

# Feature Page

## Tact

There are many things in life that one can appreciate though one doesn't choose to use or exemplify them. Scotch whisky is one of those things; I find it too expensive for my modest purse. So also are first class ratings in studies; all very well for some people, for those who like them or can afford to pay the price, but not quite suitable to my modest talents. Tact is another of those things that I can appreciate in others, slip meditatively at times, but never get drunk on.

Someone once asked me to mention some of the times I had shown tact. Up till then, I had always considered myself quite a tactful person; but when I tried to think of actual occasions when I had exercised that "nice discernment" that the dictionary defines as tact, that "delicate and sympathetic perception, especially of what is fit, graceful or considerate," I could think of but one occasion and that was many years ago. But when I came to recall the times when I had said the wrong thing, the untactful thing, the first thing that came to mind no matter what or to whom—I could recall any number.

There was the mere slip of the tongue at a formal tea, when I said "Pass the Milk"; and the pure blundering when my hostess mentioned that her husband must be a good golfer since he played with the professional. I knowing nothing of the subtle golfing distinctions between playing with a professional golfing instructor as an equal and paying him for lessons, blurted out out "No doubt anyone could play with the professional who could afford to pay for the privilege!"

And there was another time that I came around at the last minute to ask a new flame to go boat riding with me. When she inquired why I was so late about asking, the only excuse I could give was "I had taken it for granted that she wanted to go." Of course I got no date; girls seem to object to being taken for granted.

There was the time when a very lovely girl seemed to be carried away by my overmastering technique, and waxed amorous. Naturally, I didn't want the girl to fall too hard and get a let down, so I tactfully suggested "We've been having such a good time, let's not get sentimental." I'm not sure now that that was tactful, since the girl never seemed to have any time for me after that.

As I think back over the past, I can remember numerous such incidents. In the Army in England, it was usual when a fellow went to London for a leave that he'd be loaded down with little messages to friends, wives and sweethearts there. After one or two experiences with sending such messages by me, the number of messages dwindled to zero. There were so many recriminations afterwards from angry or indignant wives and sweethearts, that the boys found it safer not to send messages. I had no desire to insult these people whom I didn't even know, but they always seemed to take me wrong, or ask me leading questions which I felt obliged to answer truthfully, if untactfully, as that the results were invariably unfortunate.

Even if I don't practice it, I think tact is a fine thing. I'm all for others using it. I could suggest a number of additional occasions when it

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## Notes and Comment

### Contest

The Brunswickan Literary Contest which closed on January seventh has proven gratifying to its sponsors and to the professors and assistants who are judging the entries.

Although the judging is not completed and the final results are not available, Dr. Pacey has let us know that the short story led the other groups; poetry and the informal essay. He was sorry to say that very little poetry in all, and less that was good; was entered but this low note was counterpointed by his enthusiasm over the short stories.

We hope to be able to publish the winning entries on this page next week.

would be appreciated. Just now when the examination grades are flaunted boldly on all the notice boards of the campus, I feel sure that many a student with a sorry grade in the lowest brackets would appreciate a more tactful method of publishing his ignominy. Would it not be more considerate of a student's feelings if instead of putting up a miserable seven or ten or even fifteen percent opposite a student's name, the examiner were to write down a tactful fib such as "Did not write" or "Under consideration".

Or defeated political candidates might be solaced with an engraved loving cup by their victorious opponents. Thus, very unfortunate candidates might, in years to come, point to a long row of beautiful cups as memories of their hopeful political career.

In more minor matters, one can hardly recommend the tactful refusal of some maidens to an invitation to "dance this one" with the plea that they can't dance, although a few minutes before said a few minutes afterwards, they were or will be, floating gracefully in the arms of somebody else. That smacks more of ignorance than nice discernment.

In a couple of days when I shall be called upon to deliver one research essay before a certain class in English, I must think of a tactful excuse for nondelivery of same, and shall hope that the professor will be equally tactful in accepting said tactful excuse, and avoid making rude and unsympathetic remarks.

I wonder if it was the campus liberals or conservatives who put up a certain quaint poster in the Arts Building, tactfully suggesting a subsidy for the ailing CCF party, knowing said CCF party was too modest to demand the much need subsidy. That, I should say, was a very tactful gesture.

In summing up, I repeat that I'm all for tact; I'm tolerant enough to allow others to practice it as much as they please; and I hope the world will be equally tolerant if I don't bother with it at all.

### Happy?

The other night as we entered our room we walked smack into a conversation in which the participants were discussing how best to obtain happiness.

There was a variety of formulae ranging from the "To hail with everything" to those of religious significance.

We enquired naughtily what they considered happiness to be. These answers ranged from "Peace of mind" and the Kentucky mountain theory to the ultimate pleasure theme of Burtham and Hull.

We asked if anyone had ever really been happy at any time, what was the cause and what did it feel like?

After much consideration the answer wobbled round between "No," and "I think so but it wasn't until afterward that I recognize the fact."

Someone said, "What about Life Liberty and the pursuit of happiness". I don't even know what it looks like.

We said, what about it.

