



COUNTRY RESIDENCE OF MR. JAMES RYRIE AT OAKVILLE

This rambling nature palace is Early English in architectural design, suggestive of the ancient seats of the nobility in a land where the country house is as old as Alfred.

## A LOVER OF COUNTRY LIFE

*The Country Residence of a Toronto Millionaire*

By DONALD B. SINCLAIR

ON Lake Ontario, near the town of Oakville, twenty miles from Toronto, stands one of the best appointed country estates in the Dominion. It is the property of Mr. James Ryrie, the wealthy Toronto jeweller. Here, this Toronto millionaire hies him at week ends, retreating from the city for a few days of Horatian simplicity.

The story of Mr. Ryrie's country home is an interesting incident in the career of a man, whose rise from being a humble watchmaker to the affluence of a diamond merchant of international reputation, is one of the romances of Canadian business.

City men in Canada who buy country houses, are of two classes. There is the farmer's son, who has struck it rich in the city, and longs again for the open spaces. To him in early youth the vista of his father's acres appeared only symbolic of long, hopeless years. He followed the shriek of the train whistle until the lure of the town got him. The city meant battle. Doing chores had made him strong. He conquered. But he sweated blood for it. The gold of victory in his pocket, there comes to him a vision of the open road, the rustle of heavy grain, the silver of the creek in the sunlight down by the bush. And, so, the one time country boy invests some of the "pile" which he has made in the city, in a country house.

The second type of city rusticator is the product of the city, who discovers the country late in life. He was born with the clang of a street car a block away. He went to the city public school, where probably he met occasionally the son of parents who had moved recently into town from the country. Very likely, in common with the other boys on the same street, he learned to speak of this boy, rather raw with sunburn, as a "hay-seed." This was a special opprobrium to be attached to all inhabitants of a picturesque world *extra muros* called "the country," about which he knew accurately nothing. It was only after he grew up, and had travelled a little from the smoke of the city, that he came to know the "country," a civilization as vibrant with Canadian nationalism as that which thundered on asphalt pavements. And it was far more peaceful. He barter some of

his gold for this peace. Within automobile distance of the city a large, roaming house goes up. Wide grounds surround it. Another city man has become a country mouse.

Mr. James Ryrie belongs to the second class of country gentlemen. He has been a Toronto man all his life. Until five years ago, he knew as little about the country as do most city men. About that time he discovered it in England; in beautiful

Kent, where are situated so many of England's finest country houses. He decided to have a country house, as well as a town house, after the admirable custom of English gentlemen.

Though one of the first citizens of Toronto, Mr. Ryrie is, perhaps, not as well known to the general reading public as others of prominence in the Queen City. This is because of his distinct aversion to personal publicity in the newspapers. Writing of this modest trait of Mr. Ryrie's, reminds me of a little incident which occurred several months ago. I am not sure whether he has heard the story or not, but I am certain Mr. Ryrie, with his quiet sense of humour, will appreciate the joke on himself. A Toronto paper, renowned for its weekly slashing attacks on frenzied financiers, undertook one week to vary its programme with a eulogy to Mr. Ryrie's qualities of citizenship. But the indiscriminating newsboys, crying as usual the paper's features throughout the street, yelled, "All about James Ryrie millionaire swindler!"

