

THE HALF CENTURY

Mar 31 1950 (From Gaslamp to Geiger Counter)

Dalhousie in 1900 . . . by Dr. A. E. Kerr

I understand that this will be the last issue of the Gazette for the current session. It will mark the end of one important student activity in the year that concludes the first half of the century. At the request of the Editor I have agreed to write a few paragraphs conjuring up a vision of Dalhousie as it was fifty years ago.

It occurred to me that one important source of material for information about the past would be the Gazette itself; so I secured a bound volume of it from the Library and tried by its help to transport myself back across the years and see Dalhousie through the eyes of the students who were here at that time.

The question of the year apparently was, "shall we or shall we not wear gowns?" According to an editorial in the January issue 1900, the wearing of gowns had been compulsory when Dalhousie stood on the Grand Parade. It was abolished at the request of the students, but in the session of '96-'97 a different view began to prevail on the campus and the students by a large majority asked that the old practice be revived. The Senate, in response to their petition decided that "undergraduates and general students attending more than one class, are entitled to wear caps and gowns." A citizen of the City is alleged to have said that Dalhousie without gowns would be a

mere High School and not a university at all; and some of those who deplored the innovation felt that Dalhousie along among all the major universities of Canada had broken with the great tradition in academic dress. One champion of the change retorted that it was Dalhousie's privilege to initiate new departures; and an unromantic soul even suggested that the money that the students would spend on gowns could be more wisely used in buying stilt with which the young searchers after knowledge might get into the college building dryshod!

The students at the turn of the century were genuinely interested in serious discussions, and they apparently had a well-developed taste for literary topics. Some of the titles were *The Legal Aspects of the Merchant of Venice*, *the History of Astronomy*, *Some Rambling Thoughts on Metaphysics*, *the Concentration of Wealth*, *Some Legends of Glooscap*, *the Beginnings of Literature*, *Rudyard Kipling—a Biographical Sketch*, *the French Shore Question in Newfoundland*, and *William Shakespeare—Barrister at Law?* Many of these articles would do credit to the best journals today.

No one can read the college paper of the year 1900 without being impressed by the devotion that the students had for their Alma Mater and their interest in everything

that pertained to her welfare. They called attention to new additions made to the Museum, new books received by the Library, and new achievements of graduates that added luster to Dalhousie's name. An outsider might have wondered what they saw in their little College to awaken such pride. Not more than ten former pupils of the Halifax Academy were included in the year's graduating class in Arts. The most outstanding social event of the season would not bring together more than 200 students. But there was no lack of faith in or affection for Dalhousie. The main editorial of the February issue for 1900 contained the observation that "Dalhousie is as dear to a Dalhousie graduate as Oxford is to and Oxford graduate."

A distinguished Dalhousian wrote from Cornell at that time that one of his colleagues had recently said to him that Dalhousie could no longer be described as a "little College". It was indeed a little College in comparison with the Dalhousie that we know today. But no one could ask more for Dalhousie in the present or in the future than that its life should always reflect the spirit that prevailed on the campus in the day of small things, and that is still in evidence in the life of the University at its best.

The Balance of Power . . . by Dr. G. E. Wilson

The first half of the Twentieth Century! Fifty years! 1900 - 1950. How short the time has been and yet what a transformation it has seen in the affairs of men!

If in 1900 Lord Acton could have seen a picture of the world of 1950, the only reason he would not have thought the version incredible was that as an historian he had viewed so many other incredible half-centuries.

Five hundred years from now, one hundred years from now, how will men view these fateful fifty years? What judgment will they pass on their worth and their significance? It is a question that may well make us pause.

Marvellous scientific achievement, social upheaval, and more destructive and more widespread than anything the world has ever seen before! Will that be the record? Shall men say that it was the end of an age or shall they say that it was the beginning of a new era in the history of the world?

If we look at the picture simply from the point of view of power the most astonishing thing that has happened

has been the eclipse of Western Europe. In 1900 there was no doubt as to where was the power center of the world. At the time of the death of Queen Victoria there seemed to be no reason to think that the long ascendancy of Europe was coming to an end. In culture and in civilization, in wealth and in power, she led the world. London and Paris, Berlin and Vienna, Rome and St. Petersburg were all in their way imperial cities.

Japan was still a curious and interesting upstart, which had recently astonished the world by her victory over China, but has afterwards been firmly put in her place when she presumed too much, and sought to impose too onerous terms on her defeated rival. No European power had yet deigned to enter into a partnership with the Land of the Rising Sun.

Across the Atlantic was that strange phenomenon the United States of America. It was a land that Europe could not ignore although the old world still liked to take a condescending attitude to a country of flamboyant de-

mocracy where there was so little culture and so much vulgarity, and money was the measure of all things. Even here however there was a portentous sign of change. For years Americans had taken a holier-than-thou attitude towards the wickedness of the imperialistic wars in which European powers engaged. In 1898 the United States had defeated Spain and showed that she too might be preparing to enter the game.

In 1950 all is changed. From the point of view of power Western Europe is almost a vacuum, drained of wealth, shattered in might, her whole social system rocking, Western Europe is only a ghost of the wealthy and powerful and arrogant society that stepped so confidently and so proudly into the new century some fifty years ago.

