Life in the Empire Overseas

Under the caption, "Life in the Empire Overseas," the Rev. Arthur Beanlands, late rector of Christ Church Cathedral, has contributed the following to "The Field, the Country Gentleman's Newspaper":

It might be thought that the mass of literature provided by Government and emigration company agencies is so great that all that is necessary nowadays is to refer prospective settlers to such sources of information. It has, however, been the lot of the writer to find that emigrants require a great deal of supplemental knowledge, which may either be conveyed to them by word of mouth, if they will but take the pains to listen, or must be derived from personal experience at the extra cost which personal experience always entails. The prospective settler is generally in a hurry, sanguine but vague in his expectations, ready to imagine that he has nothing to do but to "get there" in order to qualify for a life with which he is wholly unfamiliar, and to secure a maintenance for which he has very little to offer in return.

The first question a young man should answer for himself when he contemplates so grave a change as leaving his native country is —"What have I got to give to the land that receives me? Have I the health, the habits, the training ,the knowledge that will make me really acceptable, and worth while paying for? If it is merely my capital that is wanted, depend upon it that I shall soon become dissociated from my only valuable asset." And this leads to the next question, which he should unflinchingly face, "Do I want to make a living, or do I want to get on in the world?" Let him remember that there is nothing discreditable in the first of these alternatives. It would probably be far better for the majority of emigrants if they would frankly realise that their reason for going abroad is because they cannot make a living at home. But the writer has known whole families, who, in spite of this patent fact, have expected the welcome of a Transatlantic community, and all the little luxuries it has to offer, and have "grudged if they were not satisfied," under the impression, it would seem, that it was as much the privilege as the duty of their new associates to provide for them, and that handsomely. On the other hand, it is not everyone who is justified in believing that he has the capacity to make a fortune, even in a country where he is told fortunes are to be made. The writer has seen many fortunes acquired from very small beginnings in British Columbia, and yet by no means have the majority of his acquaintances acquired fortunes. And, least of all, perhaps, has a settler the right to calculate upon exceedingly profitable returns from that which is the truest and best of the emigrant's ambitions—the life of the farm. The man and woman who can contemplate bravely and can surmount courageously the difficulties of a country life where servants and labourers are practically non-existent, who can patiently extend their little homestead while they rear a healthy brood to dwell in it, are probably doing better by their country and for themselves than if they had found a gold mine, or bought up a railway terminus. Yet how frequently in the course of visits to agricultural settlements has been heard the moan, "There's no money in farming." No money in farming! And, how, then, do all these strong, hearty people live from year to year, and gradually increase the value of their lands by clearing and cultivating, and pay off their mortgages, and leave a few thousand dollars behind them, and fine sons and daughters to follow them, if there be no money in farming? Has not all this gradual betterment and increased cost something, even if it was all the expenditure of their own labor? Does it not represent the wage of a thrifty life capitalised? And what more creditable way of making money than this can there be?

There is one very great difference which has to be taken into account between the conditions of the north-west Provinces of Canada, east of the Rockies, and those of the shores of the Pacific and mainland of British Columbia. Nature has prepared the former for the plough, man has to prepare the latter. In a forest region such as is found there, and such as once undoubtedly existed over the greater part of Britain, the value of the land is largely represented by the cost of clearing. Emigrants are frequently staggered by what seems to them the enormous price asked for improved farms. They are even more overwhelmed when confronted with the "land" which they are told they may pre-empt from the Government. It is a dense and tangled forest of 160 acres, not distinguishable from the illimitable forest which stretches beyond it. It is perhaps ten miles from the nearest settlement, and though, through the munificence of generations of good administrators, the trunk roads are better than many a country road in the older provinces or the neighbouring States, access for some miles has probably to be gained over a mere trail. To the experienced backwoodsman such conditions present no insuperable difficulties. He soon spies out the alder bottom, which he determines upon making the nucleus of his farm. He points with actual glee to the swampy thicket of 10 acres or so, which he knows he can clear soonest, and which covers the rich, black soil that will "grow something." The very absence of a road is a positive advantage, for will not the making of one provide him with remunerative employment under Government pay? So there he builds his shack and thither he brings his wife and little ones, and by arduous labor and unsparing energy he carves out that "improved farm" which a few years afterwards may grace the list of the real estate agent, and invite the attention of some later emigrant who wants to purchase a homestead.

