

with them is in the comparative degree. There is the higher thought, the nobler aim, the truer method—meaning, I suppose, their own thought, and aim, and method. Well—well—and so you really think, Vicar, that my son will come back improved; will drop the livery of prigdom, and talk and think like other people.”

“I am sure he will,” said the Vicar confidently.

Alan was away for two years. During this space of time he went all round the world making observations, his object being chiefly to discover how best to lead his fellow-men.

First he went to Quebec. On the steamer he made the acquaintance of the third officer, a man of great experience, who had once been admiral in command of the fleet of the Imam of Muscat. He resigned his appointment because the Imam refused to rank him higher than the twenty wives’ allowance, whereas he stuck out for such superior rank as is granted by right to forty wives.

“Not,” said the honest fellow, “that I wanted twenty wives, bless you, nor forty neither, being of opinion that a sailor gets on best when he’s got nobody to draw his pay but himself. But the honour of my country was at stake. So I struck my pennant, and came away, and here I am, aboard the *Corsican*, third officer in the Dominion Line. That’s a drop from an admiral, ain’t it?”

Alan did not remember to have heard any of the customs peculiar to Muscat, and was surprised to learn that the people were most open to influence, and most easily persuaded. He asked how that influence was maintained.

“Give your orders,” said the ex-admiral. “If they don’t carry out them orders, cut their livers out.”

This method, however effective, was clearly impracticable as regarded Alan’s own tenants. And yet it seemed to himself by no means unsuitable to the people of Muscat. Why was this? Why should a thing good for Muscat be bad for England? He reflected, however, that he had not yet so far schooled himself in the enthusiasm of humanity to recognise an equal in every thick-skulled negro or wily Asiatic. So that it could not, really, be good for Muscat to cut out livers.

When he got to Quebec he began to make inquiries about the French Canadians. They bore the best character in the world. They were pious, he was told; they were sober;

they were industrious; they were honest; they were fond parents of a prolific offspring. He went among them. After, with great difficulty, getting to understand their language—their talk is that of a country district in Normandy, in the seventeenth century—he found out that they were all these things—and more. The more was not so attractive to the stranger. Their contentment he found was due to profound ignorance, and their want of enterprise to their contentment.

“You may lead the people,” a priest told him, “with the greatest ease, so long as you do not ask them to receive a single new idea.”

Now what Alan wanted was, to inspire his people with the newest of ideas, and with an ardent desire for new ideas. What seemed good for French Canadians was not good for Englishmen. So he went westward—stopped a few nights at Montreal, which is the place where the English Canuk, the French Canadian, the Yankee, the Englishman, the Scotchman, the Irishman, the German, and the Jew meet, and try their sharpness on each other. It is a very promising city, and will some day become illustrious. But there was little reason for a social philosopher to stay there. He went still westward, and reached Toronto. This was like being at Edinburgh. There, however, he heard of those backwood settlements, where the forests have been cleared, and the land planted, by men who went there axe in hand, and nothing else. It is only a single day’s journey to get from the flat shores of Toronto, and the grey waves of Lake Ontario, to the hills and rocks, the lakes, firs, and hemlocks of the backwoods. And there Alan found himself among a people who were not led, but who moved on by themselves, under the guidance of their own sense and resolution. This phenomenon surprised him greatly, and he made copious notes. None, however, of the stalwart farmers could give him any philosophical reasons for the advance of the colony.

“We send the little ones to school,” one of them told him. “We have our singing choirs, and our lectures, and our farms to attend to, and we mean to push on somehow!”

That is the difference, Alan observed, between the common Englishman and the Canadian. The latter means to push on somehow. How to instil that idea into his