

A True Bright Boy

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IN July 1897 the writer was a passenger eastward bound on the Canadian Pacific Railway from Vancouver. Among the passengers were a Presbyterian minister from central Ohio and his little son, a bright boy eleven or twelve years of age. The father told me that it was the first time he had ever been on British soil.

All through British Columbia our attention was given to the magnificent scenery along the route, but after leaving the mountains, the passengers looked to their fellow travellers for such entertainment as would relieve the monotony of the outlook over the sparsely settled level country.

The conversation in some way drifted to a comparison of the respective Constitutions of England and the United States. Let that pass, for it was dry enough, no doubt.

In a few minutes I found myself left alone with the little boy, who had been a close listener to the conversation, and who had noted particularly a statement I made, to the effect that most British statesmen were willing to admit that the New England colonists were justified in their revolt in 1776. How well he used this admission the following report of the conversation between us will show.

Turning to me as the others were called to another part of the train, he asked, "Do you know, sir, why it is that the United States hates England as she does?" I smiled at the question as I recognised in it the influence of certain exciting and prejudiced lessons in some American school books which happily now are rapidly being replaced by much better mental food for children's minds.

"I have my ideas, my boy, about that, but I would much rather have yours," I replied.

"Well, sir," he said, "it is like this—I have always said that the emblem of the United States should never have been the Eagle." Then he paused while I asked—"What do you think it should have been?"

"I think, sir, it should have been the elephant."

This was a new idea to me and wondering what was in his mind, asked,—“Why do you think it should have been the elephant?” “Well, sir, you know the elephant has a great memory.” “Yes,” I answered, still wondering what point he was trying to make. But the next moment