I am speaking from personal knowledge, and well within the mark when I estimate such clearing to cost all the way from £10 to £200 an acre. Of course, at the latter price it would never pay, except for town site purposes, and there is very little that could be contracted for so low as the former. Thus, it will readily be understood that in order to make any sort of profit commensurate with the labour of the first cultivator, an improved farm of 160 acres, with 10 or 20 acres cleared, fenced, and with farm buildings, however rough, must comamnd a price of from £500 to £1,000 or so. I have often been struck with the low price at which holdings are from time to time offered; it is to be feared in these cases that someone has sacrificed a great deal of time and toil for very little remuneration, and that necessity, rather than value, sets the price. As against such cases as these, there must be chronicled the speculative accretions of the unearned increment, due to new railways, new town sites, and the general determination of population in this or that direction. No one can calculate with any degree of certainty upon these things when making a purchase. The prospect is often extended to dazzle the eyes of the newcomer, perhaps honestly, perhaps to blind him to more practical concerns. Although the questions of market and transportation are of vital importance to every agriculturist, a speculative rise should be the last thing he should take into consideration; good water, good soil, a good aspect, and good present value are of infinitely more importance.

The attention which has been given to fruit farming of recent years, both on Vancouver's Island and the mainland, has somewhat altered the circumstances of settlement. For one thing, it has made possible the subdivision of farms in choice localities, and their sale at very enhanced prices. Wonderful stories are told of the profit to be derived from small acreages, and there is no reason to doubt the truth of many of these statements. What the ordinary man generally does not take sufficiently into account is the personal factor. It is not every man who has the business capacity to make a great financial success of fruit farming, even where he has the industry and natural aptitude requisite for the operation itself. It may fairly be doubted whether ordinary mixed farming, with all that may be said in disparagement of it, is not better adapted to the capacity of an average man of small business training than such a many-sided occupation as the fruit grower's. Still, there will be always those who are ready to try the experiment, and amongst them the fittest will succeed. There is no doubt every advantage in the way of climate, soil and market, and there is an amount of attention, encouragement, and supervision provided by the Government which are sadly lacking in the Mother Country. The qualities to be supplied are those of the emigrant. You can lead a horse to the water, but the draught of prosperity is only for those that can drink it.

I am often asked, "How does the cost of living in British Columbia compare with that at home?" It is a question for which statistics alone are inadequate to provide the right answer, because it stands to reason that in a tariff-protected country like Canada manufactured articles will be more expensive, and many other commodities will share in this appreciation. Then, too, the exceedingly high price of labor, in all its branches, increases the cost of living in every direction where local labor has to be reckoned with as an element of production and distribution. And yet, notwithstanding these considerations, the paradox holds good that it may be found cheaper in the long run to live in a dear country than in a cheap one. The writer remembers many years ago being present when this question was discussed between two representative men, the then Chief Justice of the Province, Sir Matthew Begbie, and the admiral of the Pacific Squadron. The former maintained that for a man with a limited income of, say, £500 and a family, life in British Columbia could be made delightful which at home would be unendurable. It is not in the cost of what is required, but in the extended range of the things no longer needed that the saving is effected, while the many pursuits of the country gentleman, which can only be indulged in by the rich or as a hanger-on of rich friends in the old country are in the Canadian Far West brought within reach of every man who has the time and inclination to follow them. It is true that sport entails labor and bags are relatively small; but neither the arduousness of the occupation nor the scarcity of the prey is any real deterrent to a sportsman, and the opportunity of going off and catching a few fish or shooting a few birds whenever inclination prompts in the season must be set against the bigger bags of the more seldom occasion at home.

