

Personalities and Problems

11---Charles Colquhoun Ballantyne

Who Rose from \$2.00 a Week to be Managing Director of an \$8,000,000 Concern

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

THESE'S something quite unusually odd about the commercial career of Mr. Charles Colquhoun Ballantyne. But of course in this country we are becoming used to all sorts of paradoxes in business as well as politics. The day is supposed to have gone by when tariffs merely made some men prosperous. During the last decade or so tariffs in Canada have made a lot of men inconsistent.

I rather think C. C. Ballantyne is one of them. He may not think so. Yet he is one of the shrewdest, most plain-thinking of men. In fact there's no man in Canada whose commercial candor should be more freely banked upon than Mr. Ballantyne's. What he knows he knows—because he has jolly well learned it in the school of shirtsleeves. What he has done is enough to make any man not only justly proud—but also inconsistent. Other men his age may have made more money. Doubtful if there's another man of authority in commercial circles in this country whose course has been more nearly by the geometrical route said to be the shortest distance between two given points—which is an absolutely straight line.

C. C. Ballantyne is a born manufacturer and commercialist. His career in Montreal, where he has worked out all the problems that ever came his way, has proved him to be one of the most constructive and progressive men in Canada. In business, so far as manufacturing and selling is concerned, he has openly had but one dominant idea. That was and is—Paint. He has been twenty-five years selling and making paint.

Which is the first sign of inconsistency. Paint is a mere superficial matter. Mr. Ballantyne is the opposite of superficial. Paint conceals defects—such as knots and nail holes and wind-checks. Mr. Ballantyne has nothing to conceal. There is no more open-minded, outspoken man anywhere.

One item in the paint business I'm sure he has never handled.

Whitewash.

But what is the grand inconsistency about Mr. Ballantyne? His career if reduced to a simple story for a school-book might be used to instruct any youth; and in its main outlines there could be nothing in the story that wouldn't be a straight stimulus to any healthy young Canadian.

Nevertheless some bright boy would be sure to pop up with a question which the teacher would have trouble to answer.

Which is where the inconsistency begins to come in. And instead of explaining it, the teacher might better go ahead with the facts, leaving the pupil to draw his own conclusions. The thing might aptly be done with a few blackboard pictures, which the scholars could read as a rebus. (1) A lad of fifteen checking a very little trunk in a very small town—to go east. (2) The same youth tramping a lonesome, somewhat sleepy city looking for a job. (3) Office boy at two dollars a week; problem—how did he make ends meet and have anything left for Sunday-school collection? (4) Stacking pots of paint on the shelves of a crimp little store; waiting for customers? "No, children," says the teacher. "Look." (5) Out on the street, buttoning his over-coat—hiking to the highways and the hedges because he had a good thing in the shop that other people ought to buy and wasn't afraid to say so. Without a doubt the bright youth of 1912 would want to say that he guessed he knew what kind of paint that was—because it was the kind that he had seen on the billboards, covering the earth. But the teacher, for fear of advertising the brand, would forbid the lad from mentioning the name; which, of course, would cause every boy in the class to keep an eye out for the poster.

THE last picture in the series would be a huge factory with other factories in three other cities in the background; a tremendous big office covering all of one flat; in the head compartment Mr. Ballantyne at the age of forty-five. This would be freely decorated with moving trains and ships and underneath the symbol \$8,000,000 would be worked out al fresco. Nothing would then be lacking to complete the series except a geographical background. This would contain (1) Canada; (2) the United States as far as the south shore of Lake Erie and the city of Cleveland; (3) England.

Very probably the paradox of Mr. Ballantyne's

career along with much of its brilliancy and fine commercial qualities might be suggested by that geographical background.

The place where C. C. Ballantyne spends most of his office hours is farther from the Bank of Montreal than any other head office in the city. It takes about half an hour to get there. In the forenoons you are tolerably sure of finding Mr. Ballantyne in. You are dead certain to find him busy. In the afternoon he is liable to be down at the Harbour Commissioners' office on Common St. He is one of the three commissioners. This week he may be



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in Winnipeg, where the firm of which he is the capable head have a factory, office and branch warehouses. Next month he may be in Toronto—for a similar reason. Again he may be in Vancouver. Now and again he may take a run out to an oxide mining works at St. Malo, P.Q. Once in a while he sits at a meeting of directors of the Merchants' Bank; at a meeting of Canada Cement Co. directors; or on the Board of Governors of the Western Hospital. Any time an official of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association from the head offices in Toronto happens to be in town he may try his luck getting a confab with Mr. Ballantyne, who a few years ago was President of the C. M. A.

