

(March 31st, 1913.)

## The Academic Mind in Politics:

By DR. MAURICE HUTTON.\*

AT a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 31st March, Principal Hutton said:—

*Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen.*—The extraordinarily flattering terms of this postcard, "He has gained continental reputation as an after dinner speaker," reminds me of a friend of mine, a professor, who dined out at a considerable distance from the place where he was staying, and as the roads were bad he thought it necessary to take a lantern. The dinner was very good, the company very convivial, but all he knew was that he returned safe and, as he thought, with his lantern; the day after his return he was somewhat astonished to receive a telegram from his friend, saying: "Your lantern safe and burning brightly, kindly return at your convenience parrot and cage!" (Laughter.) Now, gentlemen, I hope the lantern of my reputation is burning brightly somewhere on the continent, though I have not the ghost of an idea where I left it; but I must try to discharge the obligation in connection with the parrot and cage: I mean I am to become the channel, the funnel, or the parrot for the thoughts which I catch around me from Professor Milner, and Dr. Wallace, and my other colleagues, and which I also pick up in books; and if some of them come from my own mind, still nobody knows whether these parrots, which sometimes speak so appositely, may not be fetching these thoughts sometimes from some obscure intelligence in their own brains, and whether they may not sometimes be giving their own opinions. (Laughter.)

When my friend, Dr. Colquhoun, did me the honor to suggest that I should address the Club, we happened to be considering together the work of the society called "The League of the Empire," the society started in London by Mrs. Ord Marshall, which has for its object the binding of the Empire together, through the schools and the school teachers: it is an essentially sober and simple society, which works chiefly in two ways: it endeavours to link together schools, which nature and geography have separated, by en-

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couraging the children of one school in one part of the Empire to correspond with the children of another school in another part, school children in Canada with those in England, and so on: the children will write of the conditions of life in their own school neighbourhood, of the things they are taught, of the games they play, the chief interests of the life around them, the books they read, the sights they see, the animals and flowers familiar to them, the life they look forward to, their holidays and the circuses which they enjoy, or the seaside visits which at least the poor things try to enjoy.

Obviously nothing, on one assumption, could do more to familiarize the coming citizens of this many-colored Empire with the nature of the life in other portions: nothing, on one assumption, could do more to make the many colors of the Empire stand out vividly to the eyes of those, who see only one color perhaps immediately around them: the assumption, that is, that the children can write letters, are to some extent born letter writers, able to dismiss the trivialities with which their elders fill *their* letters, able to invest even the weather, which is so trivial in our letters, with that local color which may make it significant and interesting to children in another latitude and longitude, habituated to a different climate, accustomed to see played before them on a different stage and with different scenery the eternal yet-moving drama of the seasons. This is a rather large assumption, perhaps: that the children will write out of the fulness of their hearts, and not out of the vacuity of their minds, will have the gift to read their own hearts aright, and will have yet the greater gift to put into simple words the interesting things they find there. But after all, being children, and not men and women of the world, it is at least conceivable that the children will write out of their hearts better than we do, will write more than we do what interests them, and therefore will interest their correspondents better than their parents do.

There is a second object which the League of the Empire seeks: it collects the teachers of the Empire at various centres of the Empire from time to time, and shows them the things worth seeing around those centres: the teachers of Canada and of the other overseas Dominions were in London last year, and were taken to see not merely the wealth of historic places in London of general interest, and not merely the places of special interest to school teachers, like the original school-room of Harrow with the original forms and desks, but also to Oxford and other cities accessible to London.

This possibly is an even more fruitful style of Empire building than the linking of schools by inter-Empire correspondence. No one who has crossed the ocean of recent years with hosts of intelligent teachers from the United States can doubt how blessed a work of racial peace and goodwill, of Anglo-Saxon reconciliation, has sprung from the travels of American teachers; from their seeing with their own eyes the places they have heard of, the household names which belong to that literature of Shakespeare and Milton, which is theirs as well as ours, the cities and villages from which their own ancestors came. If the history books of the United States' schools are no longer of the violent anti-British character which once marked them, the credit does not wholly belong to the upright, conscientious and truth-loving spirit of the rising generation of American historians,—though some of it belongs to them,—nor to the labors of Mr. Morse Stephens and a few other British historians on this side, who have made it their mission to combat political prejudices and revive racial sympathies—a work in which I think Mr. J. A. Macdonald, of *The Globe*, has also contributed forcefully, and for which we are indebted to him,—but it is partly due to the increase of travel in summer, among teachers, to the mother country.

