

Kipling on Canada---Newspapers and Democracy

A High Tribute to the Integrity of Canadian Journalists—Second-Class Words to Express First-Class Emotions—Canada Not Yet an Ideal Democracy—A Defense of the English Immigrant—The Value of a Kicker.

IV.—NEWSPAPERS AND DEMOCRACY.

Let it be granted that: as the loud-voiced herald hired by the Eolitic tribe to cry the news of the coming day along the caves, preceded the chosen Tribal Hero who sang the more picturesque history of the tribe, so is Journalism senior to Literature, in that Journalism meets the first tribal desire for warmth, food and women.

In new countries it shows clear trace of its descent from the Tribal Herald. A tribe thinly occupying large spaces feels lonely. It desires to hear the call of its members, and often and loudly; to comfort itself with the knowledge that there are companions just below the horizon. It employs, therefore, heralds to name and describe all who pass. That is why newspapers of new countries seem often so outrageously personal. The tribe, moreover, needs quick and sure knowledge of everything that touches on its daily life in the big spaces—earth, air and water news which the older peoples have put behind them. That is why newspapers so often seem so laboriously trivial.

For example, a red-nosed member of the tribe, Pete O'Halloran, comes in thirty miles to have his horse shod, and incidentally smashes the king-bolt of his buckboard at a bad place in the road. The Tribal Herald—a thin weekly, with a patent inside—connects the red nose and the breakdown with an innuendo which, to the outsider, is clumsy libel. But the Tribal Herald understands that two-and-seventy families of the tribe may use that road weekly. It concerns them to discover whether the accident was due to Pete being drunk, or to Pete protests, to the neglected state of the road. Fifteen men happen to know that Pete's nose is an affliction, and not an indication. One of them loafs across the plain to the Tribal Herald, who next week cries aloud that the road ought to be mended. Meantime Pete, warm to the marrow at having focused the attention of the tribe for a few moments, retires, takes mile up-stage, pursued by advertisements of buckboards guaranteed not to break their king-bolts, and later (which is what the tribe were after all the time) some tribal authority or other mends the road.

This is only a big-scale diagram, but with a little attention you can see the tribal instinct of self-preservation quite logically underpinning all sorts of queer modern developments.

As the tribe grows, and men who do not behold the horizon from edge to unbroken edge, their desire to know all about the next man weakens a little—but not much. Outside the cities are still the long distances, the "vast, unoccupied areas" of the advertisements; and the men who come and go yearn to keep touch with and report themselves as of old to their



lodges. A man stepping out of the dark into the circle of the fires naturally, if he be a true man, holds up his hands and says, "I, So-and-So, am here." You can watch the ritual in full swing at any hotel when the reporter (who Tribal Herald) runs his eyes down the list of arrivals, and before he can turn from the register is met by the newcomer, who, without special desire for notoriety, explains his business and intentions. Observe, it is always at evening that the reporter concerns himself with strangers. By day he follows the activities of his own city and the doings of nearby chiefs; but when it is time to close the stockade, to lager the wagons, to draw the thorn brush back into the gap, then in all hands, he reverts to the Tribal Herald, who is also the tribal Outer Guard.

There are countries where a man is indecently pawed over by chattering heralds, who bob their foul torches in his face till he is slugged and smoked at once. In Canada the "necessary" and "deliver your sentiments" goes through with the larger decency that stamps all the Dominion. A stranger's words are passed on to the tribe quite accurately; no dirt is put into his mouth, and where the heralds judge that it would be better not to translate certain remarks they courteously explain why.

It was always delightful to meet the reporters, for they were men interested in their land, with the keen, unselfish interest that one finds in young house-surgeons or civilians. Thanks to

the war, many of them had reached out to the ends of our earth, and spoke of the sister nations as it did one good to hear. Consequently the interviews—which are as dreary for the reporter as the reported—often turned into pleasant and unpublished talks. One felt at every turn of the quick sentences to be dealing with made and trained players of the game—balanced men who believed in decency not to be disregarded, confidences not to be violated, and honor not to be mocked. (This may explain what men and women have told me—that there is very little of the brutal domestic terrorism of the Press in Canada, and not much blackmailing.) They neither spat nor wriggled; they interpolated no juicy anecdotes of murder or theft among their acquaintances; and not once between either ocean did they or any other fellow subjects volunteer that their country was law-abiding.