But there are many considerations other than that of sport which commend the yeoman life to the settler. Where expensive schools do not exist and education in all its grades is undertaken by the Government, parents soon come to realise that it is possible to bring up a family decently and efficiently without the necessity of self-impoverishment. To many the idea of sacrificing those graces of culture which are associated with education at an expensive public school in England, and which are not, it must be confessed, always procurable even at such a cost, seems an economy least justifiable of all. But in a new world, with modified theories resulting from practical experience, a juster estimate of essentials is generally formed, and it is found that where there are no servants and few neighbors the tone of the family is of greater importance in the formation of character than the tone of the school. At any rate, the deplorable failure of the ordinary English school and college education to equip a man for the battle of life is sufficiently patent to reconcile the gentleman of limited means to the hard necessity of depriving his boys of that type of schooling which perhaps cost his own father so much with so little to show for it. The writer has no intention of decrying a system which has manifold advantages for those who can afford the cost and utilise the result. But there are many who can do neither, and who still feel compelled by the example of their more wealthy friends to give their children at great personal sacrifice the benefits of a "good education." When the finished product in the shape of a young graduate or public school boy, with perhaps the added disability of two or three years spent in making up his mind, is at length thrown on the colonial market, he finds himself, instead of being esteemed "a little lower than the angels," regarded as a poor sort of casual labourer, whom it is charity to employ, and whom pity alone saves from contempt.

There are two ways of saving a young Englishman from so humiliating a fate. If the whole family can be transported to grow up into the life of the people, he and his brothers will at least have the chance of starting fair in a race where the prizes are most numerous in almost every course of life. Or, failing this, if his father and mother, after giving him such advantages of education in a good school as their circumstances can afford to the age of fifteen or sixteen, will make up their minds to send him off at a still teachable age to be apprenticed to a practical farmer of good character for a couple of years more, then, when he would otherwise be reckoned a useless encumbrance, he will find himself ready and able to employ his trained intelligence and what little capital he may command to the very best advantage in his new home. The time will probably come when a widowed mother or homeless sisters will need his support, or when he may be wanting to found a family of his own. Then, instead of the enforced bachelorhood of the homeless wanderer or the more shameless existence of a remittance man, dependent on the scanty savings of his womenfolk at home, he will have become worthy of the country which has received him and creditable to the nation from which he has sprung.

FUTILE FABLES

A certain literary man of considerable eminence, and greatly addicted to long walks, at one time progressed even further than was his wont, and happened on a hamlet wherein distinct evidences of rejoicing were in progress.

"Tell me," said he to one of the inhabitants who stood by, "what is going on in this village today? for it is obviously an occasion of mirth and joy, and I fain would hear what is the cause thereof."

"The fact is," said the other, "that we now celebrate the birthday of the oldest of our inhabitants. She is today a matron of ninety-seven years of age."

"Do you tell me this?" exclaimed the literary fellow. "That is indeed most interesting news; and now explain to me, I beg of you, the identity of the man with the dreadfully sad countenance, who walks by the old lady's side?"

"Oh, that," said the other, "is her son-in-law. He has been keeping up the payments of her life insurance policy for the last thirty-four years."

The moral which this little fable teaches us is that endurance is all right enough in its way, but that the average man prefers its possession for his motor car, rather than for those of his relatives from whom he has expectations.

THE MAPLE TREE

A foolish little maple tree,
O mad and wanton thing,
To toss away your winter's gray
Because one bird should sing!

Light-hearted little maple tree
That mocks the wintry moon
With kiss of green and summery sheen
From finger-tips of June!

O fond and foolish maple tree,
A-shiver in the cold
Because you heard the foolish word
Some foolish robin told!

For, sad and simple maple tree,
The White Frost came along
And chilled your blood and killed your bud
And drove away the Song!

—Arthur Stringer in Hampden's.

AT THE DOOR

One day the front door bell at our house rang loudly. Aunt Sabriny, colored, who has lived with us for more than four decades, and knows all our visitors, hurried off to the door. We heard her in conversation a moment, and then she came back, vouchsafing no explanation.

"Who was it, Aunt Sabriny?" I inquired.

"Aw, jest some fool pusson lookin' fer the wrong number," she said.—Woman's Home Companion.

BUT NOT A TANK

Indignant Wife—"You talk about having 'meandered all over the neighborhood' while you were waiting for your breakfast! You haven't been out of your bed!"

Husband (half awake): "Well, didn't you ever see a river meander without getting out of its bed?"—Chicago Tribune.

