

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO PRINT

Stephen Leacock's "The Transit of Venus"

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AS LEACOCK'S ONLY PUBLISHED ATTEMPT at a serious short story, "The Transit of Venus" stands apart from the rest of his work in that, unlike his other funny pieces, his chief aim here was to tell the story. However, being Leacock, he could hardly help injecting small explosions of humour, which occur throughout.

Although this story was first published in 1926 in *Good Housekeeping*,¹ Leacock, surprisingly, did not get around to recycling it in any of his annual collections until 1942.² That he intended to write not one, but a series of short stories "dealing with college professorial life," is evident from the title he recorded in his journal, "Annals of Concordia College," on September 9, 1914,³ shortly after completing *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, chapters of which were still appearing in *The American Magazine*.⁴ However, his journal entries until June 14, 1918, the last of which contains sketchy notes, and reference to the character of Dean Elderberry Foible, indicate that he had been unable to make much headway in writing these stories; and until November 12, 1925, this project remained in the category of incomplete items. But sometime before May 1925, Leacock wrote and forwarded the opening part of "The Transit of Venus" to his literary agent⁵ in New York to ascertain the appeal of such stories to magazine editors. The agent, mistaking it for a finished piece, sold it to the editor of *College Humor*.⁶ To avoid impairing the integrity of his work, or prejudicing the sale of the series, Leacock responded:

I send you back herewith your letter and cheque for \$180.00. I am sorry to say there has been a mistake here. I thought I had written to you already to say that I am completing this story and that it will run to four or five thousand words. I have it now well under way. In the literary sense I could not bear to have a piece of it substituted for the whole and in the commercial sense I could not bear to sell it for \$200.00.

My own recollection is that I sent you this not as a completed story, but only as the beginning of a story in which an editor might be interested. I may say further that I have a very strong hope of doing not one but a little string of them dealing

with college professorial life. I have a great many notes, plans and characters. These stories when completed — if they ever are completed — will make a volume. I do not want to prejudice the whole enterprise by breaking off a piece and thus spoil the prospect of selling the full length stories.

Please convey to the editor of *College Humour* my very sincere regret and throw on my shoulders just as much blame as your own kindly conscience will permit.⁷

The “beginning” in question is extant in two versions: a fourteen-page holograph and in the sixty-two-page completed draft of the story, only the first seven pages of which, incorporating the holograph and the ones sent to the agent, are typed.⁸ They describe that fateful opening day of the semester when Professor Poynter lectured to a co-ed class, for the first time in his sixteen-year teaching career at Concordia College. Although not yet conscious that he has fallen in love with his student, Irene Taylor, the universe about him becomes more wonderful: “And that night, in the College Observatory, where Professor Pointer, on a revolving stool, gazed at the heavens through a huge telescope, the stars appeared of a brilliance and a magnitude never before witnessed. And astronomy itself seemed more than ever the noblest and grandest of sciences, and there was such a sweep to the celestial orbit of the moving earth that you could almost hear the heavens humming in glad unison to the rushing movement of it.”⁹ While the professor is thus enraptured, the world goes on, and Leacock reminds us of this in the concluding lines of the segment: “And that same night, while the professor gazed into the sky, Mr. Bill Johnson, of the College football team, took Miss Marty and Miss Taylor to a fifty cent vaudeville show.”¹⁰

Given its unity and the suggestion of irony at the end, not unlike some of Leacock’s other short pieces, it is not surprising that an editor bought as a complete story what was only its opening part.

In “Annals of Concordia College,” conceived as an offshoot of *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, Leacock was resurrecting the original small college, which had been “filled with generations of presidents and professors of the older type with long white beards and rusty black clothes,”¹¹ before it was transformed by its hustler president, Dr. Boomer, into “not merely a university, but a *universitas* in the true sense, and every one of its faculties was now a *facultas* in the real acceptance of the word.”¹² Judging from the tenor and substance of “The Transit of Venus,” this series, had it been completed, would have presented a picture far different from the morally bankrupt world depicted in *Arcadian Adventures*, whose sharp practices had vitiated its life and contaminated its religious and educational institutions.