You know the First Sign-Post on the Great Main Road? When a woman advertises that she is virtuous, a man that he is a gentleman, a Community that it is loyal, or a Country that it is law-abiding—go the other way!

Yet, while the men's talk was so good and new, their written word seemed to be cast in conventional, not to say old-fashioned molds. A quarter of a century ago a sub-editor opening his mail, could identify the Melbourne Argus, the Sydney Morning Herald, or the Cape Times as far as he could see them. Even newspaper clippings of the time declared their origin as a piece of hide betrays the beast that wore it. But he noticed then that Canadian journals left neither spoor nor scent—might have blown in from anywhere between thirty degrees of latitude—and had to be carefully identified by hand. Today the spacing, the headlines, the advertising of Canadian papers, the chessboard-like look of the open page which should be a daily beautiful study in black and white, the brittle pulp paper, the machine-set type, are all as standardized as the railway cars of the continent. Indeed, looking through a mass of Canadian journals is like trying to find one's own sleeper in a corridor train. Newspaper offices are among the most conservative organizations in the world; but surely after 25 years some changes could be permitted to creep in; some original convention of expression or assembly might be developed.

I drew up to this idea cautiously among a knot of fellow craftsmen. "You mean," said one, "straight-eyed youth, 'that we are a back-number, copying back numbers'?"

It was precisely what I did mean. So I made haste to deny it. "We know that," he said, cheerfully. "Remember, we haven't the sea all round us—and the postal rates to England have only just been lowered. It will all come right."

Surely it will, but meantime one hates to think of these splendid people using second-class words to express first-class emotion.

And so naturally from Journalism to Democracy. Every country entitled to her reservations and pretenses, but the more "democratic" a land is the more make-believes must the stranger respect. Some of the Tribal Herald's were very good to me in this matter, and, as it were, nudged me when it was time to duck in the House of Rimmon. During their office hours they professed an unflinching belief in the blessed word "democracy," which means any crowd on the move—that is to say, the helpless thing which breaks through floors and falls into cellars; overturns pleasure-boats by rushing from port to starboard; stamps men into pulp because it thinks it has lost sixpence, and jams and grills in the doorways of blazing theaters. They relaxed, like every one else, they relapsed, but they all agreed that the only drawback to Democracy was Democracy—a jealous god of primitive tastes

and despotic tendencies. I received a faithful portrait of him from a politician who had worshiped him all his life. It was practically the Epistle of Jeremy—the sixth chapter of Baruch—done into unquotable English.

But Canada is not yet an ideal democracy. For one thing, she has had to work hard among rough-edged surroundings which carry inevitable consequences. For another, the law in Canada exists and is administered, not as a surprise, a joke, a bribe, or a wrestling Turk exhibition, but as an integral part of the national character—no more to be forgotten or talked about than trousers. If you kill, you hang. If you steal, you go to jail. This has worked toward peace, self-respect, and I think the innate dignity of the people. On the other hand—where is the trouble will begin—railways and steamers make it possible nowadays to bring in persons who need never lose touch of hot and cold water-taps, spread tables, and crockery till they are turned out, much surprised, into the wilderness. They clean miss the long weeks of salt-water and the slow passage across the plains which pickled and tanned the early emigrants. They arrive with soft bodies and unaltered souls. I had this vividly brought home to me by a man on a train among the Selkirk. He stood on the safely-railed pier platform, looked at the gigantic pin-furred shaggy round which men at their lives' risk had left every yard of the track, and chirruped: "I say, why can't all this be nationalized?" There was nothing under heaven except the snows and the steep to prevent him from dropping off the cars and hunting a man for himself. Instead of which he went into the dining-car. That is one type.

A man told me the old tale of a crowd of Russian immigrants who at a big fire in a city "verted to the ancestral type, and blocked the streets yelling: 'Down with the Czar.' That is another type. A few days later I was shown a wire stating that a community of Doukhobors—Russians again—had, not for the first time, undressed themselves, and were fleeing up the track to meet the Messiah before the snow fell. Police were pursuing them with warm underclothing, and trains would please take care not to run over them.