Danger of Versatility

It is not easy for every man to find his true vocation. Some men are plainly born to do one thing. Their bent is shown in early childhood. The Chinese have a convenient theory that a baby shows by its choice of one among a number of articles placed before it just what it can best do, and what it therefore should be trained to do. If it picks up a pen, it will be a writer, if it selects a coin, banking is the predestined occupation, if a book is chosen, the child is sure to be a scholar. It would be a very fine thing if every man's occupation could be chosen so easily. If one asks a young boy what he intends to be, he is likely to get the answer, "I don't know."

Some boys confess that they would like to be soldiers of fortune; others would elect to be explorers; still others would like to build automobiles, operate wireless apparatus, and, above all, construct aeroplanes and fly like Glenn Curtiss. The average parent is glad to discern in the child some definite, wholesome proclivity manifesting itself at a tender age. It may be a boy wants a rifle, and his father is pleased to find his son practising at a target and learning to "keep his rifle and himself just so." Perhaps a chest of carpenter's tools is the object of the young idea. The instinct toward the workshop deserves parental encouragement. It is a great thing when a boy has learned to make the simplest articles of furniture neatly and solidly.

Any sort of artistic talent is to be cherished and indulged. There was a boy who was seemingly "dull and muddy-mettled." His responses when you spoke to him were numbwitted. He was given to fits of sullenness or outright anger; he brooded and was melancholy. Somehow or other he disclosed a singular talent for modelling in clay. His parents had the good sense to aid and abet this manifestation in every possible way. They gave him a capable and sympathetic instructor, who placed before the lad inspiring pictures and statuary of the great masters. The newfledged sculptor made a truly beautiful study of Watts' "Sir Galahad." He transformed his own clay in the process, as well as the argillaceous substance, and he was moulding his own character as he wrought in the plastic material.

Some Are Fortunate

It has been the salvation of many a youth to strike suddenly upon his lifework. It has been the misfortune of some men that they have hunted aimlessly and restlessly, on into middle life, for the mode in which they might most valuably employ themselves without quite finding what they sought. It is supposed to be a compliment to say of a man that he is versatile. His versatility may be his sorrowful misfortune.

Here is a man who could not choose when he was young what he would do when he was older. His hand turned easily to many things. His teachers praised him as clever. His relatives quoted his odd, bright savings. His father and his mother mollycoddled him and gave him preferential treatment over their other children. When he ent to college there was no definite trend in his curriculum beyond the attainment of that general culture, which is, after all, the best thing college has to give. But he postponed the consideration of what should be his calling afterward. He delivered a brilliant thesis on commencement day, and a career was prophesied for him. He tried the law. But it grew monotonous waiting for someone to heed the legend on his shingle and give him a retainer. He went into the ministry. He liked to talk from the pulpit well enough, but the parish work he had no heart in; he shrank from the confidences of commonplace people—uncultured sometimes to the nether extreme of illiteracy. Then he began to write books, and in the seclusion of the study great imaginations possessed his mind and soul, and he committed them to paper. But the publishers were not similarly ecstatic when he submitted to their cold commercial scrutiny what he had written. And his work as a clergyman suffered from his studious neglect of his pastoral care. He resigned and became a teacher. At first he was very enthusiastic over his pupils and his work. Presently they wearied him. The work did not seem big enough for a grown man. Others of inferior mental calibre could do it just as well. He went back to his book-writing, and now ekes out a meagre subsistence by contributions to the magazines. His wife and four children, no doubt, are proud to see their father's name in print, but they are not so proud as he is.

It is well to be suspicious of a musician who plays a number of instruments. He is not likely to play any one of them well. He may astonish a vaudeville audience, but he will not convince the connoisseur. There are men who can build lighthouses and paint pictures and write books and do full justice to a tripartite vocation, but the vast majority, in order to excel, must concentrate and specialize upon one clear-cut and carefully insulated vocation. Edward Everett Hale just came short of greatness because he tried to do too many things. It is possible for a man to be a great physician and a novelist; it is likewise possible to be a clergyman and to produce a "best seller," but in most learned professions it is far wiser to choose either the science or the muse for one's devoted, exclusive attention. The marriages of true minds are not morganatic alliances.