There are only two great power centers left in the world—Washington and Moscow. Can they compose their differences or is another war necessary to determine where is to be the new Rome? That is the great question in power politics as we enter the second half of the Twentieth Century.

The Domestic Revolution . . . by Dr. S. H. Prince

It is a fact which even yet few people realize that during the last fifty years a Domestic Revolution has been taking place quite as significant in its way as the Industrial Revolution in the previous century. One by one the traditional functions which in earlier days were the core of familial life have disappeared from the home. The mechanics of housekeeping have undergone a complete change. In many cases the modern home has become a machine shop with mechanicalized apparatus for cooking, washing and ironing. In others, these industrial processes have been handed over to the bake-shop, the lunch-counter and the commercial laundry. Its educational functions have been largely transferred to the nursery, the kindergarten and the school, and its religious functions to the Church and the Sunday School. Diversion and recreation are no longer confined within the family circle. Even the rearing of children in child-caring agencies has become a large scale enterprise. Thus the family has shed many of its earlier responsibilities. It is no longer the all-in-all it used to be. There are those who renounce the family and all its works although perhaps few would go so far as the lady who said in making her declaration of independence: "I was born in a hospital ward, reared in a boarding school, courted in an automobile, and married in a church. I get my meals at a cafeteria, spend my mornings at golf and my afternoons at bridge. When I am sick I go to the hospital. When I die I shall be buried from an undertaker's parlor. All I need is a garage and a bedroom". It must be acknowledged that with the advent of furnished rooms, prepared meals, steam laundries and the tailor-shop, the disadvantages of non-family living have largely disappeared.

It is an axiom of Sociology that the life of an institu-

tion remains secure only so long as it has vital and irreplaceable functions to perform. Shorn of many of its values does the family still retain any significant services essential to the survival of the species? The answer clearly is in the affirmative. One such service is the genetic function. Non-family species can survive only at a terrific toll of life. Vital statistics show that the death-rate of non-family children is greater than that of children born in the normal home. It in the struggle for existence as Darwin has shown, the preservation of the species is the first law of Nature it may be expected that the human population will continue in the main to be brought into the world through the family cradle.

A second law of Nature, as Kropotkin has pointed out, is cooperation and mutual aid. There can be little question that these qualities are pre-eminently home-made products. The family system is the organization best adapted to the incubation of these virtues. Indeed apart from the primary group it is doubtful if they would be produced at all.

Thus because of its basic place in social evolution it would seem highly probable that the family will live as long as society endures. It may change its form as it has changed its form time and again in days gone by. The social form which benefits one environment may not always suit another. The durability of the family may change. It may cease to be a life-long entity, as in many cases it has already ceased to be. The size of the family may change. We have seen it large in the earlier centuries, smaller in the Middle Ages, large again in the 19th Century and again today on the decline. Marital practices may change. Birth control and contraception (a renaissance

of infanticide) may become accepted elements in the folkways. Artificial insemination may bring back the maternal family of pre-literate times. But the family will endure. It is like the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze.

It must be said in all justice that in the last fifty years many new and true values have impinged upon the family to its everlasting good. Who would wish to return to the family folkways of half a century ago! Certainly one advance has been the extension of democracy to the home. Victorian domesticity, as exhibited in the Barrets of Wampole Street, is rightly repellant to us today.

One notes, too, the higher standard of living which the family of today enjoys over that of fifty years ago. Even if as a result of it, a smaller number of children come to birth a larger number come to maturity. Fifty years ago one baby in three died before it was a year old; today, only one in ten. We are filling two cradles for one coffin, effecting the same population quota with the saving of untold suffering and pain. Interest in the education and welfare of children has increased in inverse proportion to their decline as an economic unit.

Nor is it retrogression which has brought about a single standard of sexual ethics with the reduction of infant mortality the surplus woman problem began to disappear. No movement has had a greater influence upon the family than the so-called Woman's Movement of the last fifty years. Economic independence and multiplied opportunities of self-support have brought an end to sex slavery, and the infidelities which once had to be acquiesced in or condoned. Inasmuch as two-thirds of divorces are granted on the petition of the wife it may even be

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The Leftward Trend . . . by Professor J. H. Aitchison

There should be no need to demonstrate at great length the fact that there has been a pronounced leftward trend throughout the world during the past fifty years. It is most readily seen in the fortunes of those parties and movements to which the label "Left" is attached. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the establishment of communist regimes in the satellite countries of eastern Europe since the close of the second World War, the victory

office and power. In Canada, the C.C.F. forms the government in one province and the official opposition in three others. In democracies everywhere trade unions possess a power and influence which would have horrified the Right at the beginning of the century and which horrifies some elements of the Right even today. Whatever the second half of the century holds, the fascist periods of Italy and Germany, the existence of fascist regimes in a

the Left is a determination to use the power of the state to lessen the insecurities and the inequalities in real income which it conceives to be the inescapable consequences of uncontrolled capitalism. The different degrees of Leftism are best distinguished by the distance along that road it is considered desirable to go and by the price at which the journey is considered to be worthwhile. The New Deal and the Fair Deal policies of the Democratic Party in the United States go some distance along the road and hence