Leacock’s changes, in the manuscript, to the title and subtitle of the story in some ways chronicle its evolution. He began with “Annals of Concordia College” as the title of the series, and since at this stage the core of this story consisted of the

professor's rather unusual love letters, he titled it "The Love Letters of Professor Poynter." But by the time he received the typed copy of the first segment, the scope of the story had widened considerably. Therefore, the title, having become inadequate, was crossed out and replaced by "The Transit of Venus," one of his best titles. Subsequently, Leacock became less certain of writing other stories in the same vein, as is evident from his note on the title page of the manuscript, "If several stories are written on this line a general title might be used, as: 'Annals of Concordia College.'"

Leacock had considerable difficulty choosing an appropriate name for the principal character. Initially, he called him Poynter. But halfway through the segment he realized that, spelling notwithstanding, the name Poynter for a professor of astronomy, who falls in love with a student while pointing out stars in the firmament, would be inartistic. He therefore started leaving blank spaces for the name and asked the typist to do likewise, "I am not sure of the professor's name: better leave it blank perhaps."¹³ Since the name had been variously spelled in the manuscript as Pointer and Poynter, the typist, ignoring Leacock's note, simply regularized it to Pointer. After receiving the typed copy, Leacock changed the name twice on the first page — first to Pram and later to Arthur Pram — before settling on Arthur Lancelot Kidder. Although this name embodied his mockingly indulgent attitude toward the "little man," it was hardly an improvement on Poynter, the Jonsonian name Leacock had first tagged him with. While the Christian names, Arthur and Lancelot, suggest bravery and chivalry, notions Leacock alludes to humorously in depicting the professor's demeanor toward Miss Taylor, the name Kidder undermined them in the most obvious fashion. Hence, in a subsequent revision, not extant, he altered the name from Kidder to Kitter. This slight change contributed significantly in that the new name no longer suffered the limitations of his earlier choices. Also dropped at this stage was the reference, in the story's subtitle, to a particular college.¹⁴ Even though the final draft is not extant, the differences between the published text and the extant draft are, for the most part, small; some of the changes are important while others are mechanical.

THIS MANUSCRIPT illustrates the way Leacock generally composed his humorous pieces. In the initial draft, here as well as in his other manuscripts, his main concern was recording the flow of ideas, in numerous short paragraphs, paying little attention to grammar and mechanics, which he corrected once the material was typed. The following excerpt from the holograph fragment, reproduced exactly, but without the use of *sic*, is an instance in point:

And now gentlemen, — that is — ladies and gentlemen," concluded Professor Poynter with a slight blush, "having considered the general nature of the Copernican

System and the principles underlying it, we shall in our next lecture pass in review the motions of the individual planets with especial reference to Kepler's law and the mathematical calculation of their orbits'

Little Mr. Pointer, professor of mathematical astronomy at Concordia College had delivered this elegant sentence in much the same form for sixteen years, — at the close of each opening lecture of the course, — and had never been seen to blush over it.

But this time he did so. The pink suffusion of his cheeks was visible even without a spectroscope.

Now there is nothing in the Copernican System to cause a scientist in these enlightened days, even if he is a batchelor and close on forty, to blush for it.

It must have been something in the class itself.

There were only six students in the class.

There was one on the professor's right with a pale face and long hair who held a scholarship and had been covering sheet after sheet with mathematical formulae. Professor Poynter had taught him for four years. So it couldnt have been him.

There were two students with ruddy faces and long ears who took astronomy as a 'Conditioned Subject', and wrote notes in diligent despair like distressed mariners working to keep a boat afloat.

Then there was Mr Bill Johnson, otherwise known as Buck Johnson who took astronomy as a way of qualifying to play half-back on the college football team. Football men at Concordia very often took astronomy. It was considered almost as big a 'cinch' as the Old Testament or the president's lectures on Primitive Civilization. All of these were recommended by the trainer.

