

# Our Only National University Does Its Work in Overalls

## How Canada Carries Culture of Campus to Backwoods Camp

Romantic Story of Frontier College—Nothing Is More Typically Canadian Than This Unique Educational Enterprise—Enormous Potentialities of Educated Lumberjacks

By ARTHUR HAWKES

DID you ever put in a winter on the outer skirts of civilization, and sit, night after night, with nothing to read, nobody to talk to, and even a game of solitaire debarred?

Did you ever earn your living in the sweat of your face, and meet the alternative of accepting five dollars a month and your board for the winter, or working as a lumberjack?

Were you ever warned by a man who knew the camps that you would be "ungodly foolish" to go into any such places, when five dollars a month and cleanliness were assured?

Have you ever reflected on what the camp and the frontier have done for Canada and for your own comfort?

Would you be amused at the idea of lumberjacks attending university even while they are working with axe or team from daylight to dark?

Did it ever occur to you that men on railway construction and in the bush might earn an arts degree, and receive as fine a tuition in the camps as the exquisites among the intellectuals bestow around the campus?

In fifty ways the camp is ahead of the campus. So unique a truth is by way of being demonstrated by the only truly national university in Canada, and the only university in the world whose claim to attend classes is in a horny hand, and whose robes are overalls.

When this century was coming in the Reading Camp Association was formed by Alfred Fitzpatrick, a Presbyterian minister. After years of rarely quiet and splendid service to Canadian citizenship it was re-named the Frontier College, with the founder as principal. It now has a dominion university charter, with authority to confer degrees.

If you have Canadian pride prepare to use it now; for, with a past and present staff of seven hundred and fifty instructors, the Frontier College, Canadian of Canada in spirit and truth, has in it the potentialities of more advance in popular education than anything that has crossed the vision of most of those who have sensed what is in the Fitzpatrick objective. It is a revolution indeed to take the university to the student instead of bringing the student to the university, to hold classes in the woods instead of off the corridors. Some university leaders, who dote on the magnificent dignities of an alma mater (and who never did a week's manual labor), are against this new broadening out of Canadian culture. Others are for it with heart, soul, mind and hands, and will count it an honor to be included in the Frontier College's first board of examiners. They have truly patriotic vision, not being scared of free trade in knowledge, and not thinking that intellect must mainly be served nearby long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults.

When and where do men learn most if it be not during forty days in the wilderness? To whom is Canada's debt most heavily due, if not to those who have transformed the tangled frontier into highly equipped communities?

### What Is Education?

TO whom should the inheritors of the glories made possible by the dead pioneers pay their reasonable service if not to the living pioneers who toil in the hardest places, and who have been socially ignored? Before we come to something like narrative of what the Frontier University has built into our fundamentals, suffer a word touching the ancient but rather asinine notion that high education necessarily must be obtained at great and awesome seats of learning; and that only those who have been through the mills of degrees are truly educated.

Heaven forbid that an inappreciative syllable should be uttered towards the university don, to whom a Greek iambic is as congenial as a pair of socks, but who would be puzzled beyond recovery by a request to harness a horse. But it is not true that many intellectual wonders have largely been those who acquired their distinction in essentially the same way as the lumber graduate of to-morrow's Frontier University will get his diploma? The nearest example is the recently-departed chancellor of Toronto. Is there not a university professor in Canada with the range of cultured service that distinguished Sir Edmund Walker? He was too much of a master to be called a scholar. He was earning his bread at thirteen years of age. His education, in the more academic sense, had to be obtained before and after working hours. He happened to live in the city where advantages comparatively abundant. But there are intellects of as high potentialities as his in the bush, along the frontier, wherever the foundations of future Canadian prosperity are being laid by the indispensable workers. They have an inherent right to all the knowledge that they can absorb, in the interest of the state itself. For it is a sin and a shame that

Knowledge with their eyes her ample page. Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll. If you would gauge where an institution is going, learn whence it came. Respect the origin of man and you won't be discouraged by his destiny. Creation, let alone by the meddlesome Matties, develops truly to the creator. The Frontier University is running true to form; for its life in



A teacher of classes must himself do as heavy a day's work as the men whom he teaches.

