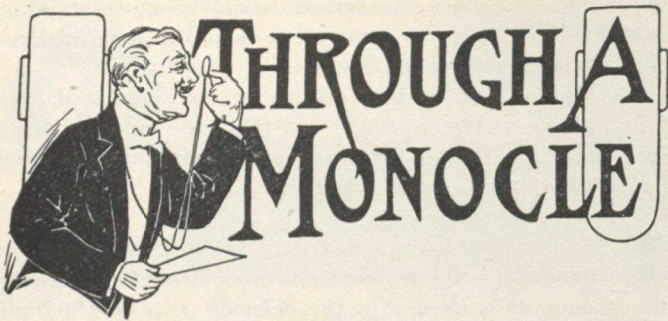




TALKING of the defects of higher education on this continent, what do you think of Professor Stephen Leacock's few remarks, born in the scholastic calm of his Professorial study, on the practical question of the relation of Canada to the Empire? Professor Leacock announces himself as the Assistant Professor of Political Science of McGill University. Political Science is then his specialty. It is Political Science that he teaches the young Canadians who are entrusted to his care. It is not elocution—or word architecture—or gymnastics—or even rhetoric. It is the very subject with which his pamphlet treats. And yet when you read his pamphlet, did you not imagine that he must surely know more about Greek or Chemistry or Apologetics or almost any other subject than that with which he shows such an appalling lack of acquaintance in his red-covered brochure? He writes like a freshman essayist; and he reasons like a cracker-barrel orator at the corner store. He refers to his fellow Canadians as "six million Colonials sprawling our over-suckled infancy across a continent"; and describes our Parliamentary debating as "the cackle of the little turkey-cocks at Ottawa."

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But you are probably familiar with the pyrotechnic extravagances of this discussion of a question of political science by the Assistant Professor of the same in one of Canada's great Universities. What he seems to propose—if any outlines can be discerned through his tangle of sky rockets and pin wheels—is that Canada shall at once join the United Kingdom in full Imperial partnership, getting six millions' worth of representation in the Imperial Parliament and paying the share of six millions toward Imperial defence. A more absurd and impractical proposal could not easily be penned. If a Freshman had put it into a class essay, he would—or should—have been marked zero for the effort. There is hardly a sane man in a responsible position anywhere in the Empire who would even suggest such a thing. Mr. Balfour—the leader of the Imperialist party in Britain—said just the other day that it was unfair to look to the Colonies for naval contributions at this time; and the great majority of the British House of Commons agreed with him.

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Now don't you think we are getting exceedingly close to one of the weaknesses of higher education in this country? When some of our University Chairs are filled with "Fourth-of-July" special-pleaders of this description, how can you expect sensible young fellows to take their teaching seriously? Last summer—I think it was—a college professor was coming home from a little trip to England. On the ship was a card-trick artist who added mystery to his achievements by pretending that the "spirits" helped him. He would let a man in the smoking-room draw a card from the pack, and then tell him he would find it again under his state-room pillow—and all such cheap puzzles. Well, when that Professor got home, he was well nigh a confirmed spiritualist, producing as evidence these marvellous manifestations of spiritualistic power shown by the "medium" on board ship. How can higher education—no matter how well subsidised or bonused by millionaires—carry such handicaps as these?

No man should be permitted to represent scholarship

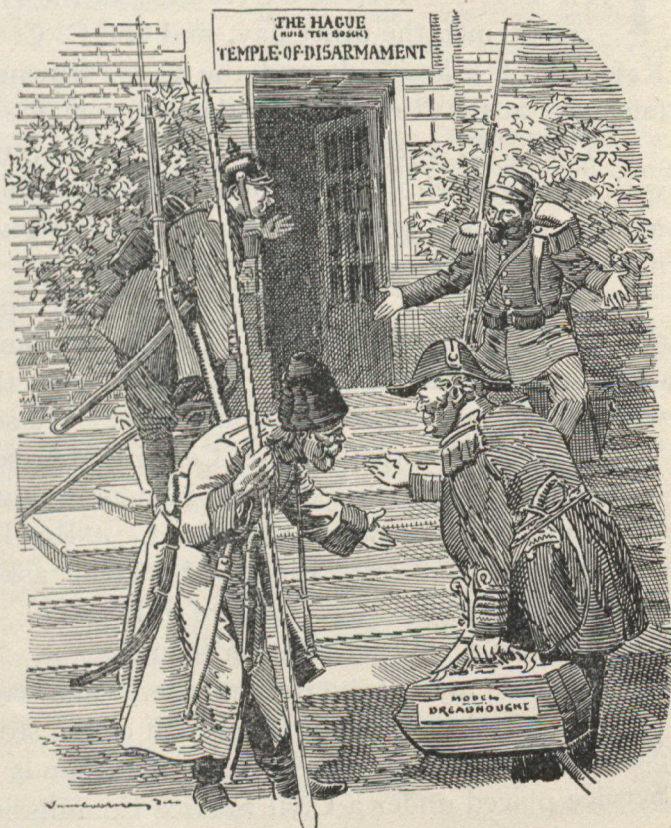
and culture to our young men and women who is not himself a MAN as well as a scholar and an example of culture. He should know the world as well as his library. We are a commercial and mechanical people, are we? Then it behooves those who would lead us into the higher paths to be men whom we can respect on our own level. The Church often understands this principle of missionary appeal and uses it. It will send a husky young athlete to shepherd the juvenile "sports" of a factory district; and it will appoint a wan and willowy aesthete to look after the young ladies of the Browning Society parish. We send our young fellows to College from homes where worldly wisdom and commercial sagacity are of a very high order; and then we ask them to take as gospel the teachings of men whom their fathers would not trust with a junior clerkship. It is not good judgment. It is no wonder our young fellows under-value culture when it is presented to them by a set of "muffs."

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Just how much of this we owe to our custom of importing as many of our professors as we can, it would be hard to say. These imported men seldom understand our conditions out here; and when they do get some inkling of them, it is only to despise us for permitting them to exist. They probably were not doing too well at home, else they would never have consented to endure exile at a Colonial University. But Colonial gold is as good as any; and they condescend to come. They confer on us the advantage of their presence. They will show us—for a consideration—how to be like them; and—as the popular song puts it—"if we cannot be like them then we must be as like them as we are able to be." They themselves are—in all probability—the understudies of real men in the Universities of Great Britain, and we are invited to understudy the understudy. It seems to me that we would do better to send our own men to Britain and to Europe after this sacred fire of culture that they may bring it home to us. Our own men would know what we lack—they must be MEN to be chosen by us for such a quest—they would command our respect on their return. It is Old World Culture we desire to import—not Old World Caddishness.

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I do not want to be taken as condemning all professors, either imported or home-grown. A few of them have my respect and admiration. Still these are not sufficiently numerous to make me hold back my generalisations.



The Tug of Peace.

Everybody (to everybody else). "After you, Sir."—Punch.