So Buck Johnson had joined the class and had sat looking at Professor Pointer with the hard irredeemable look of a semi professional half back, and wondering if he had been wise to take the stuff.

But the blush was not for him.

The reason of it was that for the first time in sixteen years there were women in the class. Professor Pointer had never lectured to women before. He did not even know whether to refer to them as 'women', 'girls', or ladies.

To the debonair professor of English literature who wore a different tie every week, college girls were as familiar as flowers are to the bees. To the elderly dean of the faculty they appeared as if merely high school girls. But into the calm precincts of mathematical astronomy no woman had ever wandered before.

Yet there they were, — two of them, — sitting on the front bench, writing notes and making diagrams of the planets. How daintily their little fingers seemed to draw! Even from Professor Pointer's desk, he could see that when Mr. Johnson drew the moon he drew it in a great rough circle that even a carpenter would be ashamed of.

But when Miss Irene Taylor, the girl with the blue serge suit and golden hair, drew it, it came out as the cutest little moon that ever looked coquettishly across its orbit at the neat earth.¹⁵

Leacock's revision of these paragraphs, inasmuch as they required little or no rewriting, also illustrates his general reworking of the manuscript. For example, the last three paragraphs of the excerpt reappear in the published text, with minor mechanical changes, as one paragraph. The first and twelfth paragraphs are also

reproduced without any significant alteration. The remaining ten he rearranged into four; in so doing, he made more emphatic the key idea, the reason for the professor's blush in class. Other revisions are of a different order. For instance, in the published text he slightly altered the description of the boy who sat alone on the professor's right, "held a scholarship," and took copious notes; instead of the stereotypical "pale face and long hair" of the original, he gave him "a pale face and a head shaped like a bulb." Whether Leacock meant it to represent an electric or a botanical bulb, this injection of humour enabled him to suggest more vividly the boy's potential. Elsewhere, in pruning the lengthy explanation of how Mr. Buck Johnson came to be in a class in mathematical astronomy, he eliminated verbiage. Although the number of paragraphs in the printed text has been drastically reduced, the number of words in the two versions underwent only a slight change, from 535 to 529.

In many cases, revisions entailed rewriting to develop fuller and sharper descriptions and explanations, when the first attempts were inadequate or embryonic. His explanation of why men "show off" when in love is an example of such a revision. Ever since the day Professor Kitter had blushed in class, owing to the presence of female students, and been fascinated by Miss Taylor's little fingers drawing "the cutest little moon," he had done all he could to impress her: "projected beams of light" at the incredible speed of 186,000 miles per second (185,000 in the extant draft), and solved monstrously long equations "with the rapidity of a conjurer." Not content with these feats, he, usually unmindful of dress, bought himself a whole new wardrobe, and, in wearing some items of it felt particularly "saucy." All these efforts Leacock attributed to man's inherent instinct to show off, and pretended that it could be traced to its source through various stages of human evolution. To present this concept with scientific authority, he began, "We are told by the evolutionist," which he abandoned for, "Only three class rooms away down the corridor there was a lecturer on evolution who was fond of explaining to his class." From these he forged the following pseudo-scientific paragraph: "We are told by those who know about such things that the male human being when in love likes to 'show off.' It appears that this tendency has been evolved in him then through countless ages of his ascent from the earth worm to the scientist. The male bird displays his brilliant feathers. The nightingale sings. The savage displays his strength. The athlete jumps over a tape."¹⁶

If, in the heat of composing, an idea did not come to Leacock well expressed, he recorded it as it occurred, then crossed it out and rephrased it as he went along, but did not allow this editing to interfere with the flow of composition. If, however, the rephrasing turned out to be unsatisfactory, he first completed the passage he was writing before attempting further alternatives. The following paragraph, describing the professor's endeavours to be near Miss Taylor as often as possible, is an example. In quoting it, the matter he crossed out has been enclosed within slashes / /, and

is followed by his rephrasings, which have been placed within parentheses (), to indicate the stage in composition:

During this same period of time the professor, by a process of rejuvenation similar to his change of dress had appeared at various college /teas and had not or at least seen Miss Taylor among those present/ (functions such as he). He had sat half frozen at a hockey match looking at Miss Taylor, seated beside Mr. Johnson, across the rink. He had attended a college play, at which he had also observed Mr. Johnson seated between Miss Taylor & Miss Marty: and he had /attended/ (handed round tea at) a perpendicular reception at the presidents house from which he had the pleasure of escorting Miss Marty to the women's dormitory while Mr Johnson walked beside Miss Taylor. From all of which things Professor Kidder, who prided himself on being an observant man, concluded that Mr. Johnson was very greatly improved from what he had been in his lower years, and showed a commendable desire to mingle in society.¹⁷

As the first of these rephrasings (functions such as) was unsatisfactory and thus left unfinished, Leacock returned to it after completing the paragraph and wrote the following alternatives on the back of the page, "functions at which he had not been present since he was a junior lecturer fifteen years before and had to attend everything that happened." And "more than once he had stood beside her at these functions holding up a tea cup and talking about the sun." Finally, he chose the first of these.

In describing another of the professor's overtures, through his unusual love letters, Leacock first wrote, "During this same period Professor Kidder wrote to Miss Taylor no less than three separate set letters. In point of the sentiment that was behind them they were love letters, the first and the last that ever came into the life of the little man. But in form they were far from it."¹⁸ Unhappy with the first sentence, perhaps because it repeated the opening words of the preceding paragraph in the text, he attempted another beginning, in pencil, at the top of the page: "Nor was this social intercourse the only in which professor's"; having now found a suitable opening, he elaborated it into the following alternative on a separate page, numbered it 19 (even though he already had a page 19 in the MS) and inserted it just before page 20, the page to which this alternative pertained: "Nor was social intercourse the professor's only outlet of expression. He wrote to Miss Taylor during this period no less than three separate letters."

Since "astronomy had sunk in too deep," not only was the professor's conversation with his students outside the class merely a continuation of his lecture; even his love letters turned out to be absurd, being only elucidations of points he feared he had not adequately explained.¹⁹ Despite many opportunities, the professor, incapacitated by shyness, was unable to proclaim his love. And as the semester approached its end, he feared that if he did not act soon, he might never have another chance to propose.

Thus the college year threatened to end with Professor Kidder's love unspoken. But as the day of graduation — the end of all things — drew near, its very nearness gave him resolution. There appeared in prospect a particular occasion when he knew that at least he would have his opportunity, and he meant at every cost, to use it.

Now the occasion in prospect was this. It had long been the custom of Professor Kidder to invite his class, hitherto consisting of men, to visit once a year at evening the Observatory of Concordia College.²⁰

Although Leacock retained this description, he also wrote the following, in which he attempted to create the same effect in a single paragraph, recording it on the back of page 36: "Humiliated by so many defeats Professor at last came to the conclusion that he would, absolutely and without fail, propose marriage to Miss Irene Taylor on the very next occasion that offered itself. And the occasion, as the college year drew to its close was presented ready to his grasp. He determined in other words to propose to Miss Taylor on the occasion of the annual evening visit of the class in mathematical astronomy to the Observatory tower."

As the critical day neared, the night of the class visit to the observatory, the professor, having rehearsed many times the words he had been unable to utter to Miss Taylor, was tense and so on edge that even the students noticed his awkwardness as he apologized needlessly for everything. When the moment arrived, as he came down the stairs, determined to ask Irene Taylor to be his wife, his overwrought imagination played a trick on him. In the darkness of the landing he saw Miss Taylor and Mr. Johnson together and mistook his recounting of his marriage proposal to Miss Marty, made earlier in the day, for a proposal to Miss Taylor. Seeing them together was enough to trigger in the professor's mind an echo of the speech he had been rehearsing and was planning to make to Miss Taylor. Believing his hopes of marrying her to be dashed, he returned to the observatory and retreated to the security of his routine existence, until the day the old Dean began a tirade against "child" marriages in the faculty committee room, referring to Mr. Johnson's impending marriage. Not wanting to hear any more on that painful subject, the professor left the room.

