

# **MY DISCOVERY OF ENGLAND**

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My discovery of England by Stephen Leacock

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**STEPHEN LEACOCK**

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BY STEPHEN LEACOCK

WINSOME WINNIE  
FRENZIED FICTION  
FURTHER FOOLISHNESS  
BEHIND THE BEYOND  
NONSENSE NOVELS  
LITERARY LAPSES  
SUNSHINE SKETCHES  
ARCADIAN ADVENTURES  
WITH THE IDLE RICH  
MOONBEAMS FROM THE  
LARGER LUNACY  
THE HOHENZOLLERNS  
IN AMERICA  
THE UNSOLVED RIDDLE  
OF SOCIAL JUSTICE  
ESSAYS AND LITERARY  
STUDIES

MY DISCOVERY  
*OF* ENGLAND

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BY STEPHEN LEACOCK

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1922

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*Introduction of Mr. Stephen Leacock Given by Sir Owen Seaman on the Occasion of His First Lecture in London*

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is usual on these occasions for the chairman to begin something like this: "The lecturer, I am sure, needs no introduction from *me*." And indeed, when I have been the lecturer and somebody else has been the chairman, I have more than once suspected myself of being the better man of the two. Of course I hope I should always have the good manners—I am sure Mr. Leacock has—to disguise that suspicion. However, one has to go through these formalities, and I will therefore introduce the lecturer to you.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Mr. Stephen Leacock. Mr. Leacock, this is the flower of London intelligence—or perhaps I should say

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## *Introduction*

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one of the flowers; the rest are coming to your other lectures.

In ordinary social life one stops at an introduction and does not proceed to personal details. But behaviour on the platform, as on the stage, is seldom ordinary. I will therefore tell you a thing or two about Mr. Leacock. In the first place, by vocation he is a Professor of Political Economy, and he practises humour—frenzied fiction instead of frenzied finance—by way of recreation. There he differs a good deal from me, who have to study the products of humour for my living, and by way of recreation read Mr. Leacock on political economy.

Further, Mr. Leacock is all-British, being English by birth and Canadian by residence. I mention this for two reasons: firstly, because England and the Empire are very proud to claim him for their own, and, secondly, because I do not wish his nationality to be confused with that of his neighbours on the other side. For English and American humourists have not always seen eye to eye. When we fail to appreciate their humour they say we are too dull

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### *Introduction*

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and effete to understand it: and when they do not appreciate ours they say we haven't got any.

Now Mr. Leacock's humour is British by heredity; but he has caught something of the spirit of American humour by force of association. This puts him in a similar position to that in which I found myself once when I took the liberty of swimming across a rather large loch in Scotland. After climbing into the boat I was in the act of drying myself when I was accosted by the proprietor of the hotel adjacent to the shore. "You have no business to be bathing here," he shouted. "I'm not," I said; "I'm bathing on the other side." In the same way, if anyone on either side of the water is unintelligent enough to criticise Mr. Leacock's humour, he can always say it comes from the other side. But the truth is that his humour contains all that is best in the humour of both hemispheres.

Having fulfilled my duty as chairman, in that I have told you nothing that you did not know before—except, perhaps, my swimming feat, which never got into the Press because I have