1924 is what its birth was twenty-four years ago.

It is more than a pleasantry that Pictou county, Nova Scotia, grows more college presidents than any other county on this continent. Principal Fitzpatrick comes from there. Millsville, ten miles from Pictou town, is his home. It is something of a deserted village now, because the late generation did not understand, any more than this present population does, that to denude the frontier of wealth without providing for its natural renewal is an insult to the past, an injury to the present and an offense against the future. At Millsville the school teacher used to board around, two weeks at a time. Mr. Rogers, now a retired Presbyterian minister, was eagerly welcomed by the Fitzpatrick boys, because his very presence was an elevation to all who lived where he was.

### How the Idea Originated

HE was teaching for what he could put into it. His example had its part in carrying Alfred Fitzpatrick through high school, and then to Queen's University, filled with resolve to help those who were ill placed to help themselves.

The pastorate was the natural goal of such a spirit. Fitzpatrick began his ministry in California, passing from camp to camp in the mountains, because a Millsville man who was believed to be there had not written to his parents for several years. The negligent correspondent found, the minister returned to Canada, and took mission duty in Algoma.

A dear old lady of our ancient friendship, whenever a tramp begged for bread, gazed at his eyes and asked, "Do you love God?" The empty-belly usually murmured something dark and looked darker. He got food every time, and was bidden to eat it on the spot. But the good lady never realized that religious inquisition, if it is a blessing at all, should always be grace after meat.

A preacher's arrival at a lumberjack's abode was never effusively welcomed. It isn't easy to get close to the man who thinks even when he doesn't say: "Who the hell are you, and what in blazes do you want?" The Reverend Alfred Fitzpatrick, accredited representative of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, felt that to his soul's marrow. He remembered that it was a carpenter who got next the fishermen; not a person who conducted himself as a being apart. "The best service, he saw, could be given in camps by one who was touched with the feelings of others' infirmities, who could win the trust of men who worked so hard that it is only by Sunday that they have time to realize how tired they were when they quit work on Saturday.

So the Reverend Alfred Fitzpatrick, dedicated to the Westminster Confession, made a confession to himself, which has resulted in a virtual disuse of the ecclesiastical title. The frontiersmen were doing essential work for Canada. They deserved more than they received in educational stimulus. That could only be imparted to them by men who were even as they were—as tired as they were, because he was working as hard as they worked.

