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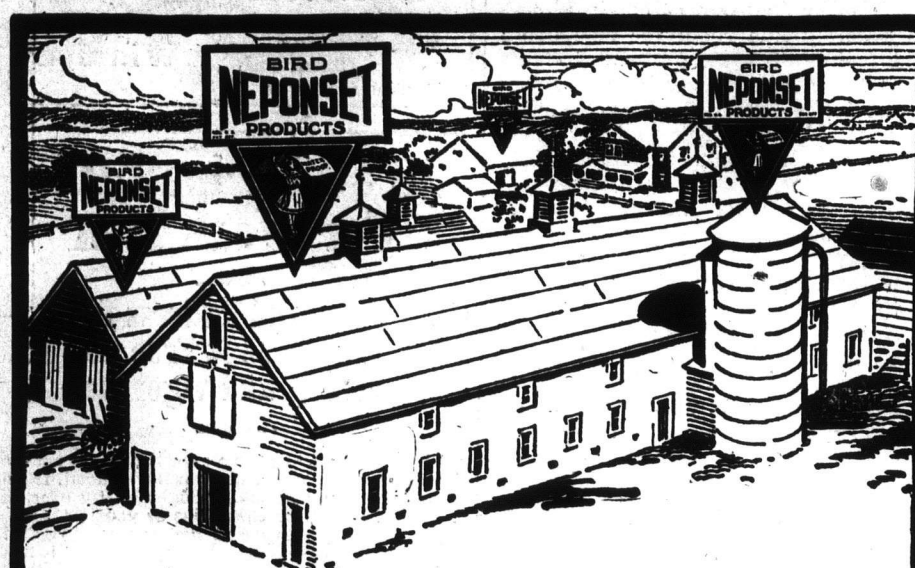


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## An Englishman's Visit to the Old Land.

By PERCY CHEW, WINNIPEG.

It is not a new thing to read the "impressions" of Canadians in England, or the "experiences" of Englishmen in Canada, in journals published on both sides of the water. In fact, English editors have gone back on "Englishmen's experiences in Canada" now, and will no more of 'em.

I was over there on a visit this winter, and was one day talking to the editor of a large weekly, published in Manchester. He said, "You'd be surprised at the number of silly fools that look in here every week and ask us if we'd like to hear about their 'experiences' in the Wild West. They seem puzzled when told that we know them off by heart."

But, however common it may be for Englishmen to write about Canada, and Canadians to write about England, it is not quite so common to read the criticisms of Englishmen about England, after an absence of years. They say comparisons are odious, but it is by comparisons that all estimates are made; and a comparison of a few conditions on both sides the water, by an Englishman who is not aggressively patriotic may, perhaps, be of interest to Canadians.

There is no doubt that the boast of the superior productivity of Canadian and American workmen over English workers, is no idle one. In every industry the American does more. In bricklaying he lays four bricks to the Englishman's one. In agriculture he probably accomplishes three times as much as the Englishman. In fact, to perceive the movements of an average English farm laborer, one needs a line of stakes. The English farm hand has, however, one good quality not so common here. He is a good plower, and leaves no green sod poking its nose up between the furrows. Moreover, he plows straight.

It should be remembered, though, that the English worker labors slowly, not because he is unable to increase his gait, but merely because he is unwilling. He argues that he is paid for the expenditure of his energy day by day; not for performing a given quantity of work. There is only a certain amount of work to be done, he thinks; and in England there are always a great many more workers than are required. Why should he, then, hurry to complete the task that when done must leave him without a job. It must be agreed that his reasoning seems sound.

On the other hand, it is possible that by refusing to compete on equal terms with the workers of other lands, he is driving trade away from England, and thus accelerating her commercial decline. He is between two fires. Whichever course of action he adopts is likely still further to reduce the already inadequate number of available jobs. As things are, he seems to have decided not to increase his pace. And he fights the American tendency to "hustle" with a bitter resentment and a full consciousness of what he is doing. The spirit of rivalry in production, the restless eagerness to excel so general among Canadians is utterly lacking in him. He will not boast of how many acres he can stook in a day. Rather he persecutes with a galling and petty tyranny any of his mates who are ambitious, and who try to do more than the amount fixed by the union.

