

A NATIONAL SHADOWGRAPH

Number Two: The Visionizer

Who for Purposes of this Narrative is the Hon. Philometre Periscope

HON. PHILOMETRE PERISCOPE had addressed a meeting on a scorching Saturday afternoon, a political meeting. On Sunday morning, under the walnut trees, he addressed another. That was—I. Sunday afternoon on the broad piazza of his uncle's country house amid a maze of gardens he spoke to another meeting. That was—Me. Sunday night, beginning at 11.15 in the drawing room, he expounded his views to a third audience. That was—myself.

I have excellent reasons for remembering Hon. Philometre Periscope. Intellectually he is one of my most exhilarating friends, even though I should never meet him again. Temperamentally he is a profound ally. He has filched away the cobwebs from my sight. Things that formerly seemed to me vague and chaotic are now as clear as \$5.00 which I owe with only \$1.25 to pay it. I am eternally indebted to Hon. Philometre Periscope. How else could I have become so suddenly and vastly conscious of my own shortcomings and so informed of a thought-world that once lay beyond me? Before I met Hon. Periscope I was running on low steam pressure made from soft coal. Now I am direct-connected belt-drive with a dynamo that gets its power from Niagara. I am no longer a feeble, isolated unit of thought, seeing the rest of the thought-world go galloping by. I have become myself a dynamo of thinking. And to the Hon. Philometre Periscope I ascribe all the credit, from that one hot July day of three meetings amid the gardens and the hills.

Hon. Philometre had travelled much. He had dined with lords—without wining. He had seen the capitals of Europe and never became contaminated with even the least of their vices. He had investigated the Orient, Japan, China, India, free government, transportation, accredited agent to find out economic and sociological truths much needed at Ottawa. He had peered into the secrets of the Old World and brought them back dangling at his belt to the New. And he was still a Canadian, willing to consider elections, to be returned to Parliament and, if necessary, for the good of his country to be incorporated in a Cabinet.

Of course he is a Grit. No Tory ever could dance so divinely to the full orchestra of international thinking. Once upon a time he had been asked by a multi-rich corporation to take charge of a department in a magnified benevolence having to do with the welfare of most of mankind.

THANKS to one plutocrat obsessed with benevolence and very much in need of expert advice, thanks not less to the efforts of Hon. Philometre Periscope, a pentecostal alliance was consummated between the two forms of industry represented by capital and labour, and the Hon. Philometre had good reason to conclude that his experience in the gymnasium of Canadian politics had not by any means been wasted. At the age of 40 he had accomplished more than most politicians do at any age. And when I met him on his uncle's farm a few days ago, he felt almost belligerently happy.

Let me describe how this luminous shadowgraph looked; by means of which you may perhaps think you have identified him.

He had a crosswise wisp of hair like a low brush fence in front of the bald part of his head. His face was round, beardless and boylike. His figure was rather cupidesque. He habitually crossed his right leg V shape over his left and squinted his right eye while he was talking.

So that Hon. Philometre Periscope was quite unlike most visionaries of whom you have read. He had no spirituelle pallor in his face, no aureole or nimbus about his head, and no suggestion of any what the emotional novelists call "aura" about his personality. In fact you could have guessed his weight to a pound and a half, his age to a year and a quarter, and he never smoked either a cigar or a cigarette or a pipe, nor ever took a drink of anything stronger than ginger ale.

Here were great potentialities compressed, eager, resilient, irresistible. You knew it by his words. He talked—traversingly, synthetically, encyclopaedically.

His passion was political economy, which he had first conceived in a Canadian University, afterwards nursing it at Yale, again in a Canadian newspaper office, later in Parliament at Ottawa, and since that time in alliance with the consolidated benevolence

AND WHO IF HE GOES AS FAR IN THE PUBLIC-PROBLEM BUSINESS OF THIS COUNTRY AS HIS GREAT ABILITY AND UNWEARYING ENTHUSIASM ENTITLE HIM TO GO, WILL YET BE ONE OF THE RISING HOPES OF OUR NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY.

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

previously alluded to in this article.

His name? Do not ask it. He is the visionizer. If you guess his identity there is no harm done. This description will not vilify him. It is but a record of hours spent in his company with much stimulating profit to one of us.

AT first Hon. Philometre indulged in nothing but genial platitudes. But he gave even these wearisome forms of conversation an injection of a peculiar mixture of sulphite and bromide. It was in what experts call "elan," "pep," "punch," "drive," that he succeeded in making these conventionalities interesting.

"The world is becoming one country," said he. "One great, international complexus of co-ordinated activities. Yes, indeed."

He gazed across a fat, aromatic clover-field of his uncle's at a drove of lean cattle in a baldheaded pasture. "I know it by the war. The war has proven the unity of the world. National boundaries are no longer the confines of peoples."

One of the lean cattle bawled. "The great humanizing forces of the world are all Pan-national and polyglot. They are."

The cattle gazed hungrily over the fence at the fat clover.

"Music belongs to the wor—ld!" (rolling vowel). "Painting is universal. Literature is common property of mankind. Capital flows everywhere to find investment, regardless of flags or tariffs or treaties. Labour is a world-asset to be lifted by the interplay of world forces and to go like capital into the ends of the earth, there to fructify and organize and elevate itself."

