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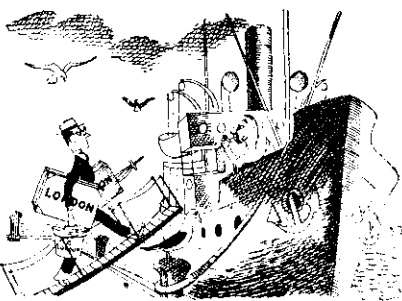
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O, to be in England!



I'M going to Cambridge in a few months' time. And at the moment I don't feel like coming back to New Zealand when they've fitted me out with my Degree. I'm going to Cambridge because I've got a scholarship that will help to keep me there, and because I should like to be a competent and qualified economist. But I'm going there mainly because I want to get to England, where I think I will find certain things which are of importance to me in the kind of life I want to lead, and which I have been unable to find in New Zealand.

No man could be absolutely sure of himself in a matter like this. It's hard enough to evaluate any complex personal emotion with the impartiality of a surgeon, let alone an emotion which is as intimate as the feeling of a mother for her child. I have lived in New Zealand for the twenty-eight years of my life, and I respect so many things and people in this country, and hate so many other things and people, that I will never be quite certain that my judgments on the subject are true for anyone but myself. But I'm going to lay what I think is a pretty safe bet on the degree of detachment I hope I have achieved.

Six years ago I left this country for Cambridge. I was glad to go, because my then attitude towards New Zealand was coloured by the personal disappointments and microcosmic tragedies common to all young men in their very early twenties, and Cambridge seemed like Samarkand. When the war broke out, and I had to return to New Zealand from Panama, I was as bitter as a child deprived of a plaything. And when the ship sailed back into Auckland Harbour, and I looked dejectedly at the land, I saw my own failures rather than the country in which I had grown up. I think I understand that attitude now, and I'm rather ashamed of it. But I still feel to-day, as strongly as I feel anything, that exile will be worth while.

... He never could recapture
That first fine careless rapture.

I HAVE waited now for six years. When I close my eyes, I can see the gateway of my College quite clearly, with its big Tudor rose and its carved daisies, and the absurd spotted antelopes prancing on their hind legs to support the Royal Arms. I have seen many curious Cambridges in dreams, and the already fine division between sleeping and waking life has become so blurred that it

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Confession of a Brain About to Export Itself

(Written for "The Listener" by RONALD L. MEEK)

will be hard for me to believe that I am really there when I actually see the odd little city. I shall dine in the Great Hall; I shall hear the bells of Great St. Mary's; I shall listen to the Madrigal Society's singing "Draw on, Sweet Night," as its members drift down the Cam in punts on an evening in May Week. But I think it will be the opportunity of hearing men like Keynes, and talking to men like Maurice Dobb, that I will value more than anything else—even more than the architecture of King's Chapel and the other lovely things I have seen in books and on picture-postcards. And if that remark sounds patronising, remember that there are the six lost years of the war to be made up.

There will be wonderful things to be seen there, of course. "Say, is there Beauty yet to find, and Certainty, and Quiet kind?" asked Rupert Brooke, sitting in a Berlin cafe in the mad days of 1912 and pining for Grantchester. At the time when God and love and Shelley were coming upon me like great lights, I cherished a splendid ambition to punt along the Cam at Grantchester, reading Rupert Brooke and listening to Beethoven on a portable gramophone. I should still like to go to Grantchester in a punt, and shall certainly do so; but my attachment to Rupert Brooke is now on about the same plane as my rather morbid fondness for old letters and pressed flowers, and I think I might now prefer Bach to Beethoven as a punting partner.

And there will also be the knowledge that so many of the darlings of history have walked and studied in those same sheltered places. It would be merely silly to try to ward off the perfectly valid emotions which that knowledge must bring forth.

But there hath passed away a glory from the earth. I can no longer feel anything but embarrassment in the company of revelling undergraduates, because a hard kernel of condescension has grown in my attitude towards them. In the same way, the incredible beauties of Cambridge, in which no one is ever disappointed, will be more a frame for the picture than the picture itself.

* * *

Far brighter than the gaudy melon-flower.

WHY do I want to leave a well-paid and congenial job, in a comfortable well-fed country where it is easy to gain a certain notoriety, and go to a dangerous and hungry land where I am a complete stranger? My friends often ask me that, jocularly, because most of them know that there are more valuable things in life than food or fame. But I often ask it of myself, and with perfect sincerity. Why does this desire to escape from New Zealand, despite its mountains and its brave social legislation, sometimes rock sensitive people like a wind?

This desire to escape is, I am sure, due only partly to the knowledge that New Zealand must of necessity do as best it can with a largely second-hand culture, and that this culture is usually worn as some women wear little dogs. I haven't seen, and wouldn't be likely to see in New Zealand for a long time, the ballet *Petrouchka*. But I have an excellent set of records of Stravinsky's music for the ballet, and books which describe it minutely, and I don't think that when I see it in England I shall learn much more about it than I know at present. I can hear the best English orchestras on my radio-gramophone; I can read books that are published in England a few weeks after they appear; and I can study Mr. Bevin's speeches on foreign affairs



"Say, is there Beauty yet to find?"; St. John's Chapel, Cambridge, from the Cam

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