

BACK TO COLLEGE

Some Thoughts Inspired by the Opening of the College Sessions when Young Canadians Resume the Study of Books and Football

By RODEN KINGSMILL

WITH the reddening leaf, the rusting grass, the rumble of the coal-shute, and the disinterred overcoat come the days when the colleges will occupy as much of the stage as Sir Wilfrid and his band of returned evangelists, the wheat crop, the football prospects and the beleaguered tariff.

From ten thousand Canadian homes the hope of the family has gone forth to the big town, there to spend the next eight months in the pursuit of culture: the knowledge of men, sport, clothes, girls and the humanities. But, though he may not know it, his primary object in going to college is to learn how to do things. He needs education to make him effective as a workman. A good many people who have not enrolled at any college misconceive the object of a scholastic course. Once upon a time, for instance, R. P. Roblin, the Premier of Manitoba, was in a Pullman parlour with a man who happened to have put in a few years at the University of Toronto. Now, R. P. Roblin would probably be the last man on earth to deny that he is himself one of the brightest and shiniest Philistines that ever trod the prairie. In that Pullman aforesaid R. P. Roblin—as is his wont—proceeded to lay down the law aggressively. Higher education, he announced, was of no use to anybody. It had never made any man richer. Whereupon the collegian made bold to remark that if a man had to dig a post-hole he would do it better with a trained intellect and a trained intelligence than if he had neither.

With the Roblin irenic habitude the Premier replied that his interlocutor was talking rot. No proof of earning power consequent upon the possession of an academic degree being shown, the degree was a worthless decoration. Q. E. D.

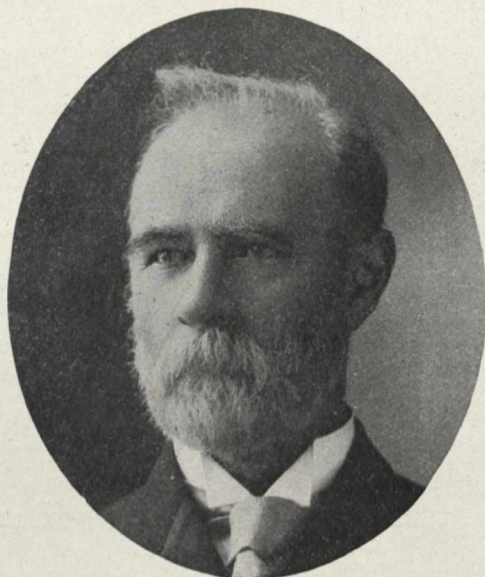
Of course, Mr. Roblin was wrong. Anybody who is not a Manitoba civil servant is at liberty to say so. Mr. Roblin was wrong because he looked cross-eyed at the situation. If any fond and self-denying parent believes that in sending his boy to college he is equipping him as a money-getter, that parent is fatally in error. If that parent wants a sure thing in the money-getting line, let him apprentice his son to some reputable pawnbroker. The profits in the business are sure; the element

of chance is eliminated; the hours are not long and the operation of a well equipped loan office—with three balls outside—gives the proprietor the opportunity of becoming a student of human nature. And he is paid for doing it. This is not yet customary at ordinary universities.

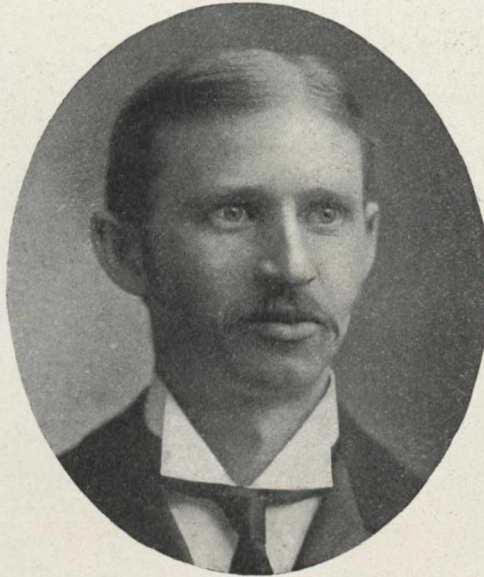
Perhaps, after all, Mr. Roblin was not so very far wrong. But did

he ever try buying a place in the long, thin seat-line-up the night before the championship?

THE Canadian college of to-day is largely what its students make it. The President, it is true, has a certain amount of say-so, but the student body has its characteristics, each after its own kind. Nobody would mistake a McGill man for a Toronto man. And Toronto, owning the largest student body in what, for want of a better name, we call the British Empire, has the least strongly-marked type of them all. Queen's is *sui generis*. It used to be the gibe of McGill and Toronto men



President Forrest,
Dalhousie University.



Dean J. C. Robertson,
Victoria University.

—it may be now—that the average Queen's man had never been in a larger town than Kingston until he visited Montreal or Toronto on a cut-rate football excursion. Students are rarely suave. Toronto is unsectarian—even, maybe Godless, *qua* Sam Blake. And Toronto doesn't care. McGill is unsectarian. And McGill doesn't care. Queen's is Presbyterian. And Queen's does care, in a peculiar way. That way tends toward proving that, although Queen's is Presbyterian, it isn't Presbyterian. To this end, every so often there are issued from the Registrar's office at Kingston statements showing that in the student body the Presbyterians are in the minority. No outsider understands why this is done. The answer is to be found in the arcana of the Board of Regents.

