

PROFESSOR STEPHEN LEACOCK

(By S. HANDMAN)

He was just a young English child of seven at the time and Canada seemed so far away and, from what he had learned, cold and filled with Indians.

The green beauty of Swanmoor in Hands felt dear to him even at that age and he protested against going to a strange country to live among strange people and to fight the soil of a strange land. But though he did not want to go, young Stephen and the Leacock family—mother, father and children—came to Canada.

They went to a farm near Lake Simcoe. It was only 11 years after Confederation and as young Stephen was to point out many years later, "it was during the hard times of Canadian farming, and my father was just able by great diligence to pay the hired man, and, in years of great plenty, to raise enough grain to have seed for the next year's crop without buying any."

Then the boy grew older, and the rebellious disinclination with which he stepped on these shores gave way slowly to a reluctant interest in the undeniable attraction of his new home. He found something so vast and strong and fine about its hills and forests that he could not help helping it.

Though the family was fairly large, young Stephen's father wanted him to go out into the life of this country as well equipped as possible. So the boy was sent to Upper Canada College in Toronto and later to the University of Toronto, where he graduated in 1891. At the university, Stephen Leacock says, he spent his entire time "in the acquisition of languages, living, dead and half-dead," and knew nothing of the outside world. When he got out he tried teaching for some time, but soon "gave it up in disgust," and went to the University of Chicago to study economics and political science.

Meanwhile he was writing. Not much, perhaps, but writing all the time. Some of his work was finding its way into college papers. Much of it was being picked up by surprised and eager editors of humorous magazines, who discovered in his easy flow of wit something to offer relaxation from pontifical, boring formality of the Victorian era. The more he wrote, the better became his output and the more receptive his markets.

He came to McGill University, and in the years that followed Stephen Leacock rose from lecturer in political science to head of the Department of Economics and Political Science—a post which he held for some 35 years. In those years he managed to pour out an unbelievable stream of books, stories and articles, dealing with biography, economics, education, history, humor, journalism, literary criticism, political science, sociology and sports.

But it was his humor—not savage, corrosive, devastating humor—but kindly, mature, sympathetic humor in the spirit of Dickens, Mark Twain and Josh Billings, which gained for him a world-wide reputation and the respect and love of his fellow men.

All this time a change was taking place in the boy who did not want to come to Canada—a change so profound and disturbing that it can only be told by Stephen Leacock himself. It was revealed when the Governors of McGill University told him some weeks ago that he was to be retired at the end of the present session because of an inflexible age limit.

At first he took the order jocularly enough and even delivered a long lecture describing himself and his associates who fell under this decision, as members of a "Senility Gang." But sitting in the quiet of his own study, he knew he would miss his classrooms and the students he loved so well. As he sat there he wondered whether he ought to go back "home"—to England. And he wrote:

"I'll stay in Canada. There is something in its distances and isolation and

climate that appeals forever. Thank you, Mother England. I don't think I'll come 'home' now. Fetch me my carpet slippers from the farm. I'll rock it out to sleep right here."

Marginalia

His writings seem to be more appreciated in the United States and in England than they are in this country... some of his best stories are woven around his classrooms and though they might lose the crackle of spontaneity in retelling, students like the one which best illustrates his tolerance... it is about two young men in his class who always sat together and seemed to care more about playing noughts and crosses than for learning economics... they thought Professor Leacock could not see them... but one day one of the pair did not turn up for his lecture and as the other sat disconsolately imbibing some education very much against his will, Stephen Leacock looked down the room and, monitoring to another student, said: "Will you please go over and sit with Mr. ... so that he can continue playing his noughts and crosses?"... he is more than generous to his students often lending them money and even writing and wiring to employers to get them jobs... there is nothing he hates more than false dignity... so much so that one pompous stiff associate who poked his nose in Stephen Leacock's classroom was told to "come in, professor, and hear a decent lecture for a change..." he likes to play billiards, fish and farm... he had a large farm at Orillia, Ont., which is a source of great amusement to him and other members of the faculty... he came to the university one day and sorrowfully announced that 300 of his turkeys had had "the pip" and died... he forgot to mention that he had been feeding them peaches which he could not sell... one of his students who was travelling in Europe relates how he met several Englishwomen on the continent and when he told them he was going to college in Montreal they asked: "You're not by any chance going to the University of Stephen Leacock?"... he nearly always carries a cane and on the lecture platform you can tell a Leacock joke coming by the way he starts to grin and as the tale develops his grin spreads so that he is roaring with his audience when the joke is out... his reputation as a humorist has overshadowed his reputation as an economist... the truth of the matter is that he usually dominates any meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, of which he was once president... he is careless about his dress and once came to class with a "boiled" evening shirt and black wig tie with a black suit... the mere listing of his works to date covers 30 pages of a recently issued bibliography... under the heading of "Boarding House Geometry"...

he says that a landlady of a boarding house is a parallelogram—that is, an oblong, angular figure, which cannot be described but which is equal to anything... all the rooms being taken, a single room is said to be a double room and a pie may be produced any number of times... to get him at his best, read his "Financial Career," in which he describes his first bank deposit.

