THE MAN IN THE IVORY TOWER

F. CYRIL JAMES OF McGILL

STANLEY BRICE FROST

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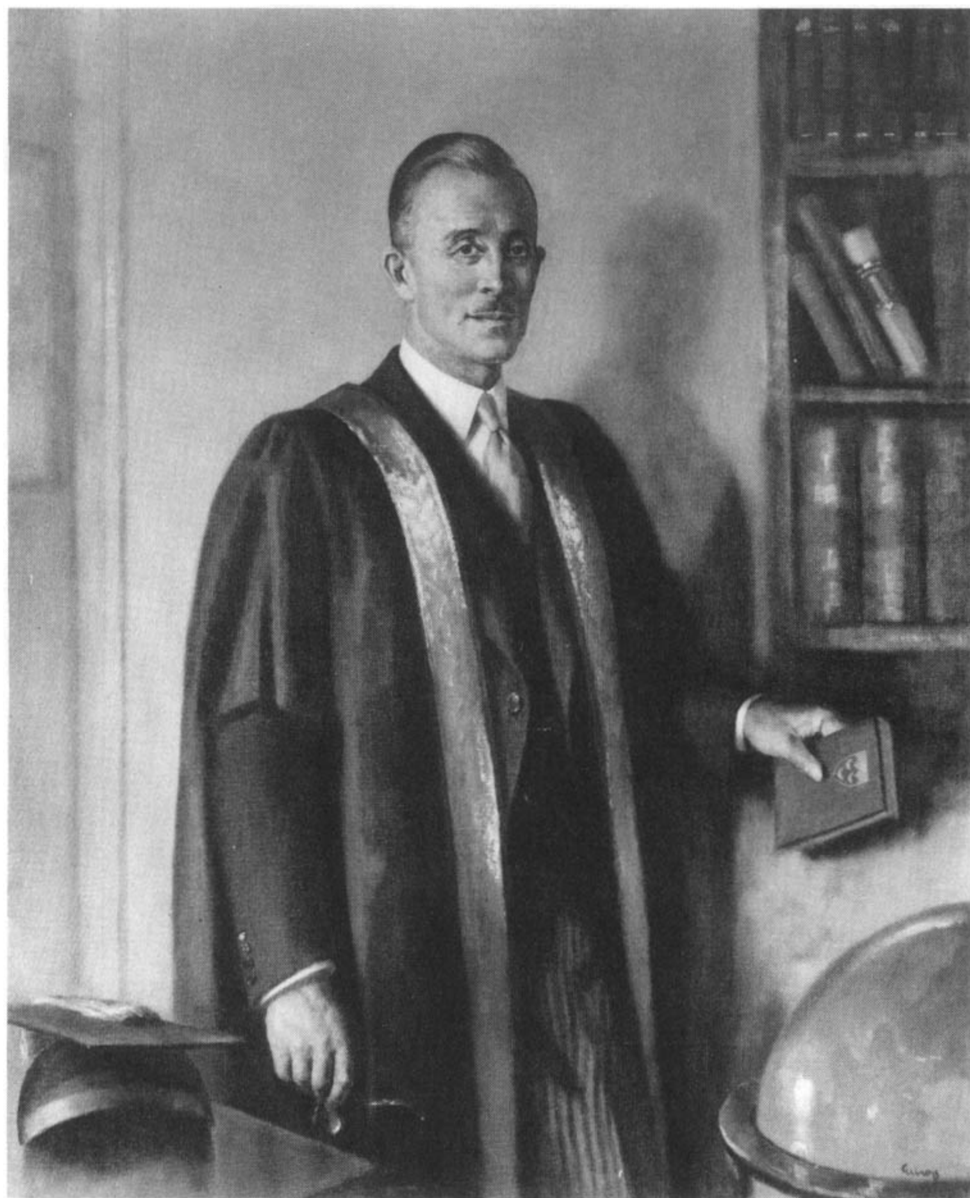

Frank Cyril James. Portrait by John Gilroy, 1956

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McGill-Queen's University Press
Montreal & Kingston · London · Buffalo

©McGill-Queen's University Press 1991
ISBN 0-7735-0803-1

Legal deposit first quarter 1991
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Frost, Stanley Brice, 1913–
The man in the ivory tower: F. Cyril James of McGill
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-7735-0803-1
1. James, F. Cyril (Frank Cyril), 1903–1973.
2. McGill University—Presidents—Biography.
3. College presidents—Quebec (Province)—Montréal—Biography. I. Title.
LE3.M217J34 1991 378.1'11 C90-090490-9

The typeface used in the text is Palatino, set by the Instructional Communications Centre at McGill University.