On the day of the wedding he encountered Miss Taylor on her way to the ceremony. Sensing his limitations, having waited a full year for him to say something meaningful to her, she took charge and retrieved him from his sterile existence; she "put her hand on the little professor's arm and turned him in her direction,"²¹ metaphorically as well as literally. The following excerpt is Leacock's initial description of this important encounter:

But on that day he was walking up the avenue among the elms, and as he walked he encountered fully and fairly and unavoidably Miss Irene Taylor. Even a professor's eye could see that she was dressed as for any occasion.

He would have raised his hat & passed but she stopped him. It was plain that she meant to stop him.

“Why Professor Kidder,” she exclaimed. Aren’t you coming to the wedding?

The professor stammered something —

“Did you mean to say that you didn’t know!” Miss Taylor went on. The professor muttered something to the effect that he had heard something.

“Oh, I thought everybody knew. Why Maggie Marty and Mr. Johnson are to be married at three o’clock, and you know it’s just lovely. He’s come into quite a lot of money from some forgotten uncle or somebody and they are going to go to Paris and both study over there — I forget what it is they are going to study — but they say that there are ever so many courses you can study now in Paris. Oh, really you must come down to the church any way even if you don’t go to the house. Maggie said they wrote and asked you — Do come.”

And with that she put her hand on the little professor’s arm and turned him in her direction.

What Professor Kidder said as they went down the avenue is not a matter of record. It may have concerned the altitude of the sun, which seemed all of a sudden to have leaped to a surprising height and brilliance or it may not. But at least it was effective, and when after the wedding & the ceremony that went with it the two walked away together under the elm trees it was understood that Miss Taylor, after an interval shorter than anything ever heard of in astronomy was to become the professor’s wife. And it transpired further that she had kept all her notes in his class from the very start and that she had copied a whole equation off the board because he wrote it and that his letter about the proper motion of the sun had seemed to her the sweetest letter she had ever dreamed of.

All of which things rapidly become commonplace. Especially as Miss Taylor, is now Mrs. Arthur Lancelot Kidder, and attends college teas, and reads little papers on Chinese Philosophy at The Concordia Sigma Phi Society, and, in fact, acts and behaves and seems much as any other professor’s wife.²²

On rereading this segment, Leacock realized that he had unwittingly left out an important piece of information, and to remove the confusion he added, on the back of the page, the following explanation of the situation which had misled the professor. After telling Professor Kitter that Mr. Johnson and Miss Marty planned to study in Paris, Leacock had Miss Taylor add: “Why didn’t you know? He asked her [to marry him] on the way over to the observatory that night and he told me all about it going down the stairs as we went out.”²³

IN CONSIDERING THIS MANUSCRIPT, I have discussed some representative Leacock revisions. He rewrote passages to develop inadequately expressed ideas, pruned the text of surplus material, moved portions of it from one place to another, made lexical changes and realigned paragraphs for effectiveness. Some of his most interesting changes, however, are those in which alterations are ostensibly slight; for example, replacing “a pale face and long hair” with “a pale face and a head shaped like a bulb” is pure Leacock. In another instance, by sub-

stituting a comma for a period in the published text, to produce a one-sentence paragraph describing the entranced professor, near the end of the first segment, Leacock skilfully enhanced its tempo: "And that night, in the college observatory, where Professor Kitter on a revolving stool gazed at the heavens through a huge telescope, the stars appeared of a brilliance and a magnitude never before witnessed, and Astronomy itself seemed more than ever the noblest and grandest of sciences, and there was such a sweep to the celestial orbit of the moving earth that you could almost hear the heavens humming in glad unison to the rushing movement of it."²⁴ A different though important small change noted elsewhere, achieved after considerable revision, is the name of the professor, from Pointer to Kitter.

