(*March 9*)

A Canadian in Paris.

By Principal Maurice Hutton.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "A Canadian in Paris," Principal Maurice Hutton, of University College, said:

Mr. Chairman,—I am going to try to put before you briefly in half an hour the half dozen things which seem to me to strike a Canadian or an Englishman most strongly when he spends half a year in Paris.

And first, I think, comes the deep divisions of French thought and French society: French logic is very deep and very inexorable, and, like all logic, sometimes very narrow. It divides with a hatchet those problems and those "causes" which seem to the hazy but wider instincts of the Englishman to melt into one another and to be indivisible, and to be incapable therefore of solution except by those compromises which the genius of England loves. And first and foremost a Frenchman seems to be of necessity a "clerical" or an "anti-clerical." I am speaking to a body of Canadians, but I don't suppose in this whole body there is an anti-clerical present to-day, and I don't suppose there is a clerical: is not this battle of the Latin races, of France and Italy and of Spain and Portugal unmeaning to us? Nor is it all the fault of the Roman Catholic Church: for the Church exists, but there is only the semblance of the division, in Ireland; and besides, this division is not only in religion or in church matters—it may be said to begin there for convenience: it does not end there.

Be that as it may, in Paris the fight is for the present irreconcilable. The clericals of some years ago by great efforts erected a gorgeous church on the heights of Montmartre, the Church of the Sacré Cœur which dominates Paris and stands out conspicuous for miles,—you see it from the

*Principal Hutton of University College, Toronto, has long been esteemed as a thoughtful and entertaining "after-dinner" speaker. Though as thoroughly steeped in the academic side of life as anyone, he is in touch with the world, and lights up any company he chooses to enter. Prior to addressing the Canadian Club, he has just returned from a year's leave of absence, a considerable part of which he spent in France, where he made a study of French political and social problems.

Port de Solferino even. The anti-clericals resented its building profoundly, and promptly the municipality, which is anti-clerical, retaliated: within fifty yards of the door of the new church the municipality erected a rival structure, a monument to the last martyr of free thought, the Chevalier Labatre, I think, burnt by the Church about one hundred years before: you fancy in your simplicity as you approach that he is a Christian martyr; no, he is a martyr of free thought, placed there to give the lie eternally by his presence to the Christianity of the Church before which he stands. Religious bitterness must be very bitter, the odium theologicum, and the perhaps greater odium atheologicum, must be very odious when such things are done, or else the spirit of controversy is very childish and very crude. But however it be, it is all very French.

Or, again, within a few hundred yards of Notre Dame stands another hero and martyr of free thought, Étienne Dolet. In the floods of last winter, attributed by the clerical and royalist organs to the present Government and to the incapacity of some Jewish engineers, the water mounted to St. Étienne's feet and threatened to swamp him. The papers became full of appropriate squibs. *"Cet homme,"* said one wit, *"n'avait aucune verve: brulé dans la chair par l'église, noyé dans la pierre par les libres penseurs."*—"This man had no joy in life: burned in the flesh by the Church, and drowned in stone by the freethinkers." And in that jest lies a real dilemma for the thinkers of France.

A professor at the university said to a friend of mine that even a professor must take sides: he must either burn his intellectual fingers still by siding with the church and roasting heretics (albeit in a modern and diluted fashion) or he must submerge himself in the shallow and muddy waters of atheism. For instance, there was the question of poor Joan of Arc before the public when I was there, and the question of her visions: she was a saint on the high road to canonization for the clerical; she was just a lunatic to the anti-clerical and intellectual; and saints much greater than poor simple Joan are just lunatics to the narrow logic of the French "intellectual." To the lazy, hazy English mind, as in English proverbs, genius and hallucination may naturally meet: the sublime and the ridiculous are but a foot apart. The Frenchman abhors so slovenly, so mystical a habit of thought.

