

The Birth of Red and White

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While I appreciate the honor of an invitation to contribute an article for the twenty-fifth anniversary number of *Red and White*, it is with a good deal of diffidence that I undertake to do so. Preparing essays for the erudite and formal magazines of the East is just a little unusual for a missionary on the Western Plains. However, it is some consolation to know that there are others among our Alumni, scattered here and there over the Continent, who today are sharpening their quills, and settling down to the same task. It is rather alarming to think that twenty-five years have passed over our heads since the foundation of our magazine. What a strange thing is time! what a precious commodity. Are the students of today trying to appreciate its value? I hope so. I wonder how many of the students of today know that *Red and White* is not St. Dunstan's first attempt at publishing a College paper. How many know the history of the *Collegium*? The best information I have on this point tells me that this college paper was published between the years 1885 and 1895, and that the editors were men named Ready and Sullivan but, of course, the students of that day will have more exact information. What happened to the *Collegium* and why was it allowed to die? Perhaps some of the students of that day will tell us. However that may be, I am prepared to say that in the late nineties and early years of this century there was always present in the back of the student mind the thought of resurrecting the *Collegium*. A sort of slogan like "Remember the Maine." During my first year at S. D. C. (1900-1901) I heard the thought frequently expressed, but just why no active steps were taken to carry the idea into effect, I cannot say.

During the winter of 1906-07 I was enrolled as a student of the Normal school at Regina, one of a class of seventy-five teachers, all newcomers in the West, and eagerly preparing themselves to teach in the new Province of Saskatchewan. Those young men and women had the social sense highly developed and, as a consequence, the Friday evening meetings were anything but dull. Someone suggested a College paper, and the idea caught

on immediately. No scheme was too ambitious or grandiose for the atmosphere of boundless optimism that pervaded the West in the first decade of the present century. To direct the destinies of this great literary project, we chose a young man named L. E. Glover. This Glover was a live wire and under his management the paper idea was a success from start to finish. One week I had the distinction of scoring a hit with a parody, "Abou Ben Adhem," that made me famous for a day. Years afterward when Mr. Glover became a prominent business man in Calgary we used to laugh about the parody that opened with the pious wish: "F. Leslie Neeley, may his tribe increase."

In the late fall of that year, 1907, a kindly Providence, aided and abetted by some good friends, directed my steps to St. Dunstan's College, as it was then called. Here I found the question of a college magazine being discussed, but it was not until the autumn of 1909 that the proposition received very serious consideration. There was at St. Dunstan's at that time a young man, S. J. MacDonald, who had the unusual experience of having spent some time at the Seminary. An enthusiastic student of English, inclined to literary tastes, he had time to flirt with new ideas and his ability was generally recognized. The hour for resurrecting the *Collegium* had struck. It was now or never. Mr. MacDonald was looked upon as a leader among the older boys because of his age and seniority in studies. With the Regina experience in the back of my mind, the desire to resurrect the *Collegium* blossomed forth afresh. So as casually as possible, I suggested to MacDonald that this would be a good time to start a paper. He was inclined to favour the idea, and advised me to see the Rector. Now a visit to the Rector's room was not something to be lightly undertaken, and I made the journey with some nervousness and trepidation, yet sustained at the same time by a strong conviction.

To my delight the Rector received my idea with favor and told me that I might canvass public opinion and try to secure the support of the Seniors for my plan. Joyfully I brought the report of my interview to Mr. MacDonald and right gladly we went to work to gain recruits. A notice was posted in the recreation hall calling a meeting for Sunday, November 14th. At this meeting which was held in the Chemistry room (S. E. corner classroom

on the third floor) there developed a good deal of opposition to our plan. Our opponents (and they numbered some of the most influential students) argued that our scheme was impracticable from every standpoint. The cost would be prohibitive. Who would think of advertising in such a paper? The students would not write for it, and without the literary contributions of the students of what use would such a publication be, and so forth. To break the deadlock some one proposed another meeting for a later date. So it was decided to adjourn the meeting till the following Sunday. Accordingly the meeting reconvened at the same place on Sunday, November 21st, at 2 p.m. At this meeting the opposition was as strong as ever. But the proponents of the project had their pride to think of and refused to give up. Like drowning men grasping at straws, we conjured up all kinds of arguments. I can recall trying to make use of the argument, if it may be dignified as such; "we have gone so far with this business that we cannot very well drop it now." That argument, however, met with the crushing retort: "Of course we can. We have taken no concrete action yet. Let us drop it while there is yet time." After a thorough airing of the question a vote was taken and the yeas were found to have the majority. The logical choice for editor was, of course, Mr. MacDonald. I was offered the position of Sporting Editor, but did not feel qualified for that office as I had never taken a great interest in sports. So the sports were intrusted to Hugh Cavanagh, of happy memory, and I was to have the department of humor. I named my page "The Funny Man." But Cavanagh, too, should have some outlet for the exuberance of his wit and humor, so he opened a column and called it "The Jungle." Hugh's chum, Russell Smith, took the job of business manager; and Michaud, of New Brunswick fame, "entered the cabinet without portfolio," so to speak. He agreed to be "deputy minister" in the business office. Our successors paid us the much appreciated compliment of retaining the headings for the various departments until recently when a change was made which I considered long overdue.