So there you have three sorts of steam-borne unfitness—soft, savage, and mad. There is a fourth brand, which may be either home-grown or imported, but democracies do not recognize it, of downright bad folk—grown, healthy men and women who honestly rejoice in evil. These folk are acting together might conceivably produce a rather pernicious democracy, alien hysteria, blood-crazes, and the like, reinforcing local ignorance, sloth and arrogance. For example, I read a letter in a paper sympathizing with the Doukhobors, who, as you know, are a community of excellent people in England (you see where the rot starts), who lived barefoot, paid no taxes, ate nuts, and were above marriage. They were a soulful folk, living pure lives. The Doukhobors were also pure and soulful, and in a free country to live their own lives, and not to be oppressed, etc., etc. (Imported soft, observe, playing up to Imported mad.) Meantime, disgusted police were chasing the Doukhobors into fannels that they might live to produce children, fit to be the sons of the man who wrote that letter and the daughters of the crowd that lost their heads at the fire.

"All of which," men and women answered, "we admit. But what can we do? We want people." And they showed where the children of St. Ignace immigrants are taught English and the songs of Canada. "When they grow up," people said, "you can't tell them from Canadians." It was a wonderful work. The teacher holds up pens, pencils and so forth, giving the names in English; the children repeat in Chinese fashion. Presently when they have enough words they can bridge back to the knowledge they learned in their own country, so that a boy of twelve, at, say, the end of a year, will produce a well-written English account of his journey from Russia, how much his mother paid for food by the way, and where his father got his first job. He will also lay his hand on his heart and say, "I am—a Canadian." This gratifies the Canadian, who naturally expects every immigrant owing everything to the land which adopted him and set him on his feet. The Lady Bountiful of an English village takes the same interest in a child she has helped on in the world. And the child repays by his gratitude and good behavior.

Personally, one cannot care much for those who have renounced their own country. They may have had good reason, but they have broken the rules of the game, and ought to be penalized instead of adding to their score. Nor is it true, as some pretend, that a few full meals and fine clothes obliterate all taint of alien instinct and reversion. A thousand years cannot be as yesterday for mankind; and one has only to glance at the races across the border to realize how in outlook, manner, expression and morale the South and Southeast profoundly and fatally affects the North and Northwest. That was why the sight of the beady-eyed, muddy-skinned, aproned women, with handkerchiefs on their heads, always distressed me. I understood what forty years ago I had seen, but did not then believe, must and should be the only reasonable aim of each man's efforts. How different, how much more joyous for myself and useful to others, might my life have been had I believed and yielded when the voice of Truth, of God, spoke for the then brave men and soul, unswayed as yet by such temptations!

Yes, dear young people, sincerely, independently—not under the influence of suggestion from outside, but quite independently and sincerely—having avowed to a consciousness of the full importance of your life, do not trust to those who tell you that your strivings are merely the unattainable dreams of youth, and that they, too, have dreamed and striven, but that life soon showed them that it has its own

"But," I argued over three thousand miles of country, "all these are excellent reasons for bringing in the Englishman. It is true that in his own country he is taught to shirk work, because kind, silly people fall over each other to help, and debauch, and amuse him. Here, General January will stiffen him up. Remittance-men are an affliction to every branch of the Family, but your manners and morals can't be so tender as to suffer from a few thousands of them among your six millions. As to the Englishman's Socialism, he is, by nature, the most social animal alive. What you call Socialism is his intellectual equivalent for Diabolo and Limerick competitions. As to his criticisms, you surely wouldn't marry a woman who agreed with you in everything, and you ought to choose your immigrants on the same lines. You admit that the Canadian is too busy to kick at anything. The Englishman is a born kicker. ('Yes, he is all that,' they said.) He kicks on principle, and that is what makes for civilization. So did your Englishman's instinct about the glass. Every new country needs vitality—needs—one-half of one per cent of its population trained to die of thirst rather than drink out of their hands. You are always talking of the second generation of the English."

They thought—quite visibly—but they did not much seem to relish it. There was a queer string-along in their talk—a conversational shy across the road—when one touched on these subjects. After a while I went to a Tribal Herald whom I could trust, and demanded of him point-blank where the trouble really lay, and who was behind it. "It is Labor," he said. "You had better leave it alone."

AN APPEAL TO THE YOUTH
BY TOLSTOY.

