

The Civil Years

be quite meaningless without an exposition of the social life of Montreal, which is too large a matter to undertake, alluring as the task would be. Even then, one would be giving one's own impressions and not his.

Wherever he lived he was a social figure. When he sat at table the dinner was never dull. The entertainment he offered was not missed by the dullest intelligence. His contribution was merely "stories," and these stories in endless succession were told in a spirit of frank fun. They were not illustrative, admonitory, or hortatory. They were just amusing, and always fresh. This gift he acquired from his mother, who had that rare charm of mimicry without mockery, and caricature without malice. In all his own letters there is not an unkind comment or tinge of ill-nature, although in places, especially in later years, there is bitter indignation against those Canadian patriots who were patriots merely for their bellies' sake.

Taken together his letters and diaries are a revelation of the heroic struggle by which a man gains a footing in a strange place in that most particular of all professions, a struggle comprehended by those alone who have made the trial of it. And yet the method is simple. It is all disclosed in his words, "I have never refused any work that was given me to do." These