

## British Scientists in Toronto

The exceptional beauty of the buildings and grounds of the University was very generally commented upon when the students returned to Toronto this fall. The lawns, the flower-beds, the walks, were all so neat and trim that the great grey pile of Old Varsity, clear-cut against the sky, looked more exquisite than ever. One felt, as one gazed about one, that these academic lawns and halls deserved all the pretty compliments that the visiting savants paid them in the summer.

Indeed, *Alma Mater* was still in her reception gown until the frost came. It was but meet that she should don her prettiest dress when the Wise Men of the East and the West and the North and the South paid her a visit. Nor were they slow to recognize the beauty of the place. A few years ago Mr. Matthew Arnold extolled the beauties of University College, and many men whose words are of no less weight, often spoke this summer of its exquisite grace. More than once they said, does Oxford spring to mind as one strolls across the wide green sward of Varsity.

It was a bright week in the history of Toronto and Toronto University, when the British Association for the Advancement of Science met here from the eighteenth to the twenty-fifth of August. The savants, not only of the Empire but also of the Republic to the south, assembled here to discuss their subjects and to stimulate scientific enquiry generally. The most notable figures in the notable assembly were of course Lord Lister, the President of the Association, Lord Kelvin, better known perhaps as Sir William Thompson, the Past President, and Sir John Evans, the President-elect. Among the other famous thinkers here were the Rt. Hon. James Bryce, M.P. for Edinburgh, the author of the "Holy Roman Empire"; Sir George Turner, the anthropologist; Prof. Ramsay, the chemist; Sir George Robertson, the hero who defended Chitral; Dr. Keltie, the geographer; Mr. Selous, the African explorer; Professors Miall, Remsen, Sumner, Osborn, Hadley, Newcomb, Lowell and Todd, and such prominent University presidents as Patton, Harper and Stanley Hall.

As might be expected, the papers read and the discussions carried on by such learned scientists as these would be rather above the heads of even a first class honor man in Toronto University. A large number of people, however, attended the meetings, though most of them were attracted by the personalities of the men rather than by their words of wisdom.

Everyone wanted to see Lord Lister, the kindly, old English gentleman, who has done more than anyone in the last hundred years to relieve human pain and misery. Before he introduced his antiseptic treatment in surgical cases every operation was attended by untold agony and generally death. Hospital fever and, what was far worse, hospital gangrene, were ever prevalent. In some hospitals the latter dreadful disease attacked eighty per cent. of all wounds. But, thanks to Lord Lister, the conditions of to-day are altogether different. I myself knew a patient, who went into the operating-room this summer whistling Yankee Doodle. The surgeons removed his troublesome appendix, and that night he was whistling again. In a couple of weeks he was up and around once more. The hospitals have now become places in which to get rid of diseases rather than to acquire them. Absolute cleanliness and thorough antiseptic treatment take time and trouble in operations, but there is to-day not a single surgeon, worthy of the name, who is not an enthusiastic

advocate of Listerism, as it is now called. The day of the doctor who carried his instruments in his horse-blanket has gone by. So great are the beneficial results of Lord Lister's discovery that Professor MacAllum, M.B., Ph.D., of this University, says that in his opinion it has saved almost as many lives in the last twenty-five years as the wars of Europe have destroyed in this century.

Great as his achievements are, Lord Lister remarked in his quiet unostentatious manner at the special Convocation of Toronto University this summer that he did not consider himself worthy to unloose the shoes of men like Lord Kelvin. Few people, however, will agree that the Atlantic cable has been such a boon to mankind as Listerism. But the old Professor of Natural Philosophy in Glasgow University has done much for the cause of science. He is known better, perhaps, as Sir William Thompson, the great electrician, or more fondly as simple "Sir William." But, as I remarked, it was his personality that specially attracted the attention and respect and even the love of those who came to the meetings.

In attempting to give some idea of the wonderful personality of these two great thinkers a Staff Correspondent to the *New York Outlook* writes: "In looking upon the faces of Lords Kelvin and Lister one feels that as their discoveries have been for all men and for all the world, so their appearance seems not so much that of a particular people as a more world-wide type. Lord Kelvin is an Irish-Scotchman, and when he opens his mouth it is the quaint canny Scot who speaks. Lord Lister is an Englishman and recalls portraits of Benjamin Jowett—but Jowett's was a head that might have belonged anywhere. Without taking into account, however, all the emphasis which in speech Lord Kelvin gives to the Scot, and which Lord Lister gives to the Englishman, it would be difficult at first to pronounce upon their nationality, whether Scotch, English, American, French, German. They have an appearance and manner uniting Anglo-Teuton solidity and simplicity with a dash of Latin alertness and agility."

The people of Toronto put forth every effort to extend a royal welcome to these men and their colleagues. The Scientists on their part gave several lectures of public interest. On Wednesday evening, August 18th, the proceedings opened in Massey Hall, where the new president, Sir John Evans, delivered an address. On Thursday evening Lord and Lady Aberdeen held a reception in the Parliament Buildings. On Friday and Saturday and Monday evenings popular lectures were delivered to the public, and on Tuesday evening a grand conversation was held in the University Buildings.

Mr. James Brebner, the University Registrar, to whose great kindness I am almost entirely indebted for the material in this report, tells a couple of interesting stories about Lord Lister at the Conversat. The genial old man was standing shaking hands with all those who sought that honor. Someone remarked to him that it must be a great bore for him to have to shake hands with so many who were absolute strangers to him. He smiled sweetly, and replied in a tone full of courtesy, "No—it is my very great privilege." But as the evening wore on the strain told on him, and his kindly face assumed a tired expression. "Almost as bad as an operation, isn't it, Lord Lister?" said someone to him. A smile played over his features as he answered pleasantly, "Yes, very nearly."

Of Lord Kelvin Mr. Alexander Fraser tells some good stories in the August number of the *Westminster*. Most of them deal with his relation to his students in the University of Glasgow. "An old student," writes Mr. Fraser, "now a professor himself, used to describe Sir William's lectures as: 'A statement of the subject, an explanation

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