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## Binders of Empire.

(By H. G. GADSBY, in Toronto Saturday Night.)

I ran across the Binders of Empire—others the Imperial Press Conference—in the Chateau Laurier. By easy stages they had worked their way from the Atlantic seaboard, stopping ever and anon to eat a banquet, to lay a corner stone, to accept an address, until here they were at last in the capital of Britain's greatest overseas dominion. They were a prosperous-looking lot from which I inferred that they might be mowers as well as binders.

Though democratic, as they professed, to the greatest extent compatible with the established order of society, I discovered among them three lords, a score of Sirs, and a certain aloofness in their manner which suggested that chibblains might appear on the slightest provocation. Their dress, slack at the belt, loose at the collar, and baggy at the knees, indicated the large score for creased trousers which the Englishman affects when travelling—he is so much at home with the world that he doesn't have to droll up for it.

I gathered from their conversation that they were much impressed by our Canadian scenery and were deeply indebted to the C.P.R., that greatest of Empire girdlers, for keeping it in such good condition. They admitted that our mountains are high, our rivers wide and our trees tall—that the trees particularly must be very old—some of them as old as the Norman Conquest—but that they lacked historic background. I assured them that this would correct itself in a few hundred years more when our historic background caught up with our national debt which just now occupied so much of the foreground that there was no background left.

In reply to the question how they liked Canada as far as they had got, they expressed great surprise at the freedom they experienced in Quebec, which they had been led to believe was—or—“quite othahwise.” They were pleased to observe that there was no Bolshevism in Quebec and that it might be a safe home for British capital. They dwelt with satisfaction on the fact that one could drink as irresponsibly as one could eat in Quebec, that the banquets were very spirited on that account, in short, that it was a real home of liberty which had not forgotten the grand old maxim embodied in the Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and other important constitutional documents—namely that an Englishman's house is his castle.

Our newspapers, nothing if not polite, had already told me that this was the greatest aggregation of intel-

lect gathered together under one tent, and looking around at the spacious foreheads festooned about the Chateau, I could well believe it. Even the small talk breathed the wide vision which spurs detail. For instance, one of the highest brows there spoke to me of Sir Richard Laurier—a comprehensive phrase which brought Cartwright into his composite picture of Canadian Liberalism—and a minute later showed a similarly bold grasp of geography when he asked if I had met his brother who lived in British Columbia. For a great mind like his British Columbia was just a post office address. When a man starts binding the Empire he naturally thinks of continents as way stations. It is not as some suppose a certain condescension toward colonials—it is rather the inability of the wide-ranging imperial eye to sight objects close at hand.

I was glad to see that our local Empire-binders, Lord Atholstan and Sir John Willison, held their own with the best of the overseas visitors. Lord Atholstan, as everybody knows, is a veritable pillar of Empire whom nothing can shake, rooted, as he is, in the peerage. Sir John, though a smaller pillar, is just as deeply rooted. He is always on the job, and when he isn't reconstructing Canada he is holding up the power and prestige of Great Britain with an expertness due to long practice. Sir John is so good at the job that he can do it with both hands tied behind his back and keep his reputation warm at the same time.

The binders of Empire—particularly the big fish—were affable to the press. They exuded interviews at every pore. Mr. Robert Donald, late of the London “Chronicle,” went as far in his efforts for better English—for which he makes an eloquent appeal to this slang-loving country—as to talk in his sleep. Only thus can I explain the volume of language from his lips which found its daily way into the Ottawa newspapers. Lord Burnham, as became his position as proprietor of the greatest newspaper in the British Empire, was more guarded in his remarks, but not enough to arouse suspicion. Otherwise happy there was a haunted look in his Lordship's eyes—shared by the other notables of the party—due, as I was told, to the gauntlet he had run from the universities.

He had been accumulating honorary degrees as a steamer trunk accumulates labels, and was at a loss to understand it until kind friends informed him that it is even harder to escape the LL.D. degree in Canada than the Legion of Honor in France. Only when he was assured that the LL.D. blesses him that gives at least twice as much as him that takes, did

he smile again. It was my privilege to see Lord Burnham presented with a moose head, typical of our Canadian wilds, a token of esteem from his fellow journalists for the dangers he has run on his Canadian trip. The moose head will be hung up in his baronial hall and two generations from now the Lord Burnham of the day will tell his son how his noble grandfather met and conquered this giant of the Canadian forest, throttling it with bare hands while the desperate animal churned up acres of pulpwood in his dying agony.