The wise man is he who finds out as early in life as he is able the thing which he can do to best advantage, and then bends his whole energies to achieve success in that particular business. The unwise man is he in whom the habit of restlessness has become confirmed by perpetual experimentation, leaving behind him a trail of incompleteness and unsuccess, inchoate enterprises and half-baked inceptions, as the immature fruits of his versatility.

SOME ANECDOTES OF SCOTLAND YARD

As head of Scotland Yard's criminal investigation department for many years, Sir Robert Anderson came into touch with all sorts of wrongdoing, and was at the unraveling of every kind of plot which can be hatched in the prolific brain of the expert modern rogue. In Blackwood's Magazine of London he gives some instances of the lighter kinds of crime, especially dealing with the thief, both in large and small way of business, his methods, and the best stratagems for frustrating them. He describes some artifices of the advertising trickster, the men who supply the credulous with enlargements of photographs for nothing, and give timekeepers as free gifts to those who will buy a suitable watchchain. In this latter connection he writes:

"A good story is told of two great Irishmen, both of whom are now gone from us—the late Archbishop Plunket and Fr. Healy, the well known parish priest of Bray. Making their way to Bray railway station, one morning, the priest urged that they should hurry, but the prelate's appeal to his watch convinced him that they had ample time. They arrived to see the train for Dublin disappearing. The archbishop's apologies were lavish. He pleaded that he had always unbounded faith in his watch. 'My dear Lord Plunket,' was Father Healy's rejoinder, 'faith won't do without the good works.'"

More ambitious criminals work on a larger scale. Sir Robert tells of one such, who told a city firm that he had discovered a secret for making gold. Sovereigns to the number of 20,000 were placed at his disposal in a carefully guarded house, and every time the man left he was most minutely searched. Yet at the end of a few months, when he disappeared, every one of the sovereigns had gone also. Whenever he had left the laboratory the gold-headed cane which he had carried was packed with sovereigns!

Sir Robert is very severe on gambling clubs, describing how he made war on them when he became head of his department.

Determined to begin at the top, for, though the lower class clubs were far the most mischievous, I was not going to incur the taunt of chevying humble folk and leaving the "toffs" alone. So I held my hand until I was ready to raid the most fashionable club of the kind in London—a house in Park Place, St. James'. The door of a gaming house does not stand open, and, of course, a stranger has no chance of admittance. And yet it was essential that the police should get in unnoticed, otherwise every outward sign of gambling would be cleared away, and evidence on which to base a charge would fail. But my inspector in the C division was a man of exceptional fitness for such work, and on the appointed night he found himself in the middle of the gamblers before any one of them "spied a stranger." The necessary evidence being thus obtained, every person present had to appear before a magistrate. And one of the disappointments of my official life was that, during the few minutes necessarily spent in preparing for the raid, two men passed out whose arrest would have added to the gaiety of London, for one of them had held office as his majesty's attorney-general, and was destined to become Lord Chief Justice of England.

Still, after so many years among criminals, he can find it in his heart to say, that as a nation the Britons are extraordinarily honest.

"The Britisher is a peace-loving biped, and honest withal; and if we eliminate the element of the alien leaven in our midst the volume of crime is marvelously small. Indeed, the twin curses of drink and gambling account for the great majority of the offences recorded in the criminal statistics."

He talks of the mingled stupidity and barbarity of our methods of dealing with criminals," and would apparently oblige the habitual offender to spend a "useful and not unhappy life in a humanely administered asylum prison," instead of turning him loose periodically to prey upon society.

DISTILLERY IN BATH ROOM.

Raiding premises in a crowded neighborhood of Belfast, Ireland, the other day, the police found an illicit still in the bath-room in full working order, together with a quantity of spirits, and a second still was found in another room. The front of the premises was fitted up as a grocer's shop. The gas used for the still was drawn direct from the main, and not through a meter. The amateur distillers were fined $500 each.

COURTESY

There is no beautifier of complexion or form, or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us. 'Tis good to give a stranger a meal or a night's lodging. 'Tis better to be hospitable to his good meaning and thought and give courage to a companion. We must be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture, which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light.—Emerson.

Life is but a tissue of habits.—Amiel.