I turn to French politics. The Republic, said Theiss, divides us least: it still does; but how deep nevertheless, even under a Republic, are the divisions. Everything and every-

where is politics. "There is no newspaper here," said one of my students to me in Paris. There was not: there were only political pamphlets going daily down to the rock bottom of philosophy and politics, discussing daily the philosophy of monarchy, the philosophy of republicanism; most able, most philosophical, most bitter, and most admirable reading,—infinitely better reading than *The Globe* and *The Mail*, even less tame than *The News*, but not newspapers, only political pamphlets.

Politics everywhere! The Steinheil trial was on when I was there. At the bottom of it, as you know, was politics. The play of *"Chanticler"* came on, and even there was politics: the Royalist papers roundly denounced it; it took me some time to find out why, but I gradually learned that the same man wrote some years ago a Bonapartist play, *"L'Aiglon"*: that damned him! or again, a still more recondite explanation, —the Jews who were guilty, as the Royalists said, of this flood in Paris, were trying to distract public attention from their misdoings by enchanting the populace with a witty, delightful play, not written by a Jew, not suggestive therefore even indirectly of Jewish iniquities, and the Royalist papers, having discovered this Jewish plot, jumped heavily on the play; for the Frenchman, like the Athenian of old, is too clever by half: no suspicion is too wild to be harbored in his ingenious imagination.

We British have no imagination and no logic in our politics; they are just luke-warm,—tame compromise. "These wretched islanders," said the elder Mirabeau, "do not know and will never know till their miserable system had brought them to utter ruin, whether they are living under a monarchy or a republic, a democracy or an oligarchy." I believe the case is even worse with us than that: we not only do not know, we do not even care, so long as things are fairly quiet and statesmen will patch up some decent compromise; our distrust is for the fanatics, the extremists, the logicians.

The flood again flowed full of politics. The "Camelots du Roi," the Royalist democratic organization of the people, organized relief for the sufferers; but the relief became a Royalist propaganda, and not unnaturally it was resented, and often resisted by the Republican magistrates; even in works of charity the voice of faction was never silent.

It was an open question whether the flood would not have upset the Republic if it lasted; possibly it is hard for a stranger to judge how firmly the present system is seated. It was said by the Royalists to be very insecure; it was said that even

before the flood, about Christmas time, all the autos entering Paris one night were searched for the Duc d'Orléans, Philippe VIII, as they called him. It was probably a newspaper scare, even as the flood itself flowed much more on newspaper than in Paris, and in imagination than in reality.

But the French are continually in extremes. The present Premier—no, you will see that this paper was written some little time ago—the last Premier, the Premier of yesterday, was a Socialist three years ago, breaking policemen's heads, —yesterday he was calling out the police and saying things to make the Socialists jump; three years ago he was shedding policemen's blood, yesterday he was shedding Socialist ministers. Always extremes.

The bitterness of labor and capital seems to me greater than elsewhere. The anti-capitalist paper, *"La Guerre Sociale,"* exults frankly in every policeman injured, in every *"sabotage,"* in every chance of damaging the present Government of France in foreign war. France's wars are French workmen's opportunities.

The bitterness of the police and the magistracy on the one side meets the bitterness of the private citizen and of the Socialist on the other side. Sometimes I have supposed all the citizens in Paris were university students, they seemed so hostile to the police. There is the other side, the extreme officiousness of the police. The case of Liabœuf occurred while I was there,—you heard of it even here. I read it carefully. I believe I am right in saying it was a difficult case, a mixed case. The young fellow was not originally an Apache, he was originally rather deeply sinned against by an unscrupulous police, but he was just an Apache to the friends of order, just a victim and a martyr to *"La Guerre Sociale."* There is a charming novel of Monsieur France, *"L'Affaire de Crainguevilles,"* written on the officiousness of the police, and the tendency of the magistrates to believe the police against the word of anyone else.

I take another theme: the scientific zeal of the French, the keen intelligence, the scholarship, the love of books, the spirit which is materialized in Paris in bricks and mortar in the Pasteur Institute, in the endless free lectures of the Sorbonne and the College of France, lectures attended every day by hosts of people, so that police protection was necessary at first when poor little Abbé Loisy began his lectures on the Higher Criticism,—interest and excitement ran so high. This particular excitement had cooled by my time; only forty quiet persons like myself listened to the quiet lectures as he ex-

pounded the diversities of the ancient view of sacrifice. There is the *Institut* again, and the forty Immortals, who meet and read papers to one another and shed tears together over the exquisite pathos and eloquence of the papers.