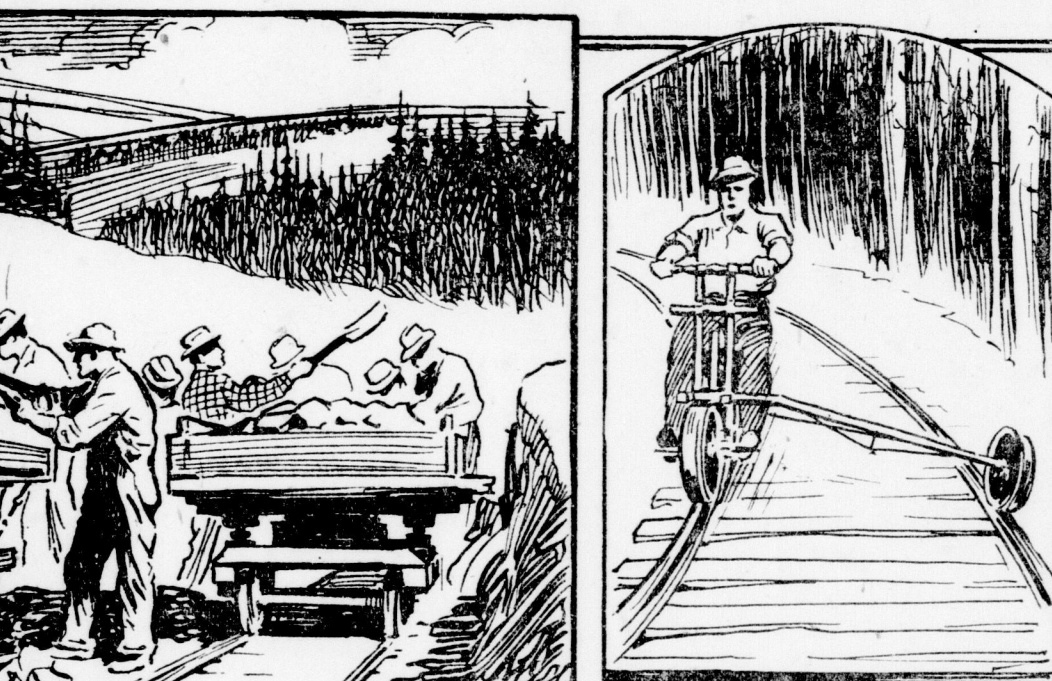
Up in the Lake Nipissing region was a responsible representative of old J. R. Booth, the Ottawa lumber king who has got a Danish prince for a grandson. To A. J. Young, Fitzpatrick told the idea that he would doff his habit, go to work along with the men, and see whether that wasn't a more Galilean modernity than the regulation services of the church. Young is a big fellow, and big fellows, who are also wise, usually see the importance of getting other fellows to work on a good proposition.

"No," he said, "if you do that, you will be buried. Your idea is too good to be treated that way. Organize an association that will put men into many camps. Multiply your work and its results."

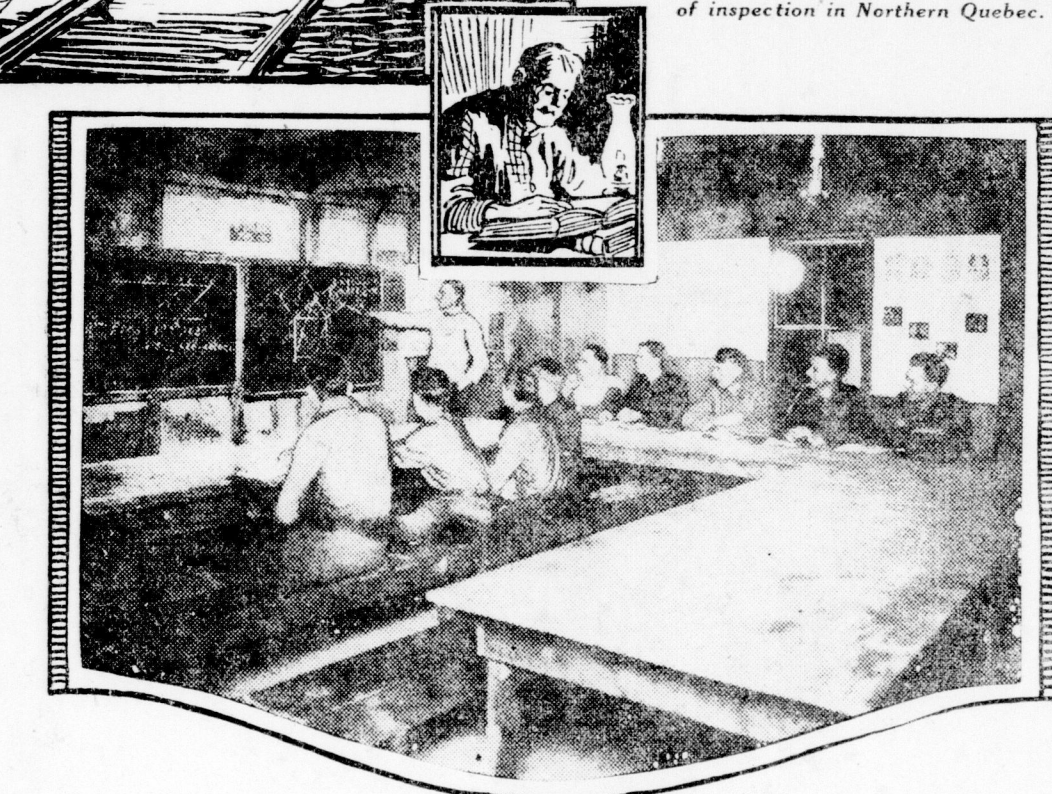
So the Reading Camp Association was born. It always supplied reading matter to camps; but it always sent instructors with the reading matter, and secured its own building wherein men might read and instructors might teach. The cardinal principle of the education work was something absolutely new in scholastic and religious civilization.

