

DECLARING OUR INDEPENDENCE

BEFORE the war—when we all lived in a Fools' Paradise—there were worthy persons in this country who vexed their righteous souls because Canada was dependent on an effete monarchy situate somewhere to the north-west of Europe. . . . We had not complete treaty-making powers. One pillow in Ottawa was supposed to be wet nightly with bitter tears at the thought of our degrading vassalage.

It was amusing to discuss the treaty-making power, when there was no danger of Canada becoming a German colony. No one was ready to discuss or consider our real vassalage. No one seemed to suspect how hopelessly dependent we have been and are; and how willing we are that this degradation should continue to the end of time.

Let us look a little distance ahead! For a century or two. A couple of hundreds of years are but a moment in the history of a country. In two centuries, it is practically certain that the West of Canada will be settled thickly by a very Pentecostal population, speaking probably twenty different tongues, and each insisting on its separate rights. But that population will be rich, comfortable, prosperous. The hamlets and little post-offices at the cross-roads will all be flourishing cities, with their own manufactures, and well-cultivated regions all round about growing wheat at fifty bushels to the acre. Modern science will make farming the best paying investment in the world. In other words, we shall all be fat, prosperous and comfortable. We shall have nothing to do—outside of business hours—but worship the great god Goodtime. In still other words, our tacit ideal is to become—in time—a smug, greasy replica of the United States, wallowing in a warm mire of materialism.

The sooner Canada declares her independence—of the United States—the better.

That we are at present hopelessly dependent on the "great republic to the south of us" is beyond question. A truthful American historian of the American Revolution has considered what would have been the development of the Thirteen Colonies, if they had never rebelled. He concludes, "We should have been a tamer, less inventive people—like the Canadians."

That is our character. Tame and un inventive. And this is true.

For years I have tried to make a list of Canadian inventions, of new ideas sprung from Canadian brains. After long and painful effort, I can find only five—Walker's whisky, church union, the acetylene gas buoy, the Canadian Club, and the telephone. The truth is that Canada has not contributed a single artistic, literary, educational, political, social, or religious idea to the world's common stock. Nay more, the world would lose nothing but population—a worthy, decent, humdrum population—if we were swept out of existence by some cataclysm to-morrow. That we are the sedulous apes of the United States is almost too plain for proof.

TAKE our speech. I can always make a compatriot furious by asking him what is the difference between a Canadian and an American. He never can tell, but he usually splutters with an American accent. If he uses slang, as he usually does, he got that slang at the "show," from across the line. We are so tame and un inventive that we have to borrow even our vulgarity.

Take our business. Sir William Van Horne is a typical instance of the "Canadian" business magnate. An Illinois train-hand was borrowed to run our greatest railway. No Canadian was good enough. How many of our "flourishing enterprises" are simply branches of big American concerns, forced up mostly by our tariff. In other words, we are exploited for the benefit of the American shareholders. Our young Napoleons of finance imitate the American combine.

Take our politics. . . . But the prospect is too painful.

Take our colleges. Here, if anywhere, should Canadian originality shine. In thirty years, every change in student life has been imported from the United States. The frat, the class organization, the college yell, class day exercises, even the tricks on the freshmen are imitations.

By ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN

An Ontario Man in Nova Scotia who speaks right out in Meeting on a Subject of Live Interest to all true Canadians

WHO IS ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN? BY OCCUPATION ONE OF THE LITERATI; A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, N.S. DULL—DRY—TEDIOUS? NOT AT ALL. SCRATCH A GOOD UNIVERSITY MAN AND YOU FIND A TARTAR. THIS ARTICLE ON CANADA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IS A STRAIGHT-FROM-THE-SHOULDER ATTACK ON A LOT OF TENDENCIES AMONG CANADIANS WHICH THE PROFESSOR HAS NOTICED DOWN IN HIS OWN PART OF THE COUNTRY AND ELSEWHERE IN CANADA. IT IS WRITTEN RED-HOT, WITHOUT BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL, WITHOUT ANY POLISHING OF PHRASEOLOGY—A CLEAN-CUT TREATMENT OF A VITAL SUBJECT WITHOUT KID GLOVES.

A FEW EXTRACTS.

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Take our journalism. It is absolutely indistinguishable from that of "the continent to which we belong," except as being tamer. We cannot even invent our comic supplements. We fill our papers up with boiler-plate, pictures of American divorcees—degenerates, murderers, and baseball players, Mutt and Jeff, and Mr. Jiggs. Long ago an Englishman named Goldwin Smith tried to found a weekly paper in Toronto on the English model. But it failed. And every journalistic enterprise since has been on the American plan.