FRANK CYRIL JAMES

Political economist, scholar-leader
of a distinguished university, protagonist
of higher learning throughout the world.

Harvard citation, 15 June 1961

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Contents

Illustrations following pages 51, 140, 282

Preface ix

1 The Early Influences 3

2 The Young Philadelphian 16

3 The Rising Star 28

4 North to Canada 52

5 The Committee on Reconstruction 76

6 Contributing to War 102

7 Preparing for Peace 114

8 Instant College and Personal Relationships 141

9 Wider Horizons 160

10 Irresistible Logic and Immovable Opposition 179

11 Many Distractions 191

12 Achievement for McGill 219

13 Achievement beyond McGill 236

14 Resignation and Retirement 264

15 The After Years 283

Notes 293

Index 307

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Preface

In 1970, I visited Dr James in his retirement home in the small country town of Amersham, in the English county of Buckingham. We reminisced about "the James era" at McGill University and, prompted by my great admiration for Dr James, and for what he had accomplished, I suggested he consider writing an autobiography.

He did not warm too readily to the idea, but admitted others had made the same suggestion. Some time later he began to collect relevant papers, press cuttings, and so on, arranging them in chronological order and interleaving his private diary notes into the typewritten journal he had kept in the 1940s. To this collection he added two large scrapbooks he had already put together that contained press cuttings, book reviews, and other memorabilia from his early student days and on into the middle '30s. Finally, he began, somewhat fitfully I imagine, to write the autobiography. He had finished five chapters, reaching into his graduate student days at Philadelphia when he died of a heart attack in May 1973.

Although I had never thought of myself as enjoying his particular friendship, he had asked me a year or two earlier if I would act as his literary executor, and I had agreed, thinking I would be concerned only with such matters as any correspondence that might arise with his publishers. But when his will was read, I was surprised to find it included a provision that his private papers be kept closed from researchers for a period of twenty years from the time of his death and that of his wife, Irene James, unless I in my capacity as literary executor permitted access to anyone who wanted to write a biography.

I had believed an autobiography written by Dr James would have been of distinguished merit; a biography of a university principal, on the other hand, however outstanding, I thought would

appeal only to a limited circle of readers. My opinion was supported by others I consulted, who were in a position to make an informed judgment. So I did not pursue the matter further, nor did anyone else – apart from one tentative inquirer, who, after he had seen the mass of material involved, was not heard from again. In my own case, I was already committed to the writing of a history of McGill University; the second volume, carrying the story down to 1971 (my *terminus ad quem*) was published in 1984. But in the process of dealing with the important postwar decades I began to think that Cyril James might have been much more than simply a university principal and that there was in this man a story that should indeed be told. I began exploring the private papers for myself, with a view to writing a biography. What was begun from a certain sense of duty soon became an enthusiastic enterprise that needed no further justification than its own merit. This book is the result.

The private papers of Dr James not only showed how interesting and significant his career had been, as a contribution both to the domestic history of the United States in the years between the wars and then later to the development of Canada during World War II and the postwar decades, but also revealed the man himself as a complex and fascinating personality. One of his associates accused him of "being looked on by most people as a demi-god in an ivory tower." In public he was indeed of a style and stature to provoke such an exaggeration; but in his private diaries he did not hide his weaknesses from himself, and if a biography was to be written he did not want them to remain hidden from others. What emerges most clearly, however, is that he was a man seized of a dominating conviction – that education was the surest hope for the future of mankind. He was through and through an internationalist and, in the words of the Harvard citation, "a protagonist of higher education throughout the world."