### Has Ruskin College Beaten

NEVER before was it essential a teacher of classes must himself do as heavy a day's work as the men whom he taught. The idea was always to get young university men to undertake this engaging task. It has got Ruskin College, Oxford, beaten to a frazzle, and is, indeed, the magnificently sane and astonishingly practical application of the theories which caused Ruskin to make the rather weird experiment of



Eastern secretary starting on tour of inspection in Northern Quebec.



putting enthusiastic young intellectuals to work making roads, within the sphere of influence of Oxford itself. It wouldn't have been surprising if it had got the studentry of our refined seats of learning beaten to a standstill.

Until the war Fitzpatrick advertised for instructors. Twenty years ago a young chap at Varsity, who had taught school for five years, had saved eight hundred dollars with which to get himself a degree, and was now compelled to supplement his resources, answered an ad for a teacher of lumberjacks. He thought it an entertaining, but queer suggestion, and wondered what sort of a man this Fitzpatrick could be.

Instead of acknowledging the application by mail Fitzpatrick answered it in person; told the student what was doing, with clear warning that there was no lavender in camps. It sounded the strangest scheme in the world for a university undergraduate to work at lumbering by day and run a school for lumberjacks at night. For a while he could hardly tear the idea seriously. But he took it on. He found in it the ache of toil, and the reward of infinite joy—and he has stayed with it to this day—Inspector Bradwin, whose thesis on the navy is about ready to be presented to the solons of Columbia University as a qualification for the degree of doctor of philosophy.

See how one uniqueness begets another? When, before, did a nascent doctor of philosophy base his expectation of the degree on a plea for the bunkhouse man, which must justify itself in an inquiry by a body of learned professors? Yesterday you would have said that the very notion of a bunkhouse philosophy being examined by a university faculty was all bunk, and worthy of no house. But hold on. One of

the fellows from a fine home who, like a hero, became an instructor, and suffered blistered hands and aching back, so that he might serve his kind, wrote in to head office that he was amazed at his pupils' range of knowledge of which he was ignorant. His summer's work was richly repaid by that discovery; which is at the very base of the new university education.

Some of us come from the farm, and know how those who know nothing of real life suppose, in their pride, that agricultural work is unskilled labor. Why, as Fitzpatrick says, navvying is a science and tree-felling an art, and proficiency with the cant hook a profession indeed. Go to the bush, and if you can find a foreman reckless enough to let you try, undertake to fall a big pine between two other pines, standing fifteen feet apart, so that the fall won't do almost as much damage as the timber is worth. Work half a day on building a log shack, and see how much your book learning is worth. The point is that the men on the frontier, laying the foundations of prosperity for the new sections of the country and sustaining the amenities of the old-settled communities, must be skilled—they have to know a lot; and they can teach the denizens of cities, including most university men, many things that it is mighty good for them to know.

Wherein is one of the Frontier university's most beneficent service. It gives to its instructors instruction of priceless value to them, and to their country. Their own testimony is conclusive; your own perception will be illuminating on that score.