During a heat wave an elderly woman hustled on to a London bus, sat down, and began to fan herself with a newspaper. When the conductor came along she puffed: "A penny one please. Isn't it hot?" The conductor with a mischievous wink at another passenger, replied: "Oh, lady, this isn't 'ot. When I was aht in India it was so 'ot we 'ad ter feed the chickens with ice cream ter stop 'em laying 'ard-boiled eggs."

Man, at theatre—Usher, take me to the centre door or aisle. Hard-boiled Usher—Or you'll what?

THE INSPIRING TOUCH

(By Stuart Robertson)

Barrett Browning, the son of Robert Browning the great poet, tells how when he was a boy he was with his father in Paris, when an old man passed by.

The father said, "Touch that old man, as he passes, I'll tell you why afterwards." The boy wondered, for there seemed nothing special about the old man. He was bowed and bent, and shabby, and shuffled as he went.

But he knew his father had some good reason, so he reached out his hand and touched the old man softly. "Now," said the boy's father, "you have touched Beranger, and you must never forget that."

Who was Beranger? Well you know who Burns was: the poet who sang his songs of liberty and independence to the soul of Scotland. Beranger was the Burns of France. He sang freedom into the soul of France; and Browning wanted his son to touch him, so that he could feel he had touched one of the great servants of freedom.

Can we touch the great men that are dead and gone? Yes! we can touch their minds with our own, through books, which is more than touching their bodies. We can touch Burns and Sir Walter Scott and Shakespeare and Dickens, and as often as we touch them we are helped to be true and brave, generous and kindly; helped to see the good in men and women, and to be patient with their failings and foolishness.

Can we touch Jesus? We read in the Gospels how a poor woman once said to herself, "If I may but touch His garment I shall be made whole," and she was healed by the touch of Him.

We would like to do that. We envy those who could touch the living hand of Jesus. We long for "the touch of a vanished hand." Do we long in vain? No.

We can read his words in the Gospels and learn to think His thoughts, and touch His mind with our own, so as to have in us "that mind which was in Christ Jesus."

We can touch His heart with our prayers. No prayer of need ever failed to touch the heart of Jesus when He was on earth, and the Bible tells us He is still the same. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." But better still, we can touch Him through acts of kindness.

There was a soldier once in France called Tannan who had a brother he loved dearly. And his war-cry was "who touches my brother touches Tannan."

Jesus said something like that when He said "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." There are many legends which tell us this.

St. Francis of Assisi walking one day in the country met a poor leper. Every one was sorry for the lepers, but none were sorry enough to touch

them. They were afraid for themselves. But St. Francis was so sorry that he never thought of himself at all, but put his arms about the leper and kissed his poor spotted face. And when he looked around again, the roadway was empty, and he knew he had touched the Lord.

St. Martin of Tours one day saw a shivering half-clad beggar whose limbs shook under their scanty rags in the winter wind. Taking a sword from a soldier he cut his own wide cloak in two and gave half to the beggar.

In the night he had a dream, and saw the courts of Heaven and Jesus on His Throne. Round His shoulders was the half-robe he had given to the beggar, and St. Martin knew that it was not a dream, but that he, too, had touched the Lord.

This story is told of the fourth wise man who followed the Star of Bethlehem with the jews to offer to Jesus. He was delayed on the road by a wounded man whom thieves had left for dead. He tended him and saw him into safety, and after a while left him, giving the inn-keeper for all expenses one of the jewels he had meant for Jesus.

So he arrived late at Bethlehem. Jesus was gone with Mary and Joseph to Egypt, and Herod's soldiers were massacring the children. One he was able to rescue from a soldier's sword and return to its frantic mother, but to do this he had to bribe the soldier with another of the jewels he had meant for Jesus.

He went to Egypt and there fell ill, and a good poor woman tended him and nursed him back to health again. One day he found her in tears. Her only son, her one support, had been taken for the army, and she was in despair.

The Wise Man could not forget her kindness, and so he bought her son out of the army, with the last of the jewels he had meant for Jesus, and gave up the hope of ever seeing Jesus at all. He had nothing to offer Him now.