It may even be that this is as great as any more purely intellectual and more purely educational advantage which travel affords. Travel is supposed of course to broaden the intellect and equip the mind; but the results in this direction are often meagre enough, except for those with a quick eye and a natural gift for observation; for others, even for cultivated people, it is often vanity and vexation of spirit: to wander from picture gallery to picture gallery—unless one understands painting—is often only a pilgrimage of pain, especially pain in the back of the neck and head, pain which is occasionally but only partially relieved by flippant bets upon the number of arrows one is going to find in the next martyrdom of that animated pincushion—as some American called him—St. Sebastian. (Laughter.) Such useless sort of travel enhances one's sense of the wisdom not of foreign travel, but of the American philosopher Thoreau, who wrote, "I have traveled widely in Concord, in my library." But real travel—not for travel's sake—but to see the places one has learned to love, to understand the authors one has learned to enjoy, the school teachers' travels to Great Britain, these travels are on a far higher plane, and bear far richer fruits, than the idle procession of the idle rich in speeding autos

from one gluttonous continental hotel to another. It is difficult for a speeding auto to educate anyone, even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it! (Laughter.) And if this travel be fruitful of good in the case of school teachers from the United States, how much more in the case of school teachers from Canada!

However, I do not propose to speak only of the League of the Empire, nor of its intention to gather the teachers of the Empire here in Toronto in 1915, or in 1916, it may be; the intention which interests Dr. Colquhoun especially and me, and I think may be of interest to other members of this Club. Rather I call your attention to this beneficent work of academic politics, of academic Empire-building, to serve as a sort of defence, it may be, or a set-off, against other tendencies of the academic mind in politics, much more ambitious and exciting, but much more dubious in wisdom and debatable in value: even though lending themselves more readily to literary treatment and to the entertainment of a general audience.

"Must college professors and schoolmasters always be visionary and unpractical?" said some New York newspaper the other day, in reference to President Wilson's inaugural; I suppose the editor meant: must their speeches always be full of hot air, and pious opinions, and counsels of perfection, and of the ideals of the millenium?

That is certainly one aspect of the academic mind in politics: the academic politician likes vague generalities and general principles more than tiresome detail or expediency or compromise; he wants to apply general principles to everything offhand at once; three such principles in particular, I think I have observed, are ever in his mouth and mind.

The academic mind is living in the Republic of Letters; the Republic of Letters has neither flag nor country; and yet it is none the worse on that account: the academic world of thought is obviously the service of humanity, not of one nation; its triumphs pass at once into all countries and into all languages: its work is the work of the impersonal human reason. But there is no contradiction between such academic work for humanity and a patriot's service of his own country: ninety-nine per cent. of such workers are doing such work directly for their own countrymen, though the work itself has no narrow national significance; though the science taught, I mean, is not British science but universal, though the mathematics are not French—except in the sense that

they have been inspired by French genius—but universal. The teacher of German, again, is teaching German as a language of universal interest and not as an agent of the Triple Alliance,—though he is sure to sympathize with the German people. Even the teacher of Greek is not there to boom the Greek claim to Janina and Monastir, while he will of course sympathize with that claim,—but to explain certain monuments and landmarks in the history of universal literature. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the Republic of Letters between the service of humanity and the service of the country to which the teacher belongs, and there is nothing to prevent the great man of science from being also like Pasteur, for example, a passionately patriotic Frenchman. But there is a natural tendency, nevertheless, in the Republic of Letters to overlook national differences, to make light of patriotism, to exalt in its place those very general terms known as Cosmopolitanism, Humanitarianism, and, in these last days, Pacifism. These are high words, and suggest thought in high altitudes: some mist, perhaps, therefore, and a little fog, perhaps, and cloud, and not unfrequently much wind. (Laughter.)

The Republican of Letters, dwelling on these mountain peaks apart, and far away from his nearest neighbors, can hardly be a violent nationalist, still less a chauvinist or a jingo. I never personally, by the way, so far as I know, met a jingo intimately: neither among my academic colleagues, of course, nor even among my other friends. I had always supposed that Jingoism was the momentary creation of the superheated atmosphere of London music halls, a creature of the hour and of an hour, a gaseous exhalation given off in the mood of after-dinner relaxation; and even then and there, even in the music halls, the jingo, if I recollect his origin, was a person, to judge from his own words, not unlike the Editor of the *Toronto Globe*: "he did not want to fight," he said, and yet he seemed to breathe an air of fighting. (Laughter.) Of course he added that "he had the ships,"—wherein perhaps my analogy,—fails—the Editor hasn't any ships, and heaven knows when Canada will have them if we wait for the Editor to fix the date! (Laughter.) I repeat that I never met any jingoes intimately, but I see so many rebukes directed towards them in the daily paper which I read daily and conscientiously, that I almost begin to suppose that they may exist somewhere somehow, and are not wholly a bogey word, a figment of the editorial imagination, so fruitful in figments and in pigments. (Laughter.)