But it's a long way out to the offices of the Sherwin-Williams Paint Co. of Canada; and the reason is that the institution of which Mr. Ballantyne is managing director occupies at least four acres of space in its factories and offices—and land in Montreal is beginning to be dear even in the outskirts.

The office of which Mr. Ballantyne is the directive head is one of the most peculiar in Canada. One entire floor of a huge building is a vast general office, subdivided by low semi-glass partitions into about thirty smaller offices of which the managing director's is one and in no respect different from any of the others except for the man inside. Any camera fiend wanting a snapshot of Mr. Ballantyne might get one on a fine day by just levelling a kodak from the waiting-room outside at the glass partition, where in full view of everybody and able at a glance to see anybody, Mr. Ballantyne sits and slams through his days' works. He doesn't seem to care for solitude. No door in that place is labelled "Private." Everything looks as open as a circus once you are inside. And the moment you are in you realize that the glass-walled quad containing Mr. Ballantyne's desk is the head office of somehow a huge concern.

AND so it is. The Sherwin-Williams Paint Co. of Canada is capitalized at \$8,000,000. The profits on the output for 1911 were \$550,000. For 1912 they will be about \$600,000. The works of this now Canadian concern are in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and London, Eng. The firms out of which it was consolidated are the old Sherwin-Williams Canadian branch, the Canada Paint Co., and the Lewis Berger and Sons, Ltd., of London, whose markets in 150 years have extended to almost every country on the face of the earth.

The President of this huge concern is a Canadian: Walter H. Cottingham, now of New York. The managing director is a Canadian: C. C. Ballantyne, of Montreal.

The story of Ballantyne and Cottingham is one of the brightest in all the annals of Canadian business. How the name Sherwin-Williams came to be the name of a Canadian business with headquarters in Montreal and with eight millions of capital, of which a large percentage is British—is succinctly the story of how Ballantyne and his crony Cottingham transformed a paint shop down on old Peter St. into a huge international business. And Mr. Ballantyne's career aptly illustrates a peculiar principle in Canadian life. Just what that is would be hard to define. But you get a notion of it when you reflect what might have been Montreal's loss had Ballantyne followed the towpath to the United States, which more than once it was very easy for him to do. And he's the kind of man that Uncle Sam has always been glad to get from Canada; the kind that you can trail up to head offices in almost every city of consequence in that country.

It would be interesting to have a census of the Ontario men who have helped to make Montreal our chief city. There is a kind of prevalent notion that Toronto, for instance, is largely conglomerated from the Ontario town, village and farm. Montreal is alleged to be more cosmopolitan: because she is profoundly bi-lingual; because she is a seaport; because of railroad termini and a bigger foreign population.

At any rate, C. C. Ballantyne is an Ontario boy. He was born in Colquhoun, Dundas Co., a few miles from the spot that gave origin to Sir James Whitney. He attended the Morrisburg Collegiate. At the age of fifteen he quit school and decided which way he would hike out from the county town. That was the time when the grand army of young men were trailing away from Canada to the United States. With an average population of one in every 750 square miles of territory, Canada was overpopulated. Toronto was a college town. Montreal was a mere stopping place for a few ships. Both were almost delightfully asleep. There was no Winnipeg or Vancouver. Calgary was only a name; Edmonton not even that; Ottawa was still in the woods. Going west was unfashionable. Going south was too common. Going to Montreal—well, it was the flip of a copper. There was no beaten trail to the city even from the counties down the St. Lawrence.

SO, when at the age of fifteen, with a High school education and a small trunk, C. C. Ballantyne arrived in Montreal, he was glad to get a job at two dollars a week. He has since refused \$600 a week.

The difference between these two salaries is something like the difference between the Montreal that