Instances of such revisions are evident in his other manuscripts as well. For example, the initial title of Chapter III of *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* was "The Blasted Philanthropy of Mr. Tomlinson." By replacing "Blasted" with "Arrested," Leacock eliminated the ambiguity that "Blasted" might have occasioned in this context. And since the initial title for Chapter V, "The Amateur Polygamy of Mr. Peter Spillikins," was not only inaccurate but also lacked taste, he substituted an ironic title, "The Love Story of Mr. Peter Spillikins."²⁵

In describing a "valuable" toddler, a "merchant prince," wheeled about on Plutoria Avenue by an "imported" nurse, Leacock had first written, "Nearby is a child in a blanket suit and a Canadian tuque and a tassel nodding beside his ear that represents the merger of two trunk line railways."²⁶ But mindful of the hostile reaction *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* had caused among Orillians who recognized themselves clearly behind his thinly disguised characters, he was determined to prevent any such identifications in this book. Sensing that he had given more information than he wished concerning the locale, he revised the description, outfitting the child in perfectly neutral clothes: "Nearby is a child of four in a khaki suit who represents the merger of two trunk line railways."²⁷ This seemingly minor change acquires greater meaning when viewed in concert with other examples in which Leacock deliberately planted misleading information. For instance, Dr. Slyder, an expert at divining the wishes of his patients, who are not suffering from any ailments, advises Mr. Rasselyer-Brown, knowing his propensity for alcohol, to take a holiday in Nagahakett, on the Atlantic coast. When Mr. Rasselyer-Brown asks in horror if it is in Maine, "'Oh, dear no!' answered the doctor reassuringly. 'It's in New Brunswick, Canada; excellent place, most liberal licence laws; first class cuisine and a bar in the hotel. No tourists, no golf, too cold to swim — just the place to enjoy oneself.'"²⁸ Nor is this the only example in which Leacock gives such information to conceal the book's setting.

Candidly assessing his ability to create character, and conscious of his limitations in plot construction, Leacock had this to say concerning the writing of *Sunshine Sketches*:

I wrote this book with considerable difficulty. I can invent characters quite easily, but I have no notion as to how to make things happen to them. Indeed I see no reason why anything should. I could write awfully good short stories if it were only permissible merely to introduce some extremely original character, and at the end of two pages announce that at this point a brick fell on his head and killed him. If there were room for a school of literature of this kind I should offer to lead it. I do not mean that the hero would always and necessarily be killed by a brick. One might sometimes use two. Such feeble plots as there are in this book were invented by brute force, after the characters had been introduced. Hence the atrocious clumsiness of the construction all through.²⁹

The evolution of "The Transit of Venus," documented earlier, illustrates Leacock's creative process as outlined above. He began with an "extremely original character" in Professor Poynter and his absurd love letters. Considering that the central conflict is the professor's incapacitating shyness in matters of love, Leacock's inability to construct action-packed plots did not hamper him in writing this story. In fact, his plot, with its apparent lack of action, became an apt vehicle for the resolution of the conflict.

Given the professor's repeated failure to proclaim his love to Miss Taylor; his determination to grab what seemed to him to be the last chance to propose marriage; and his intense preparation for the occasion, repeating the marriage proposal so many times that he had it by heart; it is not surprising that his overly tense mind aided destiny to rob him of the opportunity he had prepared for so thoroughly. Had he been able to pay closer attention to what was being said, which is asking more than most are capable of in such circumstances, he might not have been misled. For Buck Johnson's actual words were, "I can't tell you what *it* means to me, Irene. Till now I never thought of marriage—." When this is set beside the professor's own little speech, the difference becomes perceptible: "I can't tell you what *this* means to me, Irene. Up till now I never thought of marriage, but now my whole life seems changed"³⁰ (my italics). Notwithstanding similar phrasing, the *it* in Johnson's speech refers to the inheritance which suddenly made it possible for him to marry and go abroad; whereas *this* in the professor's proposal refers to Irene's acceptance of him. Considering that this distinction was made in the final revision, for it is not in the extant draft, it demonstrates the precision with which Leacock used language when such precision was important.³¹

Although the climax, in which Professor Kitter seems to have lost out to Buck Johnson, surprises the reader caught up in the story, one need only look back to see the constant stream of suggestions Leacock planted in the text throughout, creating in Mr. Johnson an unconscious and unrecognized antagonist to the professor, who, notwithstanding his claim to be observant, is hardly capable of noticing anything meaningful. Thus, for a number of reasons, Leacock's use of surprise in the climax is neither arbitrary nor mechanical; it is conditioned by the elements of the story — Professor Kitter's character and the plot — and is dictated by the design of a happy

ending, which required a dénouement to unravel the complication created in the climax.