However, to return to our Republican of Letters—he leans naturally away from Jingoism and Nationalism and in the direction of Cosmopolitanism, Humanitarianism, and Pacifism: and leaning naturally thereto, it is equally natural that he should sometimes lose his balance, and fall entirely on the Pacifist side of that fence upon which as an impartial and scientific student he is supposed to be sitting. He is obsessed, even, it may be with a horror of war: he can see nothing noble, nothing even lawful in it; no occasion that can justify it: he makes war on war!

Great and good men have felt this obsession against war. It was the moving passion of that great and good man, who added distinction to Toronto, Mr. Goldwin Smith: it explained and justified, to his mind at least, those portions of his political program with which the rest of the community, and even the lesser members of the great Republic of Letters, were out of sympathy; it was on this account that at a time when indiscriminating patriotism was more natural to us all than discriminating epithets, he was even dubbed a "pro-Boer." Other pro-Boers there have been in the Empire, equally distinguished, some of them, and equally conscientious; every variety of human nature, in fact, has been covered by that opprobrious epithet, from the single-minded Quaker-like disciple of peace to the mere cantankerous and boorish humbug, who sided with the enemy not because he loved the enemy more but because he loved his own countrymen less:—he who loves not his own countrymen whom he has seen, how shall he love the other countrymen whom he has not seen? (Laughter.)

These pacifists and humanitarians and cosmopolitans of the Republic of Letters are especially conspicuous, as one would expect, in France, the land of logic and ideas and ideals. When I was in France the public school teachers were banded together in some places into leagues to resist war, to protest against the army, to denounce patriotism: leagues of anti-patriots and anti-militarists; but it was not an ungenerous or selfish league, it was not a part of that ungenerous and selfish force called class-consciousness, which is the curse of politics; it arose naturally, if regrettably, from tendencies inevitable in the Republic of Letters. That is the first general tendency that I note in the academic mind, to cosmopolitanism, to humanitarianism, to pacifism.

Let me take another illustration of academic politics, equally the outcome of this same principle, of this love of general ideas, of broad and vague idealism, rather than of

practical details and commonplace convenience and compromise. I think the feminism of this age, the feeling that the suffrage should now be extended to women, is traceable in some measure to the academic mind. It all began of course with Plato, and was revived last century by John Stuart Mill. Now it certainly did not begin with Plato in sentiment, though John Stuart Mill revived it sentimentally: it began in logic and in the love of logic: on what principle can you withhold the vote? You cannot deny that among the lower animals difference of sex never constitutes difference of function; you cannot deny, either, the intellect and intelligence of women—every school prize-day, every University class-list, shows them to be at least our equals; then there is nothing more to be said: given equality of vote to those who have shown themselves (to say the least) our equals in intelligence: and even—if I may take a further dive into the future, and develop Plato for a moment—even if female suffrage leads to female members of Parliament and female premiers, well, gentlemen, looking at Ottawa to-day, I may ask you, why not? (Laughter.) How should there be anything in principle to keep women out of the House of Commons at Ottawa at the present moment? To sit round in a sort of sewing circle week-in and week-out, and nag at each other day and night, is there anything in that beyond the capacity of women? (Laughter.) It seems to me rather a feminine ambition and a somewhat feminine pursuit: incomparably better suited to some feminine gifts, than to the gifts of the other sex, the sex supposed to be devoted to business, to real work, to the work of sawing wood, as we say, to the work of real achievement, of discovering north and south poles, the sex supposed to be devoted to science and to action.

Well, to return to Plato's argument for feminism:—whether it be good or bad—I am not called upon here to discuss that question—at least, gentlemen, it is very academic; it is all general principle, the principle of equality; the academic and Platonic mind overlooks the prosaic and unprincipled arguments of expediency, of detail, and of compromise; and this is just what Aristotle retorted to Plato:—nothing is so delightful to me, sir, as to see the business men of Toronto listening to a controversy between Aristotle and Plato—(laughter)—of course I am only going to quote these great men; it would be madness in me, a worm of to-day, to measure or appraise their wisdom, especially when they disagree!—"I don't dispute, then," says Aristotle, drily, "the equality of women: I don't deny even that there are societies, where

they are absolutely equal in their political functions with men: you will find some such societies, Plato, I think,"—there is a certain dry vivacity in Aristotle—"in Central Africa but the analogy of the lower animals does not hold: civilized man is a monogamous and house-building animal: some one must stay at home and manage his house, while he works outside: who else can do it half as well as woman?" And so Aristotle drops the subject with a prosaic reference not to principle but to expediency: he was not an idealist like Plato, but an exponent of the sober facts of ordinary life; not so much a philosopher as a man of facts and of the world.