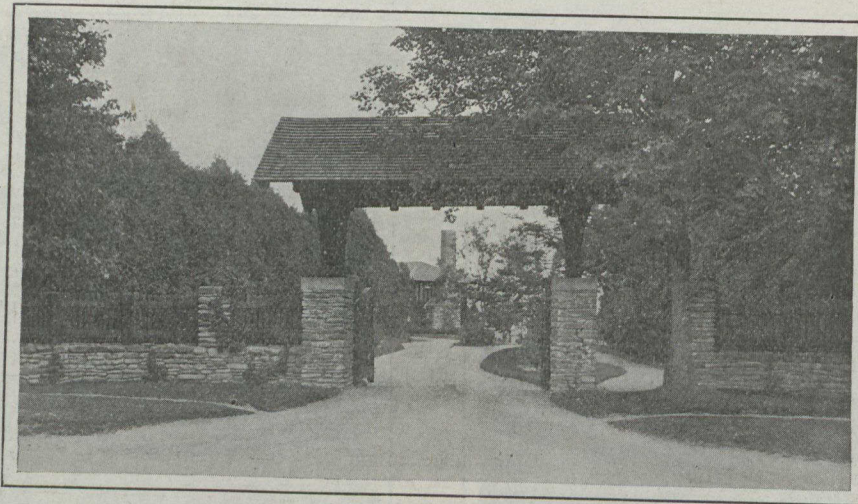
In his offices at Ryrie Bros. great emporium on Yonge Street, in Toronto, I saw Mr. Ryrie, the other day. I saw a quick, agile, grey-haired, little man sitting at a rosewood desk, in an office panelled with glass. He looked like an advertisement of neatness in his suit of light flannels. There was a touch of nature and sentiment in the carnation he wore in his buttonhole. A perfectly groomed hand, ornate with a single little sparkler, slipped out of a white cuff and wrote with a gold pen. He laid down the pen, looked up. I was conscious of a pair of keen eyes, a well-trimmed pointed beard. A suave pleasant voice was saying, briskly: "You want to see my place at Oakville. I am going to let you write it up if you think it worth while. Perhaps you think I am courting publicity. Indeed, I am not! But, in this case, I want to encourage city business men to go in for country life. If my poor example will be of any service to other business men to enjoy more of our natural heritage, I give my assent to your describing my place."

A few days later, as I was driving along an oiled road approaching Mr. Ryrie's estate, I wondered how in the world it would be possible to stage a dainty, dapper, little man like Mr. Ryrie on a farm. Suddenly, from the side of the road, I heard a voice call out, "Hello, there!" I turned, and there was Mr. James Ryrie—transformed. An old grey cap was pulled down over his eyes, his trousers were woefully baggy; I don't think the tan boots he wore had been in the hands of a Greek for ages. He carried a lawn rake in his hand.

"Just been fixing up about the place a little," he said.

Mr. Ryrie's estate at Oakville comprises in all 325 acres. On one side of the road is his house and its twenty-one acres of surrounding grounds; across from it is the Ryrie farm, managed by Mr. Ryrie's son, a Guelph O. A. C. boy. Five years ago this land was an unkempt, waste spot, near a somnolent fruit village. Mr. Ryrie, with the country bee in his bonnet, got his eyes on it and saw possibilities. To-day they are being fulfilled.

The first thing he did was to take the twenty-one acres of which I have spoken, which stretch along the lake shore for a quarter of a mile, and set a house in the middle. He built a large house in early English style, with big rooms and fireplaces, and furnished it magnificently. From the top windows of this house he could look over the lake in the morning, sparkling far more brilliantly than any diamond which ever he sold over the counter of his store. Like a true artist, Mr. Ryrie now wanted beautiful lawns and trees about his house. He attached a gardener to his payroll, and began to lay out the grounds. Had he waited for trees to sprout from the seed, Mr. Ryrie probably would be an old man before he could enjoy their shade. He journeyed to Buffalo and imported an invention which transplants trees of any diameter. In all, he pulled out over 100 Oakville trees and set them down with artistic effect on his grounds. When the lawns began to have a velvety English look, Mr. Ryrie struck out for the Orient and came back with some knick-knacks to add to the attraction of his grounds. He imported several Japanese lanterns from the temples of Japan, made of stone and of chaste design; several



Entrance and driveway Ryrie country estate—nature assisted by art. Note the twenty-foot hedge on the left; it stood there fifteen years before Mr. Ryrie saw it.



From these graceful balconies Mr. Ryrie watches Lake Ontario sparkling in the morning sun.