From east to west nearly all of the Canadian universities begin the new collegiate year in a hopeful state of importance and prosperity. There is a great deal of new life stirring in them. Some of them have been much discussed and complained of in years past, and heartily exhorted to recognise their faults and correct them; to apply themselves more sedulously to the things that are veritably requisite and necessary. In a word, they have been besought to prove themselves really worth their keep. Most of us know in what directions these faithful wounds of friends have done good. Manitoba, the one that has caused its friends most acute anxieties, seems to have its foot on the path of efficiency that will lead it to a proud place among our state universities. For many months a government commission—appointed by Mr. Roblin, to whom be praise—gave freely its time and its money toward the gathering of data which should aid in bringing order out of the chaos in which the University of Manitoba had been weltering. Sanford Evans, Winnipeg's Mayor, himself a Columbia graduate, is believed to have been the chief architect of the administrative plans that have been vir-

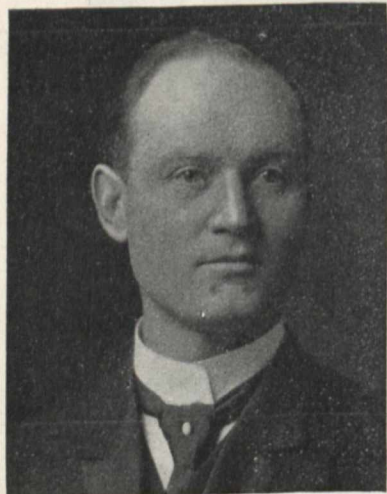
tually accepted. The system will be largely that of Toronto: a degree-conferring and teaching university with surrounding colleges. These are now all denominational. A university must come.

The surgeons of football have performed only minor operations upon that game and hopes are entertained that it will now ride a little lighter on the college back. These hopes may be justified by the fact that the Toronto champions, after beating everything in Canada last year, refused to accept a free trip to New York, where they were asked to play an exhibition match. The faculty of Toronto did not interfere, but they must have done some gratulating when the football captain announced that study must take the place of play, and that the team would not accept the invitation. Thus it is to be seen that in our greatest colleges the toleration of study is on the increase. They are becoming quite bold, in fact, in their advocacy of increased indulgence in the pleasures of scholarship. What would happen to them if the rage for knowledge got hold on the mass of their students not even so omniscient a soothsayer as Dr. Andrew MacPhail can foretell. Certainly a large part of their present apparatus of public advertisement would run at much diminished speed.

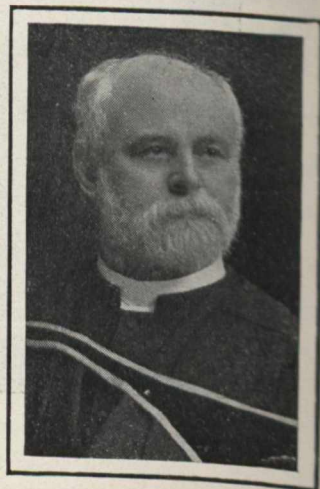
IN support of Rodmond Palen Roblin's contention that a college is a place where an extra clever boy may go through and still amount to something, there are the facts that he and Senator Cox and Sir James Whitney and Mr. J. W. Flavell and Hon. Adam Beck and Sir William Macdonald learned what they know out of school. Pretty

nearly every enthusiast—far be it from me to use the vulgar word "crank"—in Canada is a college man. Whenever you see an enthusiastic person nowadays, running about with an axe to smash the temple of some horrible abuse into chunks; whenever you discern another enthusiastic person waving a torch to commit arson on a rival temple; whenever you hear a howling dervish of some propaganda booming out woe to all heretical dissentients, go back on the trail, and, ten to one, you butt up against a college. No wonder, after all, that Mr. Roblin was comminatory in his words about colleges and college men. They used to have some standing as depositaries of conservatism, but nowadays they are the great breeding-places of loud, defiant innovations. Big and little, rich and poor, the prevailing epidemic seems to have caught most of them. Through a robust little salt-water college in Prince Ed-

ward Island slipped Professor Alexander MacPhail, the catadioptric apostle of a patented personal brand of imperialism which Canadians are ordered to accept. If they shall refuse, this McGill god from the machine placidly remarks (and his language is plain) that the Canadian people will be "bastards and not sons" of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This is hot enough—if only the audience had heard it. Rises another college man, Henri Bourassa, a distinguished alumnus of Laval, that venerable foundation. McHenry O'Bourassa—really an Irishman—slugs pretty nearly everything. Mayor Guerin, of Montreal, went to a Presbyterian corner-stone laying. "Arise! ye Habitants," bellows Bourassa. "Boiling oil for Guerin, who attends Protestant religious functions." Likewise, from the halls of Toronto, came one A. B. Aylesworth, Privy Councillor, who had the amazing and hair-raising frankness to tell Parliament that he is a straight blown-in-the-bottle political partisan, in place of pouter-pigeoning it and spurting forth guff about statesmanship and patriotism. This frankness, too, doesn't seem to have shocked anybody in any degree that you could notice. And we have Sir William Mulock, M.A., of Toronto,



President Falconer,
University of Toronto.



President Gordon,
Queen's University.