Almost every English newspaper one picks up contains illustrations of the hideous poverty that now prevails in England. Sad stories of suicide through unemployment, of shocking over-crowding, and chronic underfeeding, are common. Yet surprisingly little of this misery is manifest to the casual visitor. On a cursory inspection the happiness and prosperity of the people seems quite good. There is little to distinguish a Manchester or a Liverpool crowd from a Winnipeg crowd. The percentage of "down-and-outs" seems about the same.

This, however, is a deceptive appearance. The evils that so many competent authorities assure us exist, are concealed but thinly. Step just a little way from the broad, well-lighted thoroughfares, leave the well-dressed crowd for

but a moment, and you shall see enough to make you feel the half has never been told. Externally, England is fair and smiling. Her people seem prosperous; but they are not.

A most remarkable phase of English life is the rapid decay of the independent middle-class, the small tradesmen and the petty producers. Twenty-five or thirty years ago almost every second man you met was a small business man; a tailor, grocer, with an "off" license for the sale of liquor, or a hardware man, etc. But this is now changed; the day of the little business man is done. In a few lines the small trader persists, owing, perhaps, to the individual character of his work. He is, however, a mere belated survival of an almost extinct species. Today is the day of big business, of gigantic corporate effort. Everything is falling into the hands of large companies, against whom the small man is powerless to compete.

Now, there is one very interesting result of all this. The sons of the members of the former middle class find themselves in a most extraordinary position. They cannot follow in their father's footsteps, and gain their livelihood as small business men, for that outlet is closed. There remains the labor market; and this is where the shoe pinches. For these young men, by virtue of a peculiarly idiotic training and education, consider themselves socially superior to all ordinary "common" workers, without themselves being in the least qualified to do anything that requires special training or skill. Moreover, they do not like to work with their coats off, as by so doing they would lose "caste." Consequently, they are forced into the most ill-paid of occupations. They become clerks or shop assistants. How are the mighty fallen! You can still hear them talk of the lower "clawes."

I felt much sympathy for these young men in their truly unfortunate condition, and had interesting conversations with some of them. A great number of them live with their parents, and thus enjoy a social position in no sense the result of their own efforts. To this they cling with a pathetic tenacity. They will not lose it, not even to get married, for if they do they fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again.

Most of them were much interested in Canada. Everyone got ahead there, they had heard. Was this true?

"Well!" I said, "it is not easy to pick up a fortune, even in Canada. But conditions there are more favorable to the worker than in England. Here, there are more men than jobs. There, the opposite is often the case, and employers cannot get help. This sends wages up, temporarily, a fact of which the prudent man takes advantage. Moreover, a poor man may still acquire property in Canada, a thing almost impossible here. Yes, a poor man is better off there."

"Still, you know," objected one fellow, "it doesn't seem to me that all this booming and advertising of Canada is done from purely disinterested motives. I imagine the difficulty Canadian manufacturers and farmers experience in getting help causes them to yearn for a bigger supply of labor. Scarce labor is dear labor. Canadian employers, no doubt, like paying big wages just as little as English employers. Hence their eager solicitations to intending emigrants."

"My dear chap," I said, "it is still true that all men seek to satisfy their desires with the least possible exertion, and Canadian employers are no exception to the rule. The smaller wages they pay the quicker they get rich. Certainly you are right in saying that they wish to increase the supply of labor in order to put down the price. But it often happens that both parties to a transaction benefit thereby, and this seems to me to be a case in point. If it is well for the employer to have you in Canada, it is also well, comparatively well, for you to be there. Many Englishmen go to Canada. Few return. That should say all that is necessary."