In view of the permission given to a biographer, I have not hesitated to use both the public and the private papers freely. The autobiographical chapters were too long to serve as anything other than a most valuable source. I have, of course, also had access to the prolific material in university reports, journals, and other papers. I am greatly indebted to Robert Young of the University of Western Ontario for his study of the Committee on Reconstruction, and to Gwendoline Pilkington for her studies on the history of the National Conference of Canadian Universities (NCCU). In order to meet changing circumstances, the NCCU has from time to time modified its name (Association of Universities and Colleges

of Canada, [AUCC]; National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, [NCCUC]; to avoid confusion I have stayed with the form NCCU – the form used for the greater part of the James period.

A major source of James anecdotes is Edgar Andrew Collard's *The McGill You Knew; An Anthology of Memories, 1920–1960,* and I am grateful for Dr Collard's permission to quote freely from it. I owe a particular debt to Doreen Darby, Irene James' niece, for family information and especially for the privilege of reading, and being allowed to quote from, James' letters to her in the years 1952–63. Mrs Darby has also given me much personal encouragement, for which I thank her most sincerely. Patricia Bates, the daughter of James' brother Douglas, has also corresponded with me and permitted me to quote from that correspondence. Since these ladies were at different times members of the James household, their comments have particular significance.

The deposit of Dr James' papers in the university archives has been fully described by Faith Wallis for the publication *A Guide to Archival Resources at McGill University,* vols. 1–3, 1985. Volume 1, pp. 10–11, lists the records of the Principal's Office 1940–62, access to which is generally restricted. Volume 2, pp. 40–3, describes the deposit of private papers under the headings "Private and Autobiographical Records, 1905–1971," "General, ca. 1925–1952," "Research, 1870–1970" (the earlier materials relate to the history of banking in Chicago), "Teaching, 1924–1959," "Addresses, 1939–1967," "Pictorial Materials, ca. 1925–1970," and "Miscellaneous, 1900–." In addition the Rare Book Department of the McLennan Library possesses the original manuscript of *The Growth of Chicago Banks* and two drafts of James' account of his visit to the USSR in 1959. A cursory glance at Dr Wallis' detailed descriptions shows not only the variety of material in this deposit but also the fact that the papers I have used, although voluminous, are but a small part of the collection. I hope this book will alert other researchers to the rich resources waiting to be explored. The major proportion of the deposit will be accessible after May 1993, but much is already available.

I owe an immense debt to the members of the McLennan Library Reference Department and to Robert Michel and his colleagues in the university archives. Their patience, though often sorely tried, has proved inexhaustible. In that same connection I have to thank Marian Shulman, who, as research assistant, expertly identified many people and places mentioned in the diaries. I am indebted also to Roy Morrison for assistance with the changes in the purchasing power of the Canadian dollar in the middle decades of the century and to Abal Sen, cartographer to the McGill Geography

Department, for the map of James' journey criss-crossing the United States in 1936. Many individuals have contributed information, answered questions, and related anecdotes. I am grateful to them all.

The McLennan Library has generously provided me with an office, and the university has given me the facilities needed to complete the task. I deeply appreciate the encouragement of Principal David Johnston and of the director of university libraries, Eric Ormsby, and all their colleagues, among whom I must particularly mention Associate Vice-Principal Sam Kingdon. Without their confidence and help, I could not have completed what proved a much greater task than I had at first imagined. I acknowledge gratefully the interest and the skills of Véronique Schami, whose assistance in the preparation of the manuscript has proved a major contribution to the venture.

In writing this book, I have become very aware of the responsibility that lies upon the shoulders of a biographer. It is in his or her hands to determine the after-image of the subject, especially when it is unlikely that another biographer will follow to balance or correct the faults of the first. Having now lived intimately with Cyril James for five years, I have a far greater understanding of his achievements than when I knew him in person, and my former feelings of deep respect have been tempered by a sympathetic regard for a complex personality. While this book will, I hope, contribute to the recognition of a significant figure in Canadian and indeed world-wide educational history, it will also, I believe, remind those who read it of Shakespeare's great understatement, "What a piece of work is a man."

Stanley Brice Frost

CURRENCY RELATIONSHIPS

Since money expressed in Canadian, British, and American currency is often mentioned in the Cyril James story, the following table may be of help to readers.