If I could I should like to express the thanks of the first staff to all our successors for the good care they have taken of our child. They caught the torch which we threw to them, and passed it on from hand to hand, never

extinguished, and never dimmed. Each staff for a brief spell has worn the mantle of duty and responsibility and has passed it on, frequently better than they found it.

The first issue of the magazine was at Christmas 1909. The cover was a dark green and we did not quite fancy it, but the Easter number came out in a white dress, and every one was satisfied. The intention of the first staff of editors was to name the magazine *Collegium* but this idea was vetoed by the Rector, Father Campbell, who preferred the name which the paper now carries.

With the exception of the Seminary years I think I have read every number of the *Red and White* with avid interest. That your magazine today is an improvement on that of 1909, I think every one will admit. Whether you have made as much progress in twenty-five years as you should have, I am not prepared to say. Once in a while I see a department so well conducted that my first impulse is to send congratulations to the man in charge, but I fear this is rarely done. I think there has been a great improvement in the literary quality of the magazine; a freer flowing, and more natural style of writing. There are not only more departments but those sections have been expanded and developed in keeping with the general expansion of the College itself. Would not a page for 'Brickbats and Bouquets' be a good thing for a College paper, since it appears to find favor with national publications such as MacLeans and others?

Besides the *Red and White* I should like to see another publication at St. Dunstan's University; one that would circulate within the College walls only, belonging entirely to the students, without advertising or any kind of formal makeup, a paper to which every one would feel free to contribute at any time those mighty thoughts that habitually circulate in the student brain. With such a paper for a foundation *Red and White* should be able to build something better than has been. If the College paper is supposed to reflect the mind of the student body, *Red and White* to my way of thinking, should occupy a large place in forming and moulding public opinion on P. E. Island. There are evils to be attacked, and, so far as possible, suppressed. There are problems to be solved. A University cannot hold itself aloof from the practical realities of life in the community of which it is a part. Prince Edward Island has still a long way to go before attaining

the status of the ideal state. Without seeming to become involved in politics a College paper should be able to do much in the way of educating public opinion and promoting the general welfare of the people. The next few years are going to see far reaching changes in our economic and social life; changes which are needed, and are bound to come. College men should be able to control them and give them wise direction.

I wonder why we never see anything in our magazine from the pens of our Alumni. Would such contributions be out of place in a College paper? If that is the reason I shall not press the point; but our paper appears so seldom that I think it could stand to have a greater volume. Of course, I have not forgotten the excellent articles that came in the early days, from the facile pens of Fathers MacDonald, Campbell, Mr. J. E. Gillis, and others, but of recent years there appears to be nothing of that class of writing, and I am sure we would all like to hear from the "Old Boys." They have dropped out of our lives, and we are eager to re-establish contact with them. Will the "Alumni Man" please make note of this? We are eager to know where our old College friends are and how they are faring.

During the years 1907-10 my closest chums were Steele, McCarthy and Deagle. In the 1900 class it was "John George" McDonald. All four of them have "crossed the bar." Steele and McCarthy were brilliant young men and their death involved a real loss to the Church and State. The same may be said of Father Cameron who passed on only a few months ago to join his namesake whose death caused such profound regret at the College in the fall of 1899. The first Editor of *Red and White*, Father Stephen Macdonald, has also gone to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns." There are others, both in the flesh and out of it, that I should like to speak about, but perhaps I have already exceeded my allotment of space. All praise to Dr. Gavin Monaghan for his work in this field. May he soon recover his health and once more take up the work, more vigorously than ever. To the old students of S. D. U. wherever you may be—"Greetings, here's a hand to you, and may we all be here in 1959 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of our College Magazine."