Pasteur himself illustrates this, the noblest side of French life: when Germany defeated France he was deeply dejected and he talked continually of revenge: by revenge he meant to set French science on a higher pinnacle than any other science, to restore to France at least her intellectual throne; and he set himself to work with redoubled French patience and French genius, and had his noble revenge: he set French medical science above any other; it was a thoroughly French revenge.

The French Chamber of Deputies illustrates the same side of the French mind. One of my former students took me there to hear Monsieur Jaures, the Socialist leader, on the question of elementary education. From a long speech of over an hour I appreciated greatly a very acute and sensible appreciation of the Greek historian Herodotus, as a man of discursive intelligence, a many-sided intellect; but I thought when M. Jaures sat down that I could name a modern intelligence not less discursive and irrelevant than that of Herodotus, but I could not imagine myself on such an intellectual peregrination in the matter-of-fact atmosphere of the British House of Commons.

I come to a third and different feature of the Latin mind: its naturalism. The French is an absolutely natural mind. With all the intellect and keenness of the French there is also the spirit of the child, or, as Plato preferred to say, of the natural man, the democratic man, everything by starts and nothing long, mankind's epitome, the spoilt child, the *"enfant terrible"* of Europe, or the vain beauty, tormenting with her whims her masculine admirers in London or St. Petersburg, —"How am I looking to-day? Is this style of government becoming to me?" "Work out the man," says our sober national poet, "and let the ape and tiger die." But the Parisian has no idea of losing the picturesqueness of life by losing the ape and the tiger. The ape and the tiger are always there in the Parisian, said Voltaire, who evidently, as we can see from his works, knew something of the inner life of these picturesque and interesting creatures, who was himself a susceptible Frenchman, alert to all the passions that still disturb with echoes from distant ages the unstable equilibrium of our double nature.

This reference to the naturalism of the French suggests the often talked-of "gaiety" of Paris, a fourth theme. The

gaiety of Paris is in part an undeserved reproach, due to the visitors to Paris from the United States and from Great Britain. Every visitor finds the Paris he deserves, as every nation is said to have the Jews whom it deserves, and these gentry find Paris in a few notorious music halls, mere shambles and slop pails of sodden sensuality, which are not run for Frenchmen, but for those visitors from England and the United States. A Frenchman does not take his pleasures sadly; he is much too much a child and light-hearted; but I doubt if he takes them there.

A more serous charge against Paris is that its real theatres are so seldom open to our young women, to our women generally; and that is strange, for the Frenchman is a domestic creature and enjoys domestic life; you see him happy with his wife and children in the parks or at the cafés, as much or more than you see the same thing here or in London; but I suppose that the Frenchman, while he practises the domestic virtues, finds them very dull in theory, very poor material for literature, and he thinks so much of theory and of literature. Now, an Englishman of course is the exact opposite: his practical instinct and his political insight and his moral aspiration, what the Frenchman calls his hypocrisy, all combine to make him exalt in theory the domestic virtues; they do not lead him to practise them quite in the same degree. However it be, the French find these virtues too tame and obvious for literary treatment; the opposite vices, conversely, are racy, entertaining, diverting; therefore from his theatres he demands, and even his wife demands with him, the themes which shock the political or prudish Puritan of Great Britain,—the theme of *le mari qui trompe sa femme* and *la femme qui trompe son mari*,—and on this theme, a theme rather threadbare anyhow in a wicked world, they dwell with a most damnable iteration. During all the weeks I passed in Paris, I saw but one play perfectly innocent and perfectly charming, full of humor and of pathos, and acted with all the perfection of French acting, the play called *"Sire,"* which ran for several weeks at the Comédie Francaise, and was a joy to see and to remember.

