



# My Gray Goose Quill

*Literary Topics of the Month, Talked About Informally  
From a Canadian Point of View*

By A WAYFARING EDITOR

## OUR LITERARY EXILES

YOU remember that lachrymose elegiac of Tom Moore, *The Exile's Lament*,  
"I'm sitting on the stile, Mary,  
Where we sat side by side."

Well, we're feeling just a little that way at present—literarily if not literally speaking—on account of a thing we have seen in the *Toronto Star*.

Somebody who signs himself Irish Canadian gently but firmly rebukes the *Canadian Courier* in a recent letter to that paper. He says:

Editor of *The Star*: We would be much obliged if you would run in your columns reserved for communications the following letter regarding an item that appeared in the *Canadian Courier* of March 31st, copy attached:—

A weekly in *Toronto* recently published an article mentioning, with regret, that four Canadians engaged in literary work in New York City had become Americans. The writer has lived in New York with these Canadians, and is in regular communication with them. While these men have resided in the United States for the past twelve years they are still British subjects. To the writer's certain knowledge not one of them has ever made the Declaration of Intentions, let alone become American Citizens.

The group referred to have often been reminded that they might do more for the British cause in the United States if they would throw in their vote with that of the citizens of the Republic, but they have always maintained that, apart altogether from the sentiment of the proposition, it is of more advantage in travelling abroad to be a British subject than to be an American subject. British subjects, particularly in South and Central America, where these men have all traveled, are more respected than are American subjects. This is to them the material advantage in remaining British subjects, but the sentimental question is in itself enough to keep them under the old flag.

"IRISH CANADIAN."

We have since turned up the article in question, which is an editorial of the date referred to headed, *Americanizing O'Higgins*. Just to show that our Irish-Canadian friend had some excuse but very little reason for the accusation against us of maligning our literary exiles, we take the liberty of quoting the part of the editorial to which he evidently refers:

A thousand times we may wish such men as O'Higgins and Stringer and MacFarlane and Bliss Carman were back in this country helping to shove along our national waggon. But if we can't pay the price for their productions, we can still continue to furnish them raw material of copy without any embargo and hope they are working out their souls' salvation in the United States better than they ever could have done in Canada.

We detect in this no statement, or even suggestion, that these four writers have definitely forsworn their native land. As a matter of fact, we happen to remember very well the laconic plaint of Stringer on board ship a few years ago, "I am neither citizen nor subject." Both before and since we have visited Stringer's 14-acre farm in Kent County—our own near-native heath—and know how he still clings by his boot-soles to the land of his birth because he likes it even though he doesn't sell much copy in it. He was in the *Courier* office a few weeks ago, and seemed to think that we bore him some grudge for piping *The Exile's Lament*. We cheerfully assured him that such was not the case. There is no Canadian domiciled in the United States whom we would sooner see become a citizen of Canada—as a matter of fact, he is entitled to vote here if he wants to—than Arthur Stringer. He is a brainy, optimistic man, whose productions ought to be of great value to this country.

As for MacFarlane, his friend, we have spent at least one evening at his Canadian summer house—when he had one—near *Toronto*. We have worked with him in Club circles. We have admired his

handiwork in whatever medium it was published, knowing him to be one of the keenest-eyed, level-headed hustlers after good copy this country ever produced. When he sold his Canadian house and finally moved to New York State, nobody regretted his exile more than the editor of this paper. He was born in one of the Easthopes near Guelph, Ont., among a Scotch clan of hard-headed Canadians. And we wish we had money enough per hour or per line or per anything to buy his copy twice a month for the *Canadian Courier*. We know right well that "Mac" will never go back on Canada. But he is domiciled and fee'd in New York—so what's the use of vain regrets? We can only hope that he will come back here as often as he can and make as much use of Canada and the *Canadian Courier* as possible. Because Arthur MacFarlane is the kind of critical enthusiast that we shall always begrudge to Uncle Sam.

As for O'Higgins—we have discussed him. Naturalized American or not, he is planted deep down in United States soil and is growing there like a Rhode Island Greening. We shall never get him back. But we wish him luck in whatever plays, novels or clean-up articles he writes for the omnivorous check-spouting maw of the United States press.