After thirty years he thought he would go back to his old home, and in his journey he reached Jerusalem on the day Jesus was to be crucified. Hearing this he stood in the crowd hoping at least to see Jesus.

But as he stood, a heavy tile fell from a room and killed him.

So you say his life was a failure. He had never given his gifts to Jesus, never even seen Him.

But when his soul was borne to Heaven, he saw Jesus on His Throne, and lo! in front of His crown were the jewels the wise man had given to help the sorrows of men and women. He too had touched the Lord, because He too had touched the Lord's brethren.

When we touch another in kindness we touch Christ: and the kindness done to men for Christ's sake on earth are the jewels in Christ's crown in Heaven. —Home Magazine.

CINEMA ACTORS STAY WED LESS THAN SIX YEARS

HOLLYWOOD, California, April 13.—The average movie colony marriage endures for five years, eleven months and seven days but—

If it passes that danger-point, it is likely to last for from twenty years to life.

The law of averages operated on that schedule in a survey of 200 marriages made yesterday. The compilation was based on the interval between the wedding ceremony and the divorce hearing. In some cases, long separations preceded the filing of the suit for divorce.

Marital Averages

Other facts shown: When both husband and wife are movie players, the average duration of their marriage falls to four years, six months.

Directors and producers are the best marital "risks". Their unions last on an average of seven years, six months.

Thirty movie actresses, divorced in 1935, will be or are eligible for remarriage this year.

The survey was based on marriages ended by divorce. It did not take into account the many movie unions that have endured, such as: Mr. and Mrs. George Arliss, thirty-five years; Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Murray, twenty-nine years; Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Gleason, twenty-eight years; Mr. and Mrs. Jean Hersholt, twenty-two years; Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Cantor, twenty-one years; Mr. and Mrs. Warner Baxter, twenty years; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Muni, fourteen years; Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lloyd, twelve years, and Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Barrymore, twelve years.

Adding those figures to the longevity statistics, the average goes up almost to what is normal for marriage all over the United States for all classes of people.

That, said Paul Popenoe, director of the Los Angeles Institute of Domestic Affairs, is exactly ten years.

Movie marriages and marriages of non-professionals have one thing in common—the second year is the danger period.

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THREE CHEERS

Not many years ago we read in the newspapers of the passing away of a rather odd custom called the "claque." In London theatres the applause was frequently led by a few paid officials known as claqueurs, or clappers. These sat among the audience, just as if they were ordinary spectators, and at the right moment would begin to cheer, until the entire house, catching the infection, would carry it on. It was said that many a play was made or marred, on the first night of its performance, by the way in which the clappers did their work. Nervous actors owed a great deal to the kindly encouragement they received from friends and strangers.

In the olden days of Greece there was something of the same thing in the Law Courts. Demosthenes, the silver-tongued orator, describes how some fresh lawyer, pleading his case, would have several hired men in the court-room, cheering loudly at the end of every sentence, so that those in the outer lobby, hearing the applause, would crowd in to hear this wonderful speaker. So were reputations made and lost.

No doubt you will say to yourself, "How unreal!" But probably you will see also some good in it. If you have ever sung a song, or even a recitation in public, you will know how helpful it was to hear the sound of cheering you got. Flattery and manufactured applause are hardly right; but a little compliment goes a long way towards success. If we knew how hard a battle many people have to fight, we would not grudge the kindly nod on the back.

When Bureess was swimming the Channel he felt very tired and afraid in the eerie darkness, and asked his "mate" in the accompanying boat to sing him a song. They responded by singing a Miserere, or mournful tune. That made him worse than ever, so they struck up the French National Anthem, "La Marseillaise." In a few minutes his strength and spirits came back.

It is now a regular thing for swimmers to carry their own minstrels. Timboshchi had a jazz band, and four o'clock in the morning he called loudly for "la musique," and the bandmen had to be awakened.

Nothing is so much wanted to-day as cheerfulness, and if Churches in the past were given to sadness, they are eager now to make young people glad. One of the Church magazines in Scotland is called "Cheerio," and its pages are as bright as its title. Cheer-

Home Merchants

Home-owned stores that The Daily Mail would like to see patronized:

BEAUTY PARLORS:

Mrs. Young's
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AMUSEMENTS:

Gaiety Theatre.
Capitol Theatre.
Capital Billiard Parlor.

AUTOMOBILES:

J. Clark & Son.
Capital Garage.
D. & D. Motors.

BAKERS:

Royal Bakery.

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Kenneth Staples.
Ross Drug Co.

DRY GOODS:

R. L. Black.
Wilby's.
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COAL & FEEDS:

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ELECTRICAL WORK:

Clarence Mills.
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FARM MACHINERY:

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GROCERS:

Harold Yerxa, York Street.
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