Take our amusements. The Canadian "show" exists by the grace of the Hebrew-American theatrical trust. It is always made for American consumption. Canada is allowed the crumbs. Consequently the common Canadian was in danger of thinking that "Old Glory" was his flag and "blue" the colour of the Canadian uniform. Now that Canadians have begun to chew gum (supplied by an American trust), and give their children Teddy-bears, we might as well haul down the old flag, or the old rag, and run up the Stars and Stripes. It is not so long ago—before the war—that a Canadian Minister of Militia stated that in the event of a war, Canada would be "protected" by the United States, the country that protects its own citizens so well in Mexico and on the high seas.

Take our sports. Cricket is a delicate exotic here; in Australia it flourishes like a weed. Our one native game, lacrosse, is following cricket. Our chief game is American baseball; and the league contests are followed almost as eagerly in Canada as in the United States. Rugby football has been completely Americanized, since Ernie Wigle captained Toronto on the Lawn. It is the same story in every department of Canadian life.

Now American sport, amusement, journalism, colleges, business, accent may be the very best in the world; and we may be doing our best in imitating them. But as long as we do, we must be content to bear the stigma, "a tamer, less inventive people."

The war—thank God—has shown the soul of Canada. Our best and bravest have met the call of duty in the spirit of Crusaders. One American trick we have not learned. We cannot brag with any grace. If an American division had lost half its numbers and saved the day, as the Canadians did at the second battle of Ypres, or had been mined like the Third Division last June, what paeans would have rent the air! We have taken all this glorious sacrifice of precious life as a matter of course, in our stolid Canadian way. But we have not flinched; and we have not faltered in our determination to "carry on" to the end.

The war has set Canada at the parting of the ways. When it is over, will she resume the broad, flower-strewn road of soul-destroying ease, or will she take the high, hard road of heroic endeavour, to make her future worthy of the noble present, consecrated with so much blood and such countless tears?

Teet 'Om, Alede and Others

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weighed two hundred—solid strength.

We raced. He won.

"Does m'sieu ride far?"

"To Pont Bleu."

"Pont Bleu! You have friends there, m'sieu?"

"Not one," I returned, bitterly.

"But I shall be your first, then," he said, blithely.

"And you?" I asked.

"I am Teet 'Om!" he said.

"Teet 'Om?"

"A nickname, m'sieu. Rightly my name is Phillippe Robitaille, grandson of the toll-keeper, brother of Alede Robitaille—and a cast-out! Eh? How you say? . . . An outcast! That is it."

"But—"

"Listen, m'sieu," he went on, "I am so full of happiness I must tell someone. Six months ago I join a Montreal regiment. Five months ago I meet—a lady—an English-Canadian—at Smith's Falls! Two weeks ago I ask her—to be my wife. She does me the honour to consent. Ten days ago I speak my grand-parents. And what, think you, do they say? They say NO! For why? Because my grandfather have it in mind that I shall marry one of my own race. But I find out something—I find he have already plan to let my sister marry an Englishman. I learn of this. I say: Stop! If you let my sister marry—you let me marry as I choose. Then he get mad—how you say?—very mad. And he forbids both!"

"So that was it?" I cried. "Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"You, m'sieu? You! My ally!"

"To the limit."

"I have a hostage for my grandfather's good conduct—I have a hostage in Montreal."

"Who?"

"Alede! She ran away two days ago. She walk to Joseph Station. She take train to Montreal. She find me. I keep her hid with landlady while I come home. Now I march in I say, 'Give me to marry as I please permission, or I will not give you Alede.'"

"Hmph!" I said. "But I can't see where I come in."

"You? Why thus, m'sieu. I say also: 'Give Alede permission to marry her Mistair English-Canadian, or I will give it her myself and refuse your blessing.'"

"Kind of stiff for the old man," I said.

"Hmph!" retorted Teet 'Om.

But as he had prophesied, so was it, though I was not there to see. I did not stop where Teet 'Om stopped, but turned back and rode hard for Joseph Station, where I bought a ticket to Montreal.

A month ago Alede and the landlady returned with me to Pont Bleu and we were married. On that same day, in Smith's Falls, Teet 'Om was married, too. I forgot to mention, his bride was my sister. She had met him at a Red Cross dance in Montreal.