And for the case of Bliss Carman, that battered giant of poetry, born in New Brunswick, cradled in our Atlantic fogs, his soul chimed full of magnificent sea-wash poetry by Canadianism—we only think of him as the Samson grinding at the mill. He is the pure poet whom no exilement can rob of his divine afflatus. Why in the name of Jove or the Olympian Zeus he stays in the delirium of New York, heaven only knows.

So these are the exiles and what we think of them. If we have seemed to suggest that any bars be put up to keep them from being Canadians, we hasten to rub it out. Canadians? Yes, there's something about Canada—or getting to be—that keeps a man's heart there whether his treasure is or not.

## WAR WRITERS ABROAD

WAR writers in this war are almost as numerous as iron crosses in Germany. There is a vast difference between the crop of 1914-17 and the crop of, say, 1899-1902. In the Boer War we had but two outstanding correspondents that left anything behind that people read till at least one of them was dead; Steevens and Kipling. Steevens did by far the better work. He was the *Daily Mail* man. Already famous as the author of *With Kitchener to Khartum*, he added to his fame in his *Letters from Ladysmith*, which were his last. He died in Ladysmith of enteric fever, before the siege was lifted, one of the most brilliant field writers that newspaperdom ever produced.

The nearest to Steevens in vividness of description was Stephen Crane, whose *Red Badge of Courage* will perhaps now be in its second run of popularity in the United States. This was a tale of the Civil War; a description of some of the great battles in it woven about a story, by a young man of 22 who had never seen a battle. Crane had a tremendous gift of imaginative accuracy.

Now we are surrounded by a host of witnesses.

We shan't forget poor old Harding Davis, who passed in his last "30" to the printer a few months ago. His description of the German army's circus parade through Brussels after the invasion of Belgium was one of the first things sent over the cable. A complete edition of his war writings has since been brought out.

Of course, from the first the American newspaper had most of the pen-pushers at the front. Censored syndicate official literature would not do for Uncle Sam. There was a regular invasion of Europe by the American press. And at least half a dozen have left a good trail. Simonds, Powell, W. G. Shepherd, Cobb, Will Irwin—Frederick Palmer—these are a few of them, some of the headliners. They have been a long while finding out the Boche. Keen as America newspapermen are on trail of most things that make good copy, they were—some of them, anyway—as sadly buncoed by the thick-faced German as though they had been *Innocents Abroad*. But, of course, that was happening at home right under the noses of their own city editors. Most of these men, however, succeeded in turning out a large volume of readable stuff about the war which, even from behind the front, made better copy than most of the happenings in the United States.

One man whose war work ranks among the very best anywhere has never been in Europe since the war began, though he went over most of the battle-grounds before he came to America. Sidney Coryn, of the *San Francisco Argonaut*, is known to readers of this paper as our—for some time regular—syndicate war writer. The *Canadian Courier* and the *Providence Journal* both published simultaneously the *Argonaut's* Theatre of War stuff written by Coryn. Since the shifting of our own schedule two days' earlier in going to press, we have been unable to get Coryn's war summary such a long distance in time to publish it simultaneously, but we hope to make an arrangement for twice-a-month service of special copy from this unusually gifted summarizer. Coryn is not a brilliant writer. He has no particular style. He is an impartial logician. Originally an Englishman, he naturally leaned towards the Allies; and from the start right among a pro-German constituency he has pointed out as a neutral the weaknesses of Germany's essential position while admitting her military strength.

Canada has not produced any war writers. The censorship invited our copy experts to stay at home and write expert summaries from the despatches helped out by Land and Water, the *British dailies* and the *New York Times*. We have now a Canadian at the front. Mr. Stewart Lyon is doing the best that any man will be allowed to do making live copy for Canadian consumption against the ever-busy cable artist.

England has let loose a few notable writers. Chief among them some place Philip Gibb, who, at home, is a novelist, and at the front has turned out some of the sanest and most vivid descriptions of war a la Tolstoi. Percival Gibbon, who used to write realistic short stories, has been busy on the Russian front. Kipling has done nothing except a few verses about the navy and a few lectures. His bolt was shot in India. England was under somewhat the same disadvantage that Canada had. The censor was in the way. Only the *London Times* broke the blockade with special correspondence, which came near putting the *Times* under the iron heel of Kitchener. Northcliffe himself travelled along the western front and wrote a book of the war, as well as a number of sensational articles for his papers. His book has had a huge sale. Northcliffe has never been famous as a writer. There are people unkind enough to