

PEOPLE WE MEET

PROFESSOR WILLIAM CLARK.

It is a splendid likeness that I look at as I write. None who have once seen the Professor will fail to recognize the portrait, save, perhaps, that the features appear sterner and keener in repose, than when lit by the play of expressed thought.

It is the face of a strong, thoughtful man, —a stern man, one would say, judging only by the keen, deep-set eyes and puckered brow; but a physiognomist would at once detect the markings of the lower face that tell of a splendid generosity and a wide and wondrous sympathy. It is a rare blending, but then the original of the portrait is a man of rare personality, whose like is not to be met with every day; and whom, meeting, we remember always with a sense of personal enrichment.

A life so rich in culture and attainment, so full in experience, so wide in sympathy as that of Professor Clark, cannot touch our narrower lives without giving them a broadening and quickening impulse.

But in this little sketch it is not our purpose to be either analytical or biographic; only in simple, familiar way to bring the subject of it nearer to the large numbers of men and women throughout Canada who have heard his voice from pulpit or lecture desk; and who, once hearing, have counted the genial Professor as one among their friends for all time, because of the spell of his words, the magnetism of manner, and the charm indefinable which lies deeper than these, but which makes our hearts go out to him in quick response.

It is a wonderful gift—this one of winning hearts; but when it is accompanied by the ability to capture intellects also, then, indeed, the possessor exercises an influence whose bounds may not be marked. * * *

Come away up to old Trinity University, a broad, low English pile, set in its fine grounds. Let us find our way down the worn corridors to the Professor's library. We are sure of a welcome; since one of the things for which we love him is his wide hospitality and cordial reception alike of wise and simple, rich and poor, famed and obscure. To love books, to need sympathy or help, or even to desire simply the pleasure of his greeting, any of these are sure sesames to his presence.

The unlettered or the man of wisdom, the millionaire or the out-of-work, meet with equal courtesy and kindness.

That any one of these should need him is sufficient reason why he should give himself to the seeker; and he gives of his best, with the unconscious simplicity of a child, blended with the courtly grace of an English gentleman. * * *

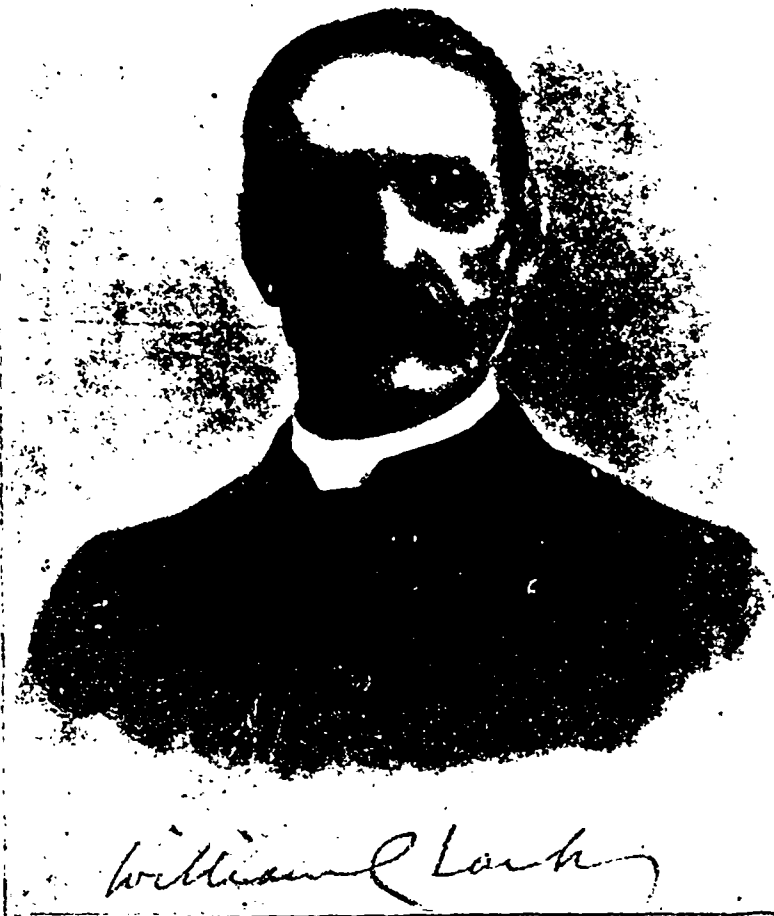
Not that Professor Clark is English. He is Scotch by birth and at heart. His is the

