



This American skipped and danced over the English itinerary as naively as a spring lamb. Harry Beach Needham, snapshotted along the road from Bristol to Glastonbury where the Abbey was.

THE "AMERICAN" IN ENGLAND

Men from Skyscrapers and Snake Fences among the Hedgerows

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

SAM KISER, from the Chicago *Record-Herald*—"well-known humorist," as they say in press notices and other obituaries—was going down Fleet Street in old London the other day along with a Canadian newspaper man. Both were members of a Canadian-American delegation visiting England in search of "copy."



Tom Daly, author of "Canzoni" getting his sea legs.

"New York Sun, buy a New York Sun, sir?" chattered a newsboy, looking square at the Canadian.

He bought; Sam likewise. The boy had no Chicago papers. The newsie may have heard of Chicago; but he knew nothing about Montreal or Toronto. And to him S. E. Kiser and the man from Toronto were both chips from the same block. They looked alike, talked alike; and the boy reckoned they were both from America, which in his case meant New York.

A block or two farther among the unusual traffic, the like of which was never seen on Broadway or State Street, swigging storey-high motor buses, dodging taxis, jiggering decadent cabs, great drays, picayune coster carts and apple women—another newsie piped out to the Canadian, who had lost track of the man from Chicago:

"Paper, sir? Buy a News, sir—only a cent."

"Oh, you mean a ha'penny, I guess?"

"Yes, sir. Fold it for you, sir? I thought you was from America. Thanky, sir. But it's really worth a penny, sir. You see, I folded it."

This weasel-eyed critic saw no difference between the Canadian and the average American on Fleet Street; though the Canadian saw a vast difference between that newsie and the average newsboy in Toronto. To the London newsie all those chaps who didn't wear morning coats or knee breeches or dinky little caps and scarves were from the land of the dollar and of the New York Sun.

A few days earlier down in Bristol, which some Londoners tell you is merely a seaport suburb of London, the Canadian-American party of scribes got another view of the "hands-across-the-sea" picture. Bristolians are quite as observant as Londoners. Perhaps they take even more interest in Canada than Londoners do. On a high hill above Bristol stands the Cabot Tower memorial of John Cabot who, sailing out of Bristol in 1497, discovered the mainland of America—so they say over and over again. To the Bristolians the entire party were Canadians. Sam Kiser, with his solemn reticence, Tom Daly from Philadelphia, swarthy as a peanut vendor and as un-Canadian as a cart wheel

dollar; Harry Beach Needham, from a little of everywhere, but as Chicagoesque as Kiser; Ernest Cawcroft, from Jamestown, N.Y.; and Herbert Vanderhoof, a Yankee of some generations now becoming a citizen of Canada—were all Canadians, so far as Bristol could see. It took Bristol two days to make sure there was any real difference.

I don't know how the "Americans" in the party took this compliment. It was really a delicate matter; though it was as easy as rolling off a log to go round with these companionable "cousins" of ours. When you pause to argue it out there's no end of trouble. To call a Yankee a Canadian is absurd. To call a Canadian an American—is a matter for discussion. Some Canadians insist that America doesn't stop at the Great Lakes and parallel 49. But let a Londoner call a Canadian an American, and he at once insists:

"Canadian, if you please."

Which may be a symptom of no-annexation, anti-reciprocity, nationalism or new Imperialism—whichever way the wind happens to be blowing. For it's one of the hardest things on record for a Canadian to define what he really thinks he is, to an Englishman who for generations has summed it all up in the convenient term "colonial"; especially when junketing with a mixed-up Canadian-American party such as ours was. One member of the party confessed his cosmopolitanism by saying that though a Canadian by birth he was now neither citizen or subject; never having become naturalized in the United States. Another born in Canada, living half in the United States and rearing his family in Canada, was in a somewhat similar predicament. When a South-of-England man heard either of these talking with equal familiarity about political conditions in New York State and the province of Ontario he was naturally as much bewildered as when he heard the Chicago-Winnipeg delegate talk as intimately about State Street as he did about Edmonton.

The personnel of the party was all the more complicated by the fact that but one was both Canadian born and living altogether in Canada. One of the other Canadians was born in Ireland; another in England; and the writer, though born in England, left that country as a youngster thirty years ago.

But we were all a unit in one respect; the wonderful novelty of old England; of Bristol, more English than London; of Somerset, marvellous for dreamy valleys and haunted caves, cheeses and cathedrals; of Devonshire, glorified by hedgerows and sea walls, cider and junket and Devonshire cream, ruined castles—and cathedrals; of Gloucestershire, almost equally beautiful, but not so lovely as "Devon, glorious Devon."

On an eight-days' swift itinerary from train to charabanc, from bus to taxi, and again on motor cars or on foot, where you wished for a day just to loaf in some sleep-haunted, archaic little town, peakful of centuries of interest, it was a constant series of sensations and shifting sentiments, mainly from the country, somewhat from the mixed-upness

of the party to which were added several species of Englishmen all as interesting to us as we were to them. Whereby the Canadian discovers sometimes that he has so much in common with the American that he has little or nothing to do with a pure Englishman at all; sometimes that he has in him so much of the British that he feels immensely more at home on Fleet Street than on Broadway.

Though a Canadian sees Broadway or State Street ten times to once that he sees London; and the man on Broadway may not even know there is a Notre Dame, or a Yonge Street, or a Portage Avenue. Provincialism may be as conspicuous on Fleet Street as on Notre Dame or Broadway. Chicagoans assert that Broadway is full of it. New York alleges that Chicago is not the real American city. Toronto and Montreal have their own characteristic insularities.

But from a snake rail fence to a Devonshire hedgerow; from a skyscraper to a Norman castle—puts Canadians and Americans on one level. The Englishmen knew that we were all abroad to see beautiful England. They had the show. We had the eyes. They had the stories; we the ears. The only difference between Canadians and Americans may have been that one was trying to interpret; the other mainly seeing things. To the Englishman we were all one party. If the Lord Mayor of Bristol had been told that Tom Daly was from Montreal and Sam Kiser from Winnipeg he would have believed it. We talked much the same; dressed much the same; perhaps thought differently.

After a public dinner in Exeter, most charming of all cathedral cities, a British journalist remarked to a Canadian regarding a speech he had made:

"I say, the people here don't seem to get on to your American humour very well, do they? They're a bit keener to it in Bristol, though."

"Well, to begin with—why do you call it 'American' humour when it was not meant for either?"

But there was no use to argue the point. So far as vernacular went, Canadians and Americans were all one. Owen Seaman, editor of *Punch*, has lately attempted to analyse American and English humour. By American he probably includes Canadian—if any; which is said to be doubtful. He finds that the essence of American humour is exaggeration; of English, understatement. He omitted one unmistakable element in some English humour—which is provincialism. A Devonshire man recited a ballad about a squirrel to an audience composed of Devonians and Americans. To the Devon people the thing was decidedly funny; to the Americans—well, not side-splitting at least. And it was the same audience that failed to see anything funny in alleged American humour.

However, the visiting delegation contained at least two American humorists; Daly and Kiser. "Tom" Daly is the man who writes Irish and Italian verse, one volume of which is called "Canzoni." He also recites his own verses—with the art of an actor. Of these he gave several selections on board ship and in England. They invariably "took." When not too busy reciting Daly told stories, of which he had more than almost any other two of the party put together. Tom's humour is



Arthur Stringer and Arthur McFarlane on the top deck, talking over New York politics and England as a source of good "copy"