The French practise the domestic virtues, but they will not sacrifice their scoffing spirit for them, nor even will they make more serious sacrifices on their behalf. It was observed during the Reign of Terror, it was observed again during the later Reign of Terror in 1870, when the bloody-minded Versaillese overturned the poor blood-guilty Commune, that few sacrifices of life or liberty were made for the domestic virtues.

Not a son (it was said) rose to avenge his father, not a husband this in a country where swords would once have leaped from their scabbards for the sake of a mistress or an epigram. band rose to defend his wife, not a father to rescue his child.

If there be any truth in the picture, I suppose the reason is that this same dullness of these essential but prosiac virtues paralyses the arm and chills the bloods of Frenchmen. They find them so prosaic, prudish, Protestant, and Puritanical. So British, these domestic virtues.

I think there is a deep significance in that scorn of British prudery: for prudery, like British compromise and common sense, is instinctive, not reasoned, not logical; and the French demand reason, and logic; they are not satisfied with instinct, and they hate the slovenly thinking which belongs to races who are not concerned to think carefully, who are content to be governed by instinct in place of logic, and to be very full of shame and prudery because they are primary instincts.

To return to Parisian gaiety—Paris may be gay in a sense; gaiety has its turn at least; I do not think it is happy. I think it is less happy by far than London, which is a fifth milestone in my survey of Paris. "When the soul is orphaned," says Plato, "then the flatterer's voice is loud." Paris is orphaned in soul; and the flatterer—in Plato's parable—is the body and its passions; and these do not make a people or an individual happy, but they make them or they make him gay with a fitful gaiety. And so Paris has a certain fitful gaiety, but is not happy, for Paris is orphaned in soul for it has not found possible religious creed, only two equally impossible, a theism on the one side, and a mediaeval Catholicism on the other. Paris is orphaned in soul, for it has not yet found a satisfactory political system: for the present system has this immense evil that there is no figure, however simple and humdrum, however commonplace and unheroic, which can be idealized and admired as the incarnation of the glory of France, no figure which can stand apart from politics and just be France. In England, even in Italy, thousands of simple people, women and children, not to say men also, surround the reigning monarch with the romance which comes of a simple and faithful heart; however obscure, humdrum or commonplace, they are proud of him or her, to the good always of the romancer, to the good no doubt often of the object of romance.

But in Paris, where the President has been but a party leader, the accursed party system and the bitterness of parties, and the irreverence of Frenchmen, make such innocent respect, make the wholesome illusions of constitutional monarchy—if

they be illusions—impossible. The British visitors were shocked at the scoffs thrown in Paris at Britain's cherished names during the Boer war. They need not have minded; the scoffs were no worse, not more irreverent, not one whit more indecent or coarse than the jibes flung daily over their own Presidents. There is no shelter for a President under the Republican system in France, no reverence for his place. If anyone doubts the wisdom of constitutional monarchy, if anyone believes in an elective monarch or President, let him go to Paris and learn better.

Paris is orphaned, and it is unhappy also, I think, and it is partly because it is conscious of poverty; not of the intense grinding poverty of some parts of London, but of an all-pervading poverty; it is conscious that there is no great mass of comfort and of comfortable people, such as are found in Canada, in Great Britain, and in the United States. It was rather pathetic to hear the people talk of it. "We are not rich here," they seemed to say, "we can not do much, we are just scholars, workers, students, and we are proud of that, we have not indeed anything else, we can only be intellectual and natural, but we try to be those things: neither dull nor hypocritical."

I think it is this poverty which makes Paris seem less democratic than London. It is not less democratic, it is more so. The logic of the people insists on liberty, fraternity, equality, as our people never have and perhaps never will; but the French Parliament will never go the lengths of our Parliament in social betterment. They will not vote old age pensions, for instance, except on a contributory system: their French thrift resists the extravagance of the British Parliamentary system, which is prepared to undermine thrift; their memories of '48 resist the idea, for France tried then some of the extreme fancies which Great Britain is only approaching now; I think their poverty also makes them resist this experience. They don't protect labor, as it is protected in Great Britain; for example, the hard night work of the bakers was just being noticed and canvassed when I was in Paris; and people were surprised, in the fierce divisions of French society, that the Archbishop of Paris should lend his help in the agitation against it, or that the agitation should seem to gain ground, for people are accustomed to work hard, to slave, in Paris. It has not occurred to them to so pity the workers, as the mass of comfortable, well-off people in the United States and Great Britain often pity them, and therefore agitate for social betterment.

