leisure for reading. How many English-Canadian or American boys have a teacher so well qualified, or provision so ample for their Latin studies? And this in a school which, in equipment for chemistry and physics, goes far beyond anything within my knowledge of English Canada!

Now I have no doubt that these are bright spots in the French Canadian educational system. Presumably the average of equipment is not so high, and in many places teachers and teaching methods are poorer. Many of my readers will have observed that I have said nothing about school libraries (indeed outside Laval University, in Quebec, I have seen no collection of books that impressed me) nor about biological study—that acid test of willingness to house with new and strange ideas. But I think the account I have given—and I could mention other encouraging features—

suffices to show that M. Siegfried's picture of French Canadian education already begins to be out of date in many respects.

M. Siegfried's chapter comparing Anglo-Saxon education in Canada (which he thought as much American as English) with French Canadian education concludes thus:

If the French Canadian race continues to lag behind, if it neglects to renovate its methods and ideas, they will prove a more deadly enemy to itself than would an army fitted with the most perfected type of rifles—The young Frenchmen are more brilliant, more cultured, but why should they be confined to a few professions, which can never enable them to take their share in governing their country? The English with their greater wealth, initiative, and energy, seem destined to keep the management of affairs in their own lands. If the French do not take care, they will be outmarched. Their educators will be chiefly responsible.

No visitor from England, of course, would ever have written so frankly. Nor would English Canadians as a whole like to admit that their French-speaking fellow countrymen are "more brilliant and more cultured", though perhaps a few of us have been secretly assailed by a suspicion of it in meeting the gifted Laurier, and one or two other French Canadians still living. But I believe that many Englishmen and many English Canadians have taken no little pleasure in reading M. Siegfried's eulogy of their educational methods as compared with those of French Canadians. Now, the culture which French Canadians have derived from their classical studies, from the study of English literature as well as French, and from their whole-hearted abandonment to music in their schools, is not to be found very generally in America. And there is no sign that this culture will not continue. But the new and amazing application of French Canadians to scientific studies is a marked sign of progress in another direction—such a sign as M. Siegfried was unable to find. It may be that this alone explains why many of us see what he did not see, a great intellectual quickening, which makes French Canadian colleges and schools something else than "a potent instrument of conservatism". There is evidence that biology also will presently take its place in the French Canadian curricula. For one thing, French Canadian doctors are beginning to claim a share in formulating college studies, and in demanding that there be a more general rational understanding of life and health. The recent visitors to the French Catholic University of Montreal heard this discussed several times, and when shown its magnificent new site, covering 180 acres on the slopes

of Montreal Mountain, were assured that biological laboratories of the most up-to-date kind would be constructed.

Many an educationist has felt that too often on this continent the "scientific studies" of our secondary schools are hardly scientific at all—that our corroding materialism has made of science a mere adjunct to the mechanical arts, instead of an instrument of education, and indeed instead of the enchanter's wand it might so easily be, to beckon on the mind of youth to wider horizons and nobler conceptions of the universe. It was held by ancient Greek teachers (and be it remembered that science is Greek) that scientific studies should be as liberal and humane in purpose and scope as philosophy and mathematics. To hear nearly the same doctrine from French Canadian instructors, and to see it put into practice in their classical colleges, made one feel not merely that education of a very high order was here carried on, but that it was an example worthy of consideration by others.

The broad basis, the solidity, and withal the purity and long tradition of the French race in Canada, will, in a continent so mixed and fluctuating, carry them far on any new path they try. Among the Greeks, Attica was known for centuries as the home of rural conservatives, before its capital acquired the reputation of being inquisitive about any new thing.