### Instructors Right Across Continent

INSTRUCTOR after instructor, who has passed into professional life, has testified that he wouldn't exchange his experience as a Frontier

College representative for anything acquired by him. He has life more abundantly because he knows the bunkhouse, and has found what it is to render help to men alongside whom he had labored the lifelong day.

What is the common jibe against the highly educated university professor, the man who has lived so much in the midst of culchah that he's lost in the midst of life? It is that he is impractical, and apt to be what the Yorkshireman calls gormless. Occasionally one has been in bush or on prairie with some big man in his own line—a railway president or a great banker. When camp has been made the president or banker has pitched in like the rest of us, cut wood, built the fire, hung the kettle, and fried the bacon as if he had never done anything else. It is one of the things which have distinguished distinction in the New World to an extent of which the Old World knows next to nothing. According to the measure in which we can preserve the virilities and handinesses that have gone into the transformation of Canada from forest and plain to farm and town, we shall vindicate the name of the New World, and deserve a dignified place at the bar of universal history.

You cannot estimate the value of the Frontier College to its instructors or their value to the nation. Of recent summers about fifty have been sent out. There is scope, but not funds for three hundred. When railway construction was at its height, and Fitzpatrick's men were scattered clear across the continent, the tolling apostolate was up to the blessedly unprecedented number of seventy. We pay insufficient homage to the pioneers of Canada. Two peculiarities of Frontier instructors suggest that, like bread cast on the waters, some of the lustrus of the pioneers are being seen after many days. It is surprising how many well-to-do young fellows become instructors whose grandfathers and great grandfathers were logging pioneers. The old spirit is asserting itself, to the renewing of the mind of the young possessor, and to the ultimate rescue of the frontier from its mental deprivations. Then there is a remarkably large percentage of medical students among the instructors—much larger, all things considered, than the proportion of theologians. The medical profession in embryo, like the medical profession in practice is consciously more in the service of humanity and less in the service of itself than some other regions of ambition that could be named. The divinity student thinks of his future in terms of discourse. The medical aspirant has visions of bed-sides and broken bodies mending.

Here, then, is an enlarging body of young Canadian collegians throwing themselves into the midst of life that is very hard, very rough, very genuine—in a baptism of service of incalculable illumination to them, and of vast hope to their pupils. Look at samples of the letters that come in to the college principal, and judge their worth from the point of view of what the frontier situation could now be if nothing like them had been made possible by the university in overalls.

### School to Be Proud of

WE select something of what J. R. Jones says about his work, and a letter from one of his students:—

Jones is telling about getting into Shewfelt's Camp, back from the north Huron shore:—

We drove about ten miles from White Fish, and then met the clerks from Robinson's and Taylor's camps, and then had to walk the rest of the way in, carrying the mail. About four o'clock we arrived at Robinson's, and at five we reached Taylor's. Then I pushed on all alone, with the mail, for our camp. By six p.m. it was dark, and I was all in, and couldn't follow the trail any longer. I was following the trail of two men who had made Shewfelt's Camp the day before.

Well, I knew I was in for a night in the bush, so I soon had a good fire burning away, and had enough wood cut to last me all night. I had found an axe by a skidway, so had no trouble in getting wood.

I put in rather a miserable night of it, as it was pretty cold and I had been perspiring so much, walking quickly, that the sweat simply froze on me when I stopped walking. I sat by the fire from 7 p.m. till 7 a.m., when I made the camp in about half an hour.

They were all glad to get the mail, and see me back safely. I stayed in bed all day, and as I had a dandy sleep last night, I am feeling all right today—only a bit stiff.

I have been interviewing some of my old pupils, and we expect to have the school running in full swing to-night, Monday. All goes well here.