Paris is not a happy city; it is distracted and poor, the people haven't time or heart to be happy or helpful or sociable like the average Canadian or American or Britisher: life is too hard for people to be as obliging as they are here. You do not meet smiling faces in the street cars, you do not meet obliging people there. If you are a young girl and pretty, of course it makes a difference, but otherwise there is a perpetual wrangle in the cars for one's rights and a perpetual wrangle for the seats. And there are a thousand and one rules which the Frenchman in his logical spirit has drawn up to settle these wrangles; and this makes them seem a fussy people. For instance, I gave up trying to rent the apartment I preferred, for I saw it would take six weeks to get the lease drawn up; so I rented instead from an American, who took four minutes and a half to write one. The lessor had a keen sense of business, and was not a whit more inclined to give away an apartment than a Frenchman, but being an American did the business in an American way, expeditiously and naturally and without red tape.

I gave up sending packages of mail to this country,—it was not worth the trouble: it took a whole morning to get a package through: first of all I had the wrong sort of string, secondly the wrong variety of paper, thirdly insufficient duplicate and triplicate invoices, fourthly an inadequate number of seals; the officials were wrapt up in the mint, anise and cummin of the Post Office Department, and it took an age to unwrap them. Life became too short for this, so naturally I ceased to send these things, or employed instead that supernumerary and extraordinary tradesman, who exists only in France, I should think, and who is constructed for these very emergencies,—the *emballeur* or packer, who has studied all the thirty-nine articles of the Post Office creed, and is the hierophant of its labyrinthine mysteries.

A final cause for Parisian unhappiness I think, and a final feature in the life of Paris, a seventh candle in my candlestick, is the sense among the people that the non-Parisian elements and the non-French elements even are so prominent now in Paris. There is an endless tirade in the opposition papers, with which I feel myself in sympathy, about the four estates which run France: the Jews, the Protestants, the Free Masons, and the Strangers,—none of them typically French; none redolent of the soil; interlopers more or less; rich cosmopolitans, not French at heart; citizens of the world, living in Paris for its galleries and gaieties, its theatres and politics; not of France, so flaunting their foreign gold and foreign

comfort, that even the satisfaction of sharing these things with them becomes but a bitter coating to the pill and cannot make it very palatable. "It might be better to be poorer and more French," they seem to say; I thought that myself. I would like the city better, had it been even poorer—and God knows it is poor and sordid and squalid enough already in great patches—if only therewith it had more local color, if it were more French and less American and cosmopolitan; if only one could escape, for example, that vile and hateful Rue de l'Opéra,—to quote my friend Mr. Waldron — where villainous pimps and panders, the "putrescent scum" of all creation, pounce upon the Anglo-Saxon visitor, for whom alone they exist, and thrust upon him their indecent postcards and pornographic photographs; where almost every man is an American or an Englishman. Long since, indeed, the Hudson and the Thames have emptied into the Seine,—"*Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes*"—and though you may still see the proud river beneath its prouder bridges, flowing in the clear air of autumn, with the Louvre on the right bank, flooded with afternoon sunlight, with the noble towers of Notre Dame in the centre, and with the *Institut* on the left bank, and all the picturesquely narrow streets thereto adjoining—Rue de Seine, Rue de Mazarin, Rue Bonaparte, Rue Delphine, Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie,—though the river be at its best, though delicious hot chestnuts are sold at the street corners and cheap wine in every café, though second-hand book stalls are open by the score along the river side, and the tone and air and even the smells of a literary and learned and book-loving people are all about you—with now and then an awful whiff of garlic—in such an autumn and in such an hour and mood one wishes one had been born some sixty years before,—one wishes one could have seen Paris when it was still Paris, and when it was still more truly French.