

became an overnight figure in Western Canadian politics, made himself president of a non-existent railroad, and charmed everyone in sight. As a matter of fact some of the qualities of "E.P." were detectable in Stephen.

During the 1930s Leacock was moved to set down his theories on writing in general and humour in particular. Both his Humour: Its Theory and Technique and Humour and Humanity stressed the desirability of kindness in humour.

"...humour goes upon its way, moving from lower to higher forms, from cruelty to horseplay, from horseplay to wit, from wit to the high 'humour of character', and beyond that to its highest stage as the humour of life itself. Here tears and laughter are joined, and our little life, incongruous and vain, is rounded with a smile."

A touch of the Bard of Avon in that -- and, like the Bard, Leacock was not without his contradictions. His Sunshine Sketches could not be said to have been unmarked by malice. He could be merciless, as in Arcadian Adventures, outrageous as with his attitude towards women in My Discovery of England, patronisingly piqued when dealing with the classics and the professors thereof.

But of one thing he was certain: "Humour is not the lower level of the field of literature, but lies around the summit of its highest range." Time and again he rued with anguish the tendency of both academe and the public-at-large to consider the humorist a lonely and often disreputable figure merely on the fringe of true literature. In truth, he had an inferiority complex about his brand of humour.

Stephen Leacock devoted the last two years of his life to blocking out what was to be his autobiography, a project he had frequently thought about and as frequently put off doing. In the end, he only managed four informally-organized, chatty chapters which were brought out posthumously under the title of The Boy I Left Behind Me. It is now out of print. In addition, he had been collecting material for a book to be entitled Last Leaves, which he had asked his niece, Mrs. Donald Nimmo, to publish after his death. As Barbara Ulrichsen, Mrs. Nimmo had served her uncle faithfully as secretary, manager, adviser and chatelaine for ten years following Mrs. Leacock's death. In Last Leaves, which appeared in 1945, Mrs. Nimmo contributed a nostalgic and at times deeply-moving preface.

Towards the end of 1943, Stephen Leacock became ill. In a matter of weeks cancer of the throat had been diagnosed and he was taken from his country retreat at Old Brewery Bay to Toronto. There he died in hospital on March 28, 1944. Following cremation in Toronto, burial took place in the family plot in St. George's Churchyard, Sibbald's Point, not far from the scenes of his childhood and a stone's throw from Orillia, on which he had based his Sunshine Sketches.

Despite the fact that it was wartime and the eve of the allied invasion of Hitler's Fortress Europe, the press of the world found space to pay tribute to the Canadian humorist's genius as parodist and satirist, whose ebullient sense of the ridiculous brought laughter to troubled mankind. But there were among his legion of admirers those who knew him more specifically as a great humanist,