In the third place—a third illustration of the love of the academic mind for general principles—no one can doubt that the immense growth of Socialism to-day is due largely to the academic mind: to its love of logic and order and system: the idea of State control, of paternal government, of centralization, appeals to the idealist; the license, the chaos, the anarchy of individualism, where each man goes his own way, works out his own salvation, or drives nails into his own coffin at his own sweet will, offends the man of logic and order and system: liberty and individualism are the negation of system; slaves are free, out of business hours at least, to go to the devil as they please, to sprawl in the sunshine and get drunk; but rational citizens should do everything by system, should he nails and rivets and wheels in an ordered and unified machinery, where there is a place for everything and everything in its place; a great organism working smoothly with no waste, every part in motion, and no movement unnecessary, all in motion to the same principle and to the same end: the control of everybody and of everything by the State is the ideal of Plato and of many modern academic minds: therefore many academic people are Socialists.

I have taken as a type of the academic mind the passion for three large ideas—peace, equality, socialism: there are other features, no doubt hardly less potent and patent in that mind. Which brings me to my second landmark in this survey of the academic mind in politics.

When a nation is in the mood for change, says John Stuart Mill somewhere, the best minds lead the van of the new movement, but the second best, the average good minds—like the second best soldiers perhaps—form the rear guard, criticising and resisting movement, like the Spartan Amompharetus at the battle of Plataea, or in other words the best minds are formative, reforming, original, constructive; the second best, and the majority of good minds, are critical and

negative and contradictory and reactionary and conservative. John Stuart Mill said somewhat the same thing on another occasion in a more popular fashion and in better known words: "all stupid people," he said, "are conservative" (laughter), and Liberals ever since then have been very careful that Conservatives should not forget this; but they generally find it convenient themselves to forget that Mill was a philosopher as well as a radical, and that he added: "and all sciolists and half-educated people are Liberals." (Laughter.) That second proposition of Mill's throws a flood of light on the first: it shows why the second best mind is so contradictory and reactionary. Well, now, I will not say that the academic mind is stupid and therefore conservative; but there is nothing that it hates more than the gush and the confidence and the blather of the half-educated; and naturally so, because it is very critical and contradictory; but there is no fun and no merit in criticizing and contradicting stupid Conservatives who don't profess to be clever or to know much, who like to stick blindly to their habits and traditions, and to feel that they are just where their fathers were before them, or at least just where they have always been themselves—"here am I, same as I was fifty years ago when a boy" is the Conservative cry, and there is no fun in contradicting people like this; and so the academic mind criticizes and contradicts instead the sciolists and the half-educated people and the Liberals. (Laughter.)

The academic mind, I mean, is generally critical and negative and contradictory; the second best, not the best kind of mind; (naturally there are very few of the best minds at any one time in the world, either in the Universities or elsewhere). Of Voltaire it was said: "il a plus que personne l'esprit que tout le monde a"—he possessed and condensed in himself the spirit of his age: he was not only the child but the very voice of his age, the bellman of his age; but there cannot be many Voltaires in any nation. The academic mind is rather the mind of Carlyle or of Ruskin, the railing voice which scoffs at the age and scorns the age and rages at democracy the more eloquently and the more bitterly as democracy grows stronger; all satirists and humorists and wits, who being satirists, humorists and wits have not much faith in human nature, but a keen eye for its absurdities and its self-deception, and its conceit of knowledge without the reality, have been, with hardly an exception, conservatives and critics. They have the academic mind. All the Saturday reviewers and many of the world's historians have followed Aristo-

phanes and Cervantes, and have broken their jests upon the idealists and the reformers and the dreamers. "Lord Lytton," said an emancipated lady whom he had had the privilege to take in to dinner somewhere, "how can you be a Tory? All fools are Tories." "True, madam," replied Lord Lytton sadly, "but then all asses are radicals." (Laughter.) The academic mind like the apostolic suffers fools gladly; one is in decent company with the fools; no one can object to people so modest, silent, and faithful to the past; but the academic mind loathes asses: people who think they know without knowing, who make up for want of knowledge by strength of tongue and lung, and bray (when they have ceased, it may be, to pray) without ceasing. (Laughter.)