Naturally I was pleased at the chance I had of conversing with these imperial minds on the great questions of the day—Canada a nation or not, how long will the grasshopper (the farmers' movement) keep jumping, and could one get it in one's room. I was happy to state that one could—if not in one's room at least across the bridge. When I saw the relief with which my last statement was greeted, I realized that the great heart of empire is in the right place, and that the quarter of a million dollars the Canadian Government is spending on this good-will excursion is not misplaced. When it comes to ties of “empire” we must have them of all sorts—liquid as well as silken, spiritual as well as commercial, bonds of affection and links of steel—morgues mostly—tariffs and tall talk. The latest and greatest bond of Empire, if I am to believe the Imperial Press Conference, also the strongest, would be of newsprint paper—but of that more anon.

It was my good luck to fall in with an Irish journalist from London, and being Irish, he had that in his bones which made him a frank critic of his fellows. The Irish newspaper man, I may say, is the saving heaven of the British press—if he can't get the truth out any other way he blarnts it. When I met him on the Chateau terrace he was gazing hungrily at the Laurentian hills, bearded to the chine with goody trees.

“Pulpwood!” he asked, jerking a thumb toward the blue horizon.

“No,” I said. “Wooden legs. We can make more money out of ‘em that way.”

I remembered the last Imperial Press Conference some seven years ago, and the new lake that was formed in North Ontario when the visitors allowed their mouths to water at the sight of our spruce forests, so I hastened to steer my Irish friend away from the subject. But, alas, he would not be steered—his nose turned ever in the direction of newsprint.

“We have no mission,” he explained, “except friendliness. We would develop your resources and our bank accounts. Our pilgrimage combines pleasure and pulpwood. If pleasure stands in our way we will let it go and take the pulpwood instead. I heard somebody the other day call this little excursion a joy ride. A joy ride it may be, but it is also a paper chase.”

“Too late!” I sighed. “It's the tail of the hunt. You should have got here sooner. Three-quarters of the money in the Canadian pulp business is American. That's why we have to go short ourselves.”

“This,” said my Irish friend, “must be remedied. You speak a great deal of the ties of Empire. You must translate your words into deeds and give us more newsprint. The solidarity of the Empire is in your hands—pulpwood. You have the greatest available supply in the world. The Lion and the Whelp cry for it—we must be fed.”

My Irish friend was getting his metaphors mixed—you do not feed lions on pulpwood—but I could see his drift. Just a little while before a hard-bitten Australian had complained to me that four hundred and fifty dollars a ton for British Columbia newsprint laid down at Melbourne was a bit thick.

“You have,” continued my Irish friend, “the desire of our hearts, plenty of pulpwood and easy to get at. As citizens of the Empire you must admit that we should share this precious heritage in common, giving the outsiders only what is left. If you love the Empire you must supply the pulpwood out of which the edifice of inter-imperial good will is to be built. There is nothing,” he added, “that will compare with your spruce as the raw material of newsprint paper. The colah boolah tree of Australia is not fibrous enough for the purpose, while the wamba-wumba tree of South Africa, which is little better, does not cohere sufficiently. You have the cream of the market, and you're damned selfish about it.”

“If you were real patriots now,” this with a twinkle in his eye—“if you really want to bind the Empire together, you would do something about it—produce a pulp tree, for example, that would grow about ten times as fast as the present sort does. It's the one thing that will save the Empire—Canadian pulpwood of commercial value at, say, two years' growth.”

“We can do better than that,” I challenged. “We can produce a print, paper tree. All you'll have to do is to back your spindle into the bush and unwind the stuff like birch bark. To go a little further, we might have two kinds of paper trees—Liberal and Conservative—the sentiments being ingrained, as it were. This would save setting up in the office and would do away with a great deal of expense if we could get the Typographical

Union to agree to it. The paper tree, tapped at the proper season, would also supply printers' ink, and thus solve another problem.”

