

McGill—A Criticism

PROF. CALDWELL

Dear Sir,—In compliance with your request for a paragraph or two for The Martlet, may I say a few words upon our college spirit here, and our situation generally—as far as I can see them from the student point of view?

I understand, to begin with, that it is generally admitted that The Martlet is not yet what many of us would like to see in the nature of a college paper, and that the support and interest it commands are far from adequate. Now there is one really healthy thing about McGill, and this is that it is, on the whole, not a nursing bed for any kind of false enthusiasm. If the present college paper is not the sort of thing we ought to have here, then something else will arise to take its place. It is, however, at least a mirror—to some extent—of the college spirit that we do have. And it is only in the further development or organization of this college spirit that I am really interested.

I am bound to say that, like many other men, I never heard college spirit talked about as such until I came to this side of the Atlantic. You assume it in the Old World, and you "run after" your university instead of expecting it to run after you, or do things for you. In the United States, to be sure, college spirit is a real commodity which has a marketable value, which everybody connected with a college seems to understand, and to the production and distribution and exchange

of which he feels he can contribute. And in the language of the hour down there, they have "no use" for a man or woman about a college (or "affiliated" to it even) who does not see the real spirit of the place, and who cannot contribute to its development. Objectors or neutrals they prefer to see "elsewhere." And all this has its value, although I suppose nearly all Americans admit there is sometimes a forced or artificial sentiment and enthusiasm about colleges that deceives no one but the members of the inner circle.

Now, although there are about our McGill students and their activities and proclivities many features that suggest the American college type, there is, I think, at McGill, a University (or an academic) spirit altogether greater than any mere college spirit, however intense or loyal that may sometimes be. At McGill we have real university ideals, a real academic tone, a real academic freedom (in both professors and students), a metropolitanism, and a cosmopolitanism, an elevation above all local and sectional interests that make it much more valuable to the world at large and to the McGill student than almost anything else could possibly make it. When you visit Harvard University you feel in a few hours the spirit of that universality and catholicity that make it—along, of course, with its traditions and its accumulated resources—the greatest shrine of American Imperialism in the United States.

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