I have been speaking of the critical attitude of the academic and literary mind; of its dislike or distrust of the spirit of the age, and of such new ideas as are everywhere in the air and everywhere becoming popular; of its reaction towards lost causes and impossible loyalties. But after all, the literary and academic mind is human, and being human it likes to have new ideas of its own, and to make its own discoveries, and to start new political or literary fashions of its own, especially if they be strange to the ordinary mind and very unpopular; these new fashions in literature or politics, I mean, have at least this in common with academic conservatism and academic resistance to the time-spirit, that they have in them the same element of contradiction, or resistance to the popular. I think I can give you some concrete illustrations of this special variety of contradictoriness of the academic mind, that starts some new and impossible cult, of this love for new but already lost causes and new but equally impossible loyalties. There was lately written a book by an eminent Oxford scholar on "Politics and Monarchy," in which he proposes a new and extraordinary scheme for the government of the Empire,—he would unite all the parts of the Empire in an Imperial federation, which should be governed by the King himself! Here is a most promising academic cause surely: a cause lost before it is even born: a cause offering splendid material for impossible loyalty.

As another example,—this time from literature, rather than from politics—there was an American poet, or alleged poet at any rate, who ran counter to all the old ideas of poetry and started a new style of his own, which looked to other people like bad prose, and therefore was called by its author a new style of poetry. (Laughter.) You recognize, I see, Walt Whitman (the least of whose offences was to call him-

self "Walt," when all sensible people so-named call themselves "Walter). His own countrymen, those masses of business-like and matter-of-fact people, were on the whole rather ashamed of him; but some English academic persons and literary men, on the lookout for a mare's nest, took him up and discovered him and made a cult of him, just out of contradictoriness, to show their superiority to the judgment of the public, and now we have in literature this disease which may be called Whitmania—just the product of academic and literary perversity! (Laughter.)

I have been talking, gentlemen, of the foibles of the academic intellect: of its weakness for dazzling generalities, for general principles, for cosmopolitanism, equality, socialism; secondly, of its contradictoriness, of its dislike and distrust of popular half-knowledge; of its reactionary conservatism as against the popular spirit of the age; thirdly, of the same contradictoriness displayed in another form, in the form of novel theories political or literary, which have the same quality, that they contradict popular taste and popular opinion, and are just as unpopular as the old-fashioned politics which the academic reactionary loves to defend.

Yet after all, gentlemen, the academic mind is not seriously out of touch, probably, with the commercial or business mind in politics, with the mind I see before me: it distrusts just as much as you do the real elements of danger in our politics,—those catch words, those watchwords, those shibboleths or gags of the newspapers on both sides, those bogey words which beset and besot our country about election times;—you all know them,—we have all of us burnt our fingers at those fires at some time or other; on the one side "patriotism," "loyalty," "pro-Boer," these are the cries which are used as bogey words; and on the other side "tribute," "conscription," "jingoism." I have chosen three on each side, and I will suggest a seventh—a seventh candle—the mystical number seven—and I will leave it to you to decide, each for himself, which side abuses it most, uses it most as a bogey word: the mystical and blessed word "emergency" (laughter)—the modern and up-to-date "Mesopotamia" of the old lady. These bogey words beg every question, on which they are brought out, darken counsel with hot air and words without knowledge, settle nothing, but raise a dust and din to confuse the issue and blot the sun out of the political heavens and confuse simple hearers; nay, they do far worse: they discredit democracy, and make it seem in danger of becoming the most futile, and the most foolish, and the most un-

manly and contemptible form of tyranny, the tyranny of half-baked popular phrases. It is inevitable when the country is young, when democracy is young, when education is young, when everything is young, and therefore raw and crude in proportion as it is eager and hopeful, it is inevitable that that this danger should arise; but woe to the newspapers and yellow journals which trade upon these catchwords! (Applause.)

Well, Mr. Chairman, I apologize for this diatribe. We have had two political addresses lately, one on each side; so I thought the Club might bear another on neither side; therefore I have tried to-day to pour a little oil on the troubled waters of politics, to administer a little oil to each side, and, if you please, a little vinegar also, to improve my salad;—professors are a simple folk, and live largely on salads, (laughter)—so I serve a little academic salad, just to relieve your intellectual palates, troubled, it may be, on two recent occasions, by a diet too highly spiced, too heating, too stimulating, for the digestions of a Club, so simple in their tastes and food as the gentlemen I see before me. (Long applause.)