“You're spoofing me,” said my Irish friend, and sure enough I was. Not having an English sense of humor he saw it at once.

“As a binder of Empire,” I explained, “I yield to none, but I suppose you have a job printing end to your newspaper?”

“What has that to do with it?” “Well, as a job printer, you ought to know that if you bind too tight the binding rips. I'm in favor of the loose leaf system—when you can slip ‘em in and out.”

“The disadvantage of that,” commented my Irish friend, “is that once they slip out you can't slip ‘em in again. They go blowing around.” “True!” I agreed sadly. “Look at the United States of America. They're blowing yet.”

No mission, of course—except a little pulpwood. But truth like a tooth will come out. One bright morning I felt strong enough to love the Empire as it should be loved, and took measures accordingly. What I mean to say is that I attended a meeting of the Press Conference and listened to the speeches. Sitting there under the aegis of the broad “a” I drank in those dear old red, white and blue platitudes which go to prove that the British Empire is the greatest human interpretation of divine justice extant, the most universal community of soul on the face of the earth, and other fine words to the same effect.

On this growing atmosphere of ideals and such impinged Mr. John Dafee, editor of the Manitoba “Free Press,” with a sturdy self-respecting speech which made me feel proud that I was a Canadian. No lack of loyalty there, but likewise no cringing. Dafee stood up to it four square. The British Empire—what was it? A partnership by consent. If by consent then any partner might drop out if consent ceased. What was the solution? Not independence—at least not yet. Not independence, but more interdependence. Partners by consent—equal partners—Dafee stressed that word “equal.” Canada a nation—yes, a real nation, not a mere after-dinner amenity. Dafee concluded with a few ill-considered words from Disraeli about the “wretched colonies.”

To this huge chunk of reason from John Dafee a flow of soul was invited from Sir Gilbert Parker, who was evidently regarded by Lord Burnham as the proper antidote. Sir Gilbert is interested in a syndicate of English newspapers. He is novelist and journalist too—if his truth is only half as strange as his fiction he ought to be a great success in the newspaper business. That he is a great success as an Englishman and a Tory his opinions and his accents equally show. As long as his Canadian color lasted, Sir Gilbert had trouble with his accent, but now that he is thorough English—on the principle of the actor who blackened himself all over in order to play Othello—his accent fits better and does not fall off in moments of excitement.

Sir Gilbert admitted that Canada could leave the union of British Commonwealth without a shot being fired to stop her, but he was bound to explain. He explained that Mr. Dafee was an “impawant figyah” in the West. He explained that Mr. Mackenzie King, “from whom you heard such loyal sentiments yesterday afternoon,” was the “grandson of William Lyon Mackenzie the rebel.” He explained that “Dizzy”—one felt at once that Sir Gilbert was speaking of a pal—had uttered those foolish words in pique, but that he had “retracted nobly.” He explained—quoting a little—that he had with the Duke of Westminster in Green Park—that it was the privilege of English public men to “retract nobly” when necessary, and that on occasion he had done it himself, notably in the case of South Africa, which had turned out trump in spite of his alarm when the gift of self-government was granted. Sir Gilbert explained—but why tell all? He was in an explaining mood and my sole purpose in giving him so much space is to explain that in him we have the greatest of treasures—an explainer of real genius. It seems a pity that we haven't given him more to explain.

The story of the Empire binders would not be complete without a short reference to Sir Harry Brittain, who threw out the hint that the

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Press Conference would shortly be followed by a Constitutional Conference at which great things would be doing if the Downing Street Imperialists had their way. Another thing that he threw out—and very properly so, I think—was the suggestion that the Committee of Overseas Cabinet Ministers, sitting permanently in London, should give their decisions on imperial policy on the spot, thus relieving the Overseas Governments of those massives of detail which it would be quite unfair—quite unfair to impose upon them. We seem to have heard something like this before and to have speculated on the fact chance that overseas committee would have of not running in the wash.

We have heard that Britons never will be slaves, and we are disposed to suggest that, however successful

he may be as a courier, Sir Harry Brittain cease being a slave to an idea that is further from coming to pass now than it was six years ago.



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The minister was telling Ma about a land of milk and honey, when I butted in and asked him if they had



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