

Considering the circumstances this seemed palpably absurd. But he admitted that there might be some analogy.

"Do you think the legal profession is overcrowded?"

"At the bottom—yes."

By this time I concluded that it was really nobody else's business but Mr. Geoffrion's what he thought about law. From this point on, the cross-examination was more promiscuous; when there was nobody but Mr. Geoffrion to decide how wild were the questions asked; such a hodgepodge of queries pertinent and impertinent as would have been ruled out of order by any judge. It was clear enough that when a shrewd advocate is out of court he has no business to prove the adage that "a fool can ask a question that ten wise men cannot answer." It didn't much matter what I asked him now. So I let go at random, with about as much logical sequence as a census-taker.

"You have seen much of Montreal?"

"I was born here."

"You have observed great changes?"

"Yes——" (Upward inflection.)

"Are you still member of the International Waterways Commission?"

"No, the Tories turned me out. I was really appointed in an interregnum."

"Nine years ago, I believe, you were junior counsel for the Canadian Government in the Alaskan Boundary Dispute?"

"I was."

"Then you have considerably studied international problems?"

"No, not considerably."

"But you have observed a somewhat remarkable influence of the United States upon Canada."

"Certainly. That is inevitable. It is obvious."

"Uh—is Montreal being Americanized as much as say Toronto or Winnipeg?"

"I do not know. I am myself a Montrealer and a French-Canadian. Therefore I do not see Montreal as clearly as——"

I felt sure he would say ironically—"as other people do who come here once in a while." But he added,

"As I do other cities."

"And you have noticed near resemblances between Toronto and any American city of its class?"

"Yes. To me Toronto is much like an undersized New York."

"And do you expect Montreal to Americanize as much?"

"I do not think so."

"What are your reasons?"

"The French are more difficult to Americanize. They are more conservative and traditional."

"But is there not already some change?"

Again he executed the bewildering squirm and trained his acute lenses on the cross-examiner. Another silence. It seemed as though he would be guilty of contempt of court in refusing to answer.

"I mean the modern French movement in Canada——"

"Is there one? I have not observed it. What do you mean?"

"That the French in Canada are becoming more like modern France than formerly."

"I do not think so."

Another hiatus was beginning to begin.

"But the French and the English in Montreal—are they not crossing lines in business as never before?"

"There always has been interchange. That does not extend to social relations—not so much. The French are still largely a separatist element."

I regretted to hear Mr. Geoffrion admit this. For in spite of my former aversion, I was beginning to like him. He was a stimulus to mental activity. The smoothly beveled character of his deliverances, the swiftness with which he gathered them together and served them out with the finesse of a smooth cricketer or a fencing champion, made me unconscious of the almost foolish handicap under which he was answering such a variety of random questions.

"Montreal, however—is cosmopolitan?"

"Yes—I hope so."

"She is destined to become—a world city?"

"There again I am no prophet. Perhaps so. I only know clearly what Montreal is now and what it has been in my own time."

"Take, for example, the Jews—so conspicuous in the recent Quebec elections?"

"Surely. The Jews are good Liberals—mainly. They have their reasons."

"Do you think they expect separate schools?"

"I do not know that."

"Would it be a wise thing to——?"

"No, I think not. I see no reason why the Jews or any other foreign nationalities should be permitted to withdraw their support from the public

schools."

"Do you observe any difference between Roumanian and Russian Jews?"

"They are all Jews to me."

Perhaps M'sieu Aime was not aware that for three laps back now I had been coming to a break in the thread. With all his court-room casuistry and his remarkable insight into the gropings of other men's minds, did he foresee that the next question would be political?

"At this distance from the last Federal elections, Mr. Geoffrion, do you still believe in reciprocity?"

Another silence. He seemed to be cogitating. He looked away at the opposite wall.

"I mean—economically."

"I am considering it."

He continued to ruminate. There is a specific value in a mind able to detach itself dispassionately from party politics and prejudices and bigotries. The opinions of such a mind are apt to be of more consequence than those of the political enthusiast. Mr. Geoffrion has that detachment of intellect. He has the qualities of a judge. And he was still considering reciprocity—though himself a Liberal.

"The country has declared against reciprocity," he said, deliberately. "I do not think it will be revived soon. It is perhaps a dead issue."

"Yes, but suppose that in the West this year there should be a tremendous crop such as the railways could not get out to the terminals——?"

He waved the question aside with brusque impatience.

"The West said they wanted it once. What happened? The West turned down the very party that was prepared and pledged to give them reciprocity. I think the West is a huge baby. It cries for something, but does not know what it wants. They have talked of secession—bah!"

"Economically, would it be any harm to have some free interchange of natural products?"

"Well, the East does not need it. We have reciprocity now."

The examination was nearly done. So far Mr. Geoffrion had demonstrated that he was able to adjust himself to a farce as though it were really a serious matter. He had disarmed suspicion and aroused curiosity. He had spoken with almost generous candor and had admirably kept control of his temper under exasperating conditions. There was but one more question I wanted to ask him—whether important or impertinent.

I took up my hat. He rose to permit me to leave the court.

"Have you ever had any temptation to enter political life?"

"None whatever," he snapped.

A look of recapitulatory disgust came into the ascetic lineaments of his face.

"That is the only sensible answer I have made since you came in," he said. "The rest is wild talk, I am sure."

"Thank you, Mr. Geoffrion! I am glad indeed to have had this opportunity of——"

"The same to you," he said. "Good-afternoon."

The street was crowded. I almost ran down to the Place d'Armes. Never had I felt such relief except when escaping from a farmer's dog. The spectre of Aime Geoffrion, K.C., seemed to pursue me. It was with me at the hotel; at dinner; on the street; down in the poppy-eyed glamour of Chinatown and along St. Lawrence Main.

And after I had gone to sleep, I still dreamed that Aime Geoffrion was cross-examining me to find any good reason why I should not be hanged by the neck till I was dead.

Seeing Natural Resources—and Voters



Northern Ontario is the Theme of All the Ontario Politicians and Business Men. "Seeing" This New Country Has Become a Pastime. Mr. Rowell, Leader of the Ontario Opposition, Recently Led a Party of His Followers Through the District. This Week There is a Big Excursion of the Associated Boards of Trade to Northern Ontario.



Mr. Rowell Did Not Overlook the Women and Children. He is Here Seen Lunching With Them in the Big Church Driving Shed at Earlton, One of the New Towns of the North. There Were Men Present, of Course, and This is Only a Small Section of the Big Party of Pioneers Assembled on This Occasion.