In "The Transit of Venus" Leacock attempted a serious short story, and considering that it was first published in 1926, had he persevered and completed the series, "Annals of Concordia College," he might have left another notable contribution to his canon.

NOTES

- ¹ *Good Housekeeping*, 82 (Jan. 1926), 78-81.
- ² Stephen Leacock, *My Remarkable Uncle, and other Sketches* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1942), pp. 243-63.
- ³ Leacock's Journal #84, Leacock Memorial Home Files, Orillia, Ontario; excerpts reprinted with the permission of Mrs. Barbara Nimmo.
- ⁴ Although all eight chapters of the book were completed by August 5, 1914, only the first five appeared in *The American Magazine* during July and November of that year. The last three were withheld for inclusion in the book, which was published on November 25, 1914.
- ⁵ Paul Revere Reynolds (1864-1944).
- ⁶ This Chicago magazine was "a digest of humor appearing in humorous publications of the collegiate world."
- ⁷ To Paul Reynolds, dated May 7, 1925, Leacock Memorial Home Files. In quoting Leacock's correspondence and manuscripts, unless otherwise indicated, small obvious errors have been silently corrected in the interest of readability.
- ⁸ "The Transit of Venus" manuscripts, Leacock Collection, McGill University, Montreal. Henceforth the complete manuscript is cited as ms, and the holograph fragment as Fragment. Manuscript quotations are printed with the permission of McGill University, McLennan Library.
- ⁹ ms, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.
- ¹¹ Stephen Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), p. 39.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 40.
- ¹³ Note on the title page of the Fragment.
- ¹⁴ From "A Story of Concordia College" to "A College Story."
- ¹⁵ Fragment, pp. 1-5.
- ¹⁶ ms, pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 18-19.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 20.
- ¹⁹ The first of these love letters read:
Dear Miss Taylor,
I fear that I made a rather ridiculous slip in my lecture of this morning in speaking of the proper motion of the sun. I implied that there was a drift of the solar system towards the star Arcturus. I trust that you did not gather from this that there was

the least fear of collision. Let me hasten to correct this error in case it has led to any misunderstanding on your part.

Yours very faithfully,
Arthur Lancelot Kidder.

²⁰ ms, pp. 35-36.

²¹ Ibid., p. 60.

²² Ibid., pp. 58-61.

²³ Ibid., reverse of page 60.

²⁴ Stephen Leacock, *My Remarkable Uncle, and other Sketches* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), pp. 144-45.

²⁵ *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* manuscript, Leacock Collection, McGill University, Montreal, title pages of Chapters III & V.

²⁶ Ibid., Chapter I, p. 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Arcadian Adventures*, p. 84.

²⁹ Peter McArthur, *Stephen Leacock* (Toronto: Ryerson, n.d.), p. 136.

³⁰ *My Remarkable Uncle*, pp. 153 and 151.

³¹ The same care is evident in many of his other manuscripts. One instance in point is his rephrasing of a single sentence numerous times in *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*; commenting on the lack of trust between capital and labour in the aftermath of World War I, Leacock rewrote the following sentence until he was satisfied that the final version — “The warning cry of ‘back’ is challenged by the eager shout of ‘forward!’” — would not be misconstrued by either party. See Chapter I, p. 7 of the manuscript in the Leacock Collection, McGill University, Montreal.

MAKING FUN OF TRAVELERS

Deborah Eibel

Whenever the travelers returned,
They tried to tell long stories
About the interesting people
Who had helped them
Find their way.

But some one always stopped them.
“How can we expect you
To know what to look for,
If you always depend on
Midwesterners-at-large.