This about Jones, from John McCannan at the end of the Shewfelt's Camp season:

I take the liberty to say a word or two to the Frontier College people. I know they all think as I do, especially the French class of which I was a pupil under Mr. J. R. Jones, one of the Frontier's able instructors, and one that the school can well be proud of, for he is the shining star here at the camp. It would have been a lonesome place here had it not been for Jones and his friends on the outside—the Frontier people—who were forever sending reading matter, as well as two gramophones, which we all shared in. We spent many pleasant evenings, reading the daily papers as well as the magazines, which were so full of love stories, while the band played. I only regret that I cannot be under J. R. Jones' care and teaching longer. When I go to my home in N. Y. state I will carry the best of wishes for the Frontier College and J. R. Jones, who has done wonderful work here and has made everyone his friend.

This correspondence touches last year's work. Here is part of a letter from Mr. Jones reporting his labor at Island Falls, north of Cochrane, where the Hollinger gold mine is developing power, and has built a place for the college work:

Friday night I had the first classes, and they were well attended. There were 18 Finlanders, 2 Swedes, 4 French-Canadians and 2 Canadians taking instruction in actual classes. Then there must have been 20 or more men in the building for reading or writing purposes. I hardly expect the attendance will be as large as this regularly, because, of course, the whole idea was new to them. However, I should have a good average attendance each night and will do my best to hold the interest of the men.

### Big Employers Co-operate

THE building is larger than you anticipated—it is 40 feet long and 22 feet wide. We are putting in a partition, dividing it in half, and carrying out your plans regarding the reading room, a class room and an

instructor's room in the corner. I am going to make me the tables, as you suggested, also the bookshelves. I think we will arrange for electric lights to be installed, so, I would run moving pictures for, say, two or three nights a week. We would also have free of charge from the Ontario Department of Culture Bureau, controlled by the government.

Each night at five o'clock I swing open the F.C. building, start my fire, arrange the magazines, books, etc. It is a large building and requires a lot of time to keep it in order. However, I am doing my best, and I think all events, will make a lot of it, somehow or other.

There are children here, perhaps fifteen or twenty. I have been wondering if they wouldn't find time to hold school for them, too. Would that be in accordance with Frontier College ideals? I can see that I shall have to work slowly here at the start, and then gradually develop into something great and really worth while.

The camp, clearly, becomes more and more a community, the assurance of a larger Canada of to-morrow. At Shewfelt's and Island Falls—to take only one example of a lumber camp, and another of a water power construction outfit—the Frontier College is the civic church and schoolmaster. You see the mining company co-operating by furnishing a suitable building. The co-operation of the lumber, construction and mining firms is good.

On construction of the Chipawa Canal and at Nipigon the Provincial Hydro has liberally facilitated the Frontier College work. At the Whirlpool Camp, for instance, the building specially erected must have cost five thousand dollars. For two thousand men seven or eight instructors were employed, of whom all but the supervisor worked every day with the men.

The great railways have always shown a warm side to the Frontier University, subscribing to the funds, giving passes, facilitating accommodations, and generally behaving like enlightened business corporations which know the value of intelligent efficiency and contentment among workers far removed from populous centres.

One trouble with camp life is the proportion of men who jump the job, often when a considerable sum has been paid in railway fares. The Frontier College helps to reduce the number of jumpers—a man taking French from J. R. Jones isn't very likely to hike off because there's nothing interesting to retain him at his job.

It has been said that there is scope for three hundred instructors in Canadian camps. Before they could all be supplied there would still be room for instruction to a few educators. In the nature of things his business is destructive, an organization which financially has lived from hand to mouth. The work has naturally been done where facilities have most cheerfully been afforded. Lumbermen, as a class, may be a little slow to appreciate the modernization of bunkhouses and the education of lumberjacks. In the nature of things his business is destructive, an organization which financially has lived from hand to mouth. The work has naturally been done where facilities have most cheerfully been afforded. Lumbermen, as a class, may be a little slow to appreciate the modernization of bunkhouses and the education of lumberjacks. In the nature of things his business is destructive, an organization which financially has lived from hand to mouth. 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