oatmeal and shorter catechism mellowed into rarebit and the Anglican litany—a splendid sweetening.

And if one were still disposed to doubt his nationality, listen while he reads from "The Bonnie Brier Bush." Surely none but a genuine Scotchman could roll out "Drum-tochty" and "Drumseugh" in such sonorous fashion.

Aye, the Professor is of the heather land; yet the rose and the maple leaf are sacred to him; while even the golden rod that grows across the border wins from him kindly favor,—so broad is he in sympathy and national creed. * * *

It is a picturesque library, an ideal library—since the spirit of its owner permeates



every nook, and his ardent book-love rests like a benediction upon every volume.

It matters little if library walls be lined with costly volumes, if the old masters speak in a score of tongues, if rare editions bestrew the shelves,—when the human lover of them all is missing.

But the Professor knows his books; he calls them by name; and in swift response they lead him where he wills to go, through all the lovely byways of the literary ages.

The light from the deep old windows falls across the heaped shelves—five thousand volumes, or six; what matters it, since we reckon not by numbers. Philosophies, histories, theologies, in somber bindings, having the cheeriness about them of friends often consulted; poets and dramatists in many editions; and the gayer bindings of fiction. Martin Luther and the modern novel meet here; yet the earth quakes not; while only he who listens can hear the still, small voice.

Busts of poet and dramatist gleam whitely down into the dusky atmosphere. Portraits of wise men—stern reformers, rare bishops, and sweet singers—look from the walls into this warm brown world of books; while sweet, serene Madonnas smile out from their greater wealth and higher wisdom upon it.

The open grate sends cheery glow and dancing shadows about the room and over the Professor's desk, all bestrewn with letters and books. It faces the deep, old-fashioned windows; and, standing beside it, we look out where the bare-leaved boughs and dark-green pine define the College avenue that stretches far down to the busy city street. It is a pleasant outlook, glimpsing into busy life, yet sheltered by the stillness of a seclusion conducive to literary study. And the center and heart of this little, silent world of literature—the Professor—sits in his favorite chair, and the rare charm of his conversation is upon us, as he chats generally of people and things, bringing from his store of wide experience and travel story and incident worth not only the laugh it brings, but the remembrance. Or possibly the talk turns upon literary themes; and then we discover—if we have not known it before—what a dear and veritable lover of books he is.

He shows us his many Tennysonian editions, Tennyson is pre-eminently the Professor's poet, as his delightful series of Tennyson lectures testify.

Those of us who have heard these lectures will remember not so much the critical analysis, but the Professor's enthusiasm as he hastens hither and thither in the field of the poet's works, like a child in a flower garden;—not knowing in his embarrassment of riches what to gather for our delectation, and giving to his hearers the hearty contagion of his own enjoyment. * * *

Aye, the Professor loves his books; yet he loves humanity better; and this is the characteristic that draws us to him. He has sorrow for the afflicted, counsel for the perplexed, hospitality for the stranger, a sympathy that swerves him not from his own faith, yet enables him to proffer cordial hand-grasps to those furthest removed.

We are proud of his scholarly attainments; we yield tribute to the fine flavor of his courtly and genial bearing, all too rare in these later days; but we love him for the dear, unconscious simpleness of speech and thought that makes him one with all humanity, and places him in close touch with men and women in every walk of life.

Heath Benton



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