## CITIZENS

Everyone is gradually being brought into the field of a newly generated magnetic force called Canadianism. Like all the little iron filings in the freshman physics labs, Canadians are being made to face inward to recognize this new power of which they are all a part. For the past post-war months columnists, novelists and politicians have felt they were aware of this force and have through their own channels metered out their findings to a "below zero" public. Some have told us how we are different from other peoples. Some have told us why we can never get anywhere as a nation. Others have told us why we could well be supreme in all things, especially democracy. Yet generally, we think, J. Doe has not been responsive to these strokings of the press.

Anyway whatever his reaction may be he must have read in the paper the other day that he was a citizen and that for five dollars he could have the new gift certificate. Presumably this admits him to bigger and better bars where he can become intoxicated on the fermented juices of international intrigues.

# CLASSICS

(Or "The Classics Made Easy") by Percherson Quisquid, A. B.  
The extremely trying and depressing experience of writing examinations having been concluded for another four months, I have set myself to the task of presenting to my readers a brief outline of English Literature. I should point out that for four years I've made the highest marks in English Literature, and am considered by my professors as about the brightest student they've known since they went to school.

Today's Brief Outline for serious students of English will feature John Milton, who is known to have lived in the seventeenth century. (1) The secret to studying Milton is to realize that nobody understands him at all. The reason for this is that he took all kinds of Latin in college (Cambridge) and never quite got over it. Milton writes in one of his essays (2): "They (students) get the ill habit of barbarizing against the Latin and Greek idiom, with their untutor'd Anglicisms, odious to be read..." You see old John had the idea that the only way to write good English, or what he quaintly called Anglicisms, was to master Latin and Greek. This idea of mastering the dead languages in order to write a live one was strictly Milton's, and like all his other ideas he stuck to it.

The next thing Milton knew he was blind, and he wrote then perhaps the only poem everyone completely understands. In fact, high school students are usually forced to memorize his "When I consider how my light is spent" and this gives them a rather overconfident attitude towards him. This feeling is corrected as soon as they get messing around with Honor English in college.

Although people have never understood what Milton was writing about (3), they've never been able to get over the fact that he wrote so much. "Paradise Lost" is exactly (4) 293 pages (5) long in my book, and that is a lot of poetry. It is written in blank verse, and that gives you a hint as to how much you'll get out of it. It is packed with classical, Biblical, and doubtful references which confuse the issue, along with some dreadful misspellings and capital letters for every other proper noun. This modest little poem is supposed to be the result of all Milton's thought.

Milton introduces it with the words "Rime . . . being but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre . . ." so you can see that he was not without a sense of humor. This should in no way be interpreted to mean that Milton is uproariously funny, because he is painfully unfunny, but every once in awhile he writes something amusing he no doubt overheard from a passing Cavalier.

Milton was married several times, and this caused him to be a strong advocate of divorce. There being no Reno in the seventeenth century (I think the Indians lived in Reno then and were on the whole a pretty well adjusted bunch), old John found it difficult to get rid of his wives when he felt his marriage had become "a polluting sadness and perpetual distemper". Since Parliament at that time couldn't see Milton's argument, the poet settled down and outlived all three of his wives and died single. Milton was the first of a long string of poets to get tangled up in politics. If Cromwell was the sort of fellow to have any friends, old John was certainly one of them. In fact, Milton wrote a little poem "To Oliver Cromwell", in which he said a lot of nice things about him, probably just after Oliver had burned another church full of Irishmen.

But enough of this idle prattle. The things you MUST remember about Milton is that, along with that fellow Shakespeare, he is the greatest poet of England, and, like Ulysses, (6) he wrote an epic poem that had more Latin than English in it. He was a staunch Puritan, and an amateur astrologer. If you have the nerve to attempt Paradise Lost, you might be interested in Milton's ideas about the universe. It was all done with layers, and the earth was very small, and hell was something like Siberia, in that Beezebub, or Satan, was sent there for trying to start a political revolution in heaven.

In case you're interested, Milton also wrote on the death of the university letter carrier, on a fair infant dying of a cough, on the drowning of a friend at sea, and kindred other cheerful topics. He took himself more seriously than anyone else has been able to, and the last line of his last poem, "Sanson Agonistes", read "And calm of mind all passions spent", and that, I think is the happiest state he was ever in, and it's too bad he was so late in arriving.

Next week, literature students, I shall continue this series of lectures with William Shakespeare, who is a lot older than John Milton but has grown old more gracefully. Next week, I'll tell you why. (7)

- (1) Born in 1611, to be exact, but co-eds are about the only people who worry about dates.
- (2) "Of Education" — and you should be glad he isn't on THIS faculty.
- (3) People who have never been able to understand Milton can be broken down into four groups:
  1. People who think they do.
  2. People who know they don't.
  3. People who never gave it much thought.
  4. Ibid.
- (4) I can't prove this, but I'm pretty sure.
- (5) And small print too!
- (6) Ulysses was the son of a Latin father and a Greek mother. James Joyce has written a very entertaining biography about him.
- (7) Footnotes are fun, aren't they?

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