All the cattle bawled in hungry unison. "Science is based upon universal laws. Sociology is the key study to the welfare of all races. It is." The cattle thrust their long weazands over the fence.

"And the greatest problem before the world to-day is the co-relation of—not capital and labour. No! These are falsifying, misrepresentative terms. Capital and labour are one. They are summed up in—Industry. 'As the bow unto the cord is, so is man unto the woman,' sang the poet. So with Capital and Labour. There never could have been capital without labour, which working upon raw material produces wealth of which capital is only the consolidated symbol."

He paused, not for breath, which was universally copious, coming from a hundred hills amid which he sat on a broad piazza, himself feeling akin to the great god Pan when same was young; nor for ideas which came in galloping hordes over the hills as buffaloes used to come; but out of sheer sympathy for the audience, which was Me. He would give these bombarding ideas time to burst inside my brain pan, while I smoked, and held myself as steady as a boat in a gale; and he just gazed out over the dome of the hills in a vast contemplation of the marvelous co-unity of the whole blessed world.

"Keep in mind now," he continued, boldly, "that capital and labour are one by nature and derivation, and that their sum total by marriage is—Industry."

I fell back on the familiar marriage of the Greek myth by which demigods are related to common people by family trees that reach up to Jupiter and Zeus.

"Now then," he peregrinated, "if these two are contained in Industry, what is the other side of the shield? Do you—follow me?"

I could not call him Steve, because the name of the Hon. Philometre Periscope was not Stephen.

"I—receive you," said I feebly, but hopefully.

"Then you—get me," he added indulgently, smiling, as though to say, "Don't be afraid, little mortal, of myopia (near-sightedness). I'm not a demigod of large words."

"I want it to be perfectly plain," he subjoined amiably. "The co-relative to Industry typified by Capital and Labour is—Humanity."

This he clinched with a thumping lunge on both arms of his chair at once.

"Now," he asseverated, "Industry exists for the

sake of humanity. Make that clear."

"Yea," I murmured to myself. "I will put that in a wet burdock leaf for the crown of my hat this hot day. It will be thus only the thickness of my hair from the skull against which my expansive brain is now pressing hard from the inception of ideas."

"So that capital exists for the sake of humanity, and—"

"So does labour?" ventured I schoolboyishly.

"Correct!" exploded he. "To five decimal places."

And the new doctrine of the united, energizing world is that capital can no more afford to be unkind to humanity than labour can. Labour has no right to obstruct capital. Capital has no right to oppress labour. Humanity demands that each shall be respected by the other. Labour has as much right to organize as capital. Capital has as much right to co-ordinate its activities as labour. Eh?"

How could I possibly refute this? Hon. Philometre Periscope had me caught in a web of irresistible deduction. I was completely hypnotized. From the broad of that piazza I could see the nations of the world after the war marching into the grand united army of humanity. I could see the vanishing of all wars, the union of all peoples in the sublime task of conquering the earth for the good of mankind, the great derricks and traveling cranes and steam-shovels of earth toiling on the foundations of a new heaven that should not wait for the death of mortals to reveal itself to man. I could see churches and creeds unite to abolish irreligion, schools to banish ignorance, universal morals consolidate to put away booze and gambling and boodlery—

But just at that moment the Hon. Philometre Periscope bounded from the piazza. He hurled himself across the garden and out into the billowing clover field adjacent. He shouted and waved his hands and whistled for the dog. He clapped his hands and shouted, "Sik 'em, boy! Put 'em out! Hoi, hoi!"

And then he began to throw stones and clods and all manner of missiles that banged into the fence, over which leaped all the neighbour's lean cattle that had broken into the clover-field.

"Con—found you!" I heard him say as he tried to repair the broken fence. "If you don't keep out of here I'll have you put in the pound."

Subsequently I learned that Hon. Philometre had taken it upon himself to "investigate" the economics of the farmer who owned the lean cattle. He discovered that the leanness of the cattle was caused by an hereditary taint of non-thrift in the farmer, was therefore incurable and a fit subject to be looked after by that all-wise agency known as the State.

But by that time three of the cattle had died.

HOWEVER, I shall never forget that it was the Hon. Philometre Periscope who first propounded to me the doctrine that Labour is not congenitally in conflict with Capital, and that it is only the organized cupidity of one and the organizing un-reason of the other that makes the struggle. In this doctrine, as he made it pellucidly clear, lies the hope of humanity which is bigger than either capital or labour because common to both. If he can carry this doctrine to a logical conclusion in his practise of Canadian politics, he should have no trouble in establishing himself as one of the bright particular stars of our new political economy. In the readjustment of our national affairs we shall relegate a lot of our present maxims to the junk-heap of exploded fallacies. To keep them from being reclaimed and put into commission by the old fogey element in our politics we shall need the unceasing vigilance of all such men as the visionizer. With a little more commonplace tact and a degree less of visionizing quality in his make up the hon. gentleman should have no difficulty in getting followers. He will, however, discover that the average follower will do his best to bedevil him with party shibboleths and slogans.

Hon. Philometre—be not discouraged by these people. Continue to make your economic ideas into a song; but if now and again a few of us who are more blase and less well-informed, find that we can't always get the swing of the metre, don't be down-cast. It will take the best part of your philosophy, well rid of the most impractical part of it, to keep the public affairs of this country along the broad road of a new national life.