Trust yourselves, youths and maidens, who are emerging from childhood, when first the questions arise in your soul. Why am I? Why do I exist? Why do all who surround me exist? And chiefly—most agitating of all questions: Am I and are all around me living as we should do? Trust yourself, then, also, when the replies to these questions which suggest themselves to you do not agree with those impressed on you in childhood, and do not agree with the life that you and the people around you are living. Do not fear this disagreement, but, on the contrary, be assured that in this disagreement between you and all that surrounds you is expressed the very best that is in you; that divine principle whose manifestation in life constitutes not only the chief, but the sole meaning of our existence. Trust, then, not yourself, the individual Bill, Jack, Annie or Molly, son or daughter of king, minister or workman, merchant or laborer, but trust that self—that eternal, reasonable and holy Source which lives in each of us, and which for the first time has awoke within you, presenting these most important of all questions, and seeking and demanding their solution. Do not then, trust those who with a condescending smile tell you that they, too, once sought replies to these questions, and did not find them, for none can be found except those which are accepted by everybody.

Do not believe this, but trust yourself alone, and do not fear to disagree with the views and thoughts of those around you, if only your replies to the questions that have presented themselves to you are founded not on your personal wishes, but on a wish to fulfill the purpose of your life, and to fulfill the will of that Power which has sent you into life. Trust yourself, especially, when the replies presenting themselves to you are confirmed by those eternal principles of human wisdom, expressed in all religious teachings, and in the teaching nearest to us (that of Christ) in its highest spiritual meaning.

I remember, when I was 15 years old, experiencing a time when I suddenly awoke from the childish submission to other people's views in which I had lived till then, and for the first time understood that I must shape my own life, must choose my own path, and must myself answer for my life to that Source which gave it to me.

I remember that I then dimly but deeply felt that the chief aim of my life was to be good: good in the gospel sense, the sense of self-sacrifice and love. I remember that I then tried to live accordingly, but the attempt did not last long. I did not trust myself, but trusted rather to what was suggested to me consciously and unconsciously by all around me. And my first awakening was replaced by very definite though various desires for success in the eyes of the world; to be distinguished, learned, famous, rich, strong—I, e., not such as I, but such as other people, considered good. I did not trust myself then, and only after several decades spent in attaining worldly aims (which I either failed to attain, or, having attained, saw to be useless, vain or harmful), did I understand what forty years ago I had seen, but did not then believe, must and should be the only reasonable aim of each man's efforts. How different, how much more joyous for myself and useful to others, might my life have been had I believed and yielded when the voice of Truth, of God, spoke for the then brave men and soul, unswayed as yet by such temptations!

Yes, dear young people, sincerely, independently—not under the influence of suggestion from outside, but quite independently and sincerely—having avowed to a consciousness of the full importance of your life, do not trust to those who tell you that your strivings are merely the unattainable dreams of youth, and that they, too, have dreamed and striven, but that life soon showed them that it has its own

demands, and that one must not indulge in fancies of what life might be, but must try how best to adapt our actions to the life of existing society, and to aim only at being a useful member of that society.

Do not believe, either, in that dangerous temptation, especially strong in our day, which consists in the assertion that the highest destiny of man lies in co-operating in the reorganization of the society that exists at a certain place and time, using therefore for all possible means, even though they be directly opposed to moral progress. Do not believe this. That aim is insignificant in comparison with the aim of manifestation in yourself the principle of goodness dwelling in your soul. And that aim is false which permits any deviation from the principle of goodness dwelling in your soul.

Do not trust it. Do not believe that the manifestation of goodness and truth in your soul is not only possible, but all life (yours and that of all men) consists in that alone. And that manifestation in each man is the one thing leading not merely to the best reorganization of society, but to all the welfare that can come about—only through the personal efforts of individual men.

Yes, trust yourself when in your soul is heard, not the wish to excel others, to distinguish yourself from others, to be more powerful, more important or more famous, or to be saved

hours of men, freeing them from the evil organization of life (such desires often supplant the wish for goodness), but trust yourself when the chief desire of your soul is to be better yourself, for in self-perfecting there is something personal, something gratifying to self-love, but I will say; to make yourself such as the God desires who gave us life, to disclose in yourself the principle, like unto him, which is in us, and to live "godly," as the peasants say.

Trust yourself and live thus, bending all your strength to one purpose—the manifestation in yourself of God, and you will do all you can do, both for your own welfare and for that of the whole world.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; the rest shall be added unto you.

Yes, trust yourself at that most important time when the light of consciousness of your divine origin first shows itself in your soul. Do not extinguish that light—guard it with all your strength, and let it burn all strongly. In that one thing, the kindling of that light, lies the one great and joyous meaning of your man's life. Yes, I say again, trust yourself.

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