

The Youth in the Flophouse

(By Lewis Milligan)

Several readers have taken exception to my recent article entitled "Mind Your Own Business," in which I referred to a series of articles in a Toronto paper dealing with the human interest side of the unemployment situation in that city. The words "Mind your own business" were addressed to the reporter by a youth with whom he tried to sympathize when he overheard him sobbing to himself one night in a flophouse. In my comment I said: "Somehow I admired the lad's blunt independence. It was his business..... he was going to see it through. He wept, but he did not whine."

The reporter told of other young men who had come to the city seeking jobs on the construction of the new underground street railway. He said that he found that some of the unemployed were shiftless and content to sit around in the employment offices and blame everybody but themselves, particularly the government and social system, for their position. My article concluded as follows:

"It may well be that we are running into a brief period of unemployment, and everything possible should be done to prevent it and assist those who are honestly seeking work. We have all had our hard times and can sympathize with those who are passing through them, but there is no cause for alarm if every Canadian will mind his own business, and mind it well. As the above cited cases show, the problem is largely an individual one."

It was to this paragraph that my critics took exception. Gordon Norman of Bridgetown (N.S.), accuses me of being callous and "aloof," and he concludes: "I would solicit another article containing a true account of his (my) struggles and hard times referred to which led him to sympathize so deeply with those who are passing through them." Well, that is a large order and, like the lad in the flophouse, I feel like replying, "Mind your own business." But I detect a touch of sarcasm in Mr. Norman's request, as if he doubted whether I ever had any struggles or hard times. I can assure him that I have had plenty of both and would be glad to match stories with him, but I long ago learned that people are bored with hard-luck stories, because they have enough of their own and want to forget them.

I recall one instance of this very many years ago when I was telling a friend of a particularly raw deal I had handed out to me. Before I got to the end of my story I suddenly realized that my friend was not listening. His mind was far away, and I felt that he regarded me as a grouch. There is no greater bore than the man who goes around with a grouch, and no more futile person than the man who nurses one. So I have tried, not always successfully to keep my grouches to myself and to distill poetry from the bitter and rotten fruits of life. It is a delightful pastime.

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you;

Weep, and you weep alone," wrote Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and she distilled that from experience. One of my own first youthful attempts at poetry was a long effusion entitled "Man's Lot." It was for the most part a melancholy affair, but it enabled me to think through the sorrows of mankind and it finished on a note of triumph over them all. That is what poetry and religion do or should do for us. Dante descended into the depth of Hell, but ascended by purgatorial steps to the heights of vision in his Paradiso.

Life on this earth is like that, if we accept it as a journey and face its hardships with faith and courage, and "keep right on to the end of the road." We don't have to wait for the next world for Heaven or Hell—they are both within us. Doctor Samuel Johnson summed up the problem of human happiness in these few lines:

"How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find."

Markham Organize Horticultural Society

Committees were appointed and projects for the summer months outlined at a meeting of the newly organized Markham Horticultural Society last night. Paul Angle, Richmond Hill, was guest speaker. President Russel Wideman said membership now totals more than 50. Committees appointed were Nick Schouten, Roy Crosby and A. G. Shea; projects; H. Rolph, C.F. Todds, Mrs. T. W. Whetter and N. Schouten, flower show; B. Newell, Miss E. Reesor and O. R. Staler, program; Miss K. Craig, Mrs. C. Chambers and Mrs. Russell Wideman, refreshments; Miss K. Craig, Charles Chambers and John Whetter, membership.

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