Years	British Pound in relation to US Dollar	Canadian Dollar in relation to US Dollar	Canadian Price Index Fluctuation
1920s	$4.86 US	$0.86 US	$1.00
1930s	4.86	1.04	.80
1940s	4.03	0.90	1.00
1950s	2.80	1.05	1.50
1960s	2.80	0.92	1.80
1970s	2.40	1.00	3.00
1980s	2.20	0.80	6.50

The relationships described are only approximate since considerable fluctuations could occur within the decades or indeed within a much shorter period of time. The last column indicates that in the 1980s a Canadian consumer would have had to pay approximately $6.50 for a "basket" of goods that cost $1.00 in the 1920s.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Early Influences

Early in the morning of 4 September 1939, the transatlantic liner the *Antonia* steamed up the St Lawrence and docked at Montreal. The passengers who disembarked were in a thankful but sombre mood. At Quebec the previous day they had heard the dreaded news of the outbreak of war between Britain and Germany. This morning they had been further shocked by the report of the sinking of their sister ship, the *Athenia*, by a German submarine. Safely landed, they realized they themselves had had a narrow escape.

The passengers found themselves in a country preoccupied with wartime preparations. The official declaration by Canada had not yet been made, but already memories of 1914 were being evoked and everyone knew that the patterns of life were going to change dramatically. The atmosphere was one of uncertainty and confusion.

Among those arriving on the *Antonia* were a young professor of economics and his wife. Their home was in Philadelphia and they were returning from vacation in England. He had been invited to serve as director of the McGill School of Commerce, and with some misgivings he had agreed to do so for two years, while on extended leave from the University of Pennsylvania. He had been recruited by Principal Lewis Douglas, with the strong backing of Chancellor Edward Beatty; his task was to reform the school of commerce, which had been in poor condition for many years. The difficulty of the assignment was obviously now much increased: a Canada newly plunged into wartime preparations would not provide many opportunities for academic reconstructions.

Events at McGill moved rapidly in a way no one could have predicted. Within two months, Lewis Douglas had returned to his natural habitat in Washington, DC, and the young economics professor had been appointed to succeed him as principal of McGill.

Three weeks later, Chancellor Beatty, the dominating influence in university government for nearly two decades, became severely ill. The young professor found himself without mentors, head of a university he did not know, in a country to which he was a stranger, and with both university and country caught up in the feverish activities of war. He himself was untried: he had not previously held any major administrative office. His name was Frank Cyril James.

F.C. James was born in London, England, in 1903. In the family he was always known as Frank. His father, Frank James senior, was employed by the New River Company, one of the predecessors of the Metropolitan Water Board. His position in the company was a lowly one; at the end of thirty-six years he had risen to the rank of inspector and merited a superannuation diploma and a gold watch. The family home was humble, but the father's wages were sufficient to meet the modest needs of his wife and three boys – Frank junior, Mervyn, born three years after Frank, and Douglas, born in 1908. The family's small cottage in Stoke Newington was, in the years before World War I, in the northern fringes of London, yet with easy access to St Paul's and the city. The open countryside was within walking distance, but the weekend footsteps of father and son were more often turned toward London.

As I grew older, we went for longer walks ... Throughout his life, Dad was always enthusiastic about long walks and nowhere was he happier than in London – so that I saw and absorbed unconsciously much of the history and atmosphere of a city that was only just beginning the process of change from Dickensian times that has since been accelerated by two world wars. There were still hansom cabs and four-wheelers, and the automobiles that one encountered were still something of a modern curiosity. For twopence one could travel on top of a bus drawn by two horses from Newington Green to the Bank of England.[1]

These boyhood experiences implanted a lasting affection, so that in later life, in far-off Montreal, James built up a small collection of materials dealing with London and its history. His early years also planted other seeds, which grew into a life-long love of fine books and the enjoyment of a catholic range of literature.

At about the time I learned to read, Arthur Mee started publication of *The Children's Encyclopaedia* in fortnightly parts which (if memory serves

me) cost sixpence each. Dad subscribed on my behalf. These were the first books that I owned; the instalments were studied by both of us each fortnight, as they arrived, and ultimately there were eight large volumes bound in red cloth to which I often referred.

But there are deeper memories, and the most precious of them is the hour of twilight during the autumn and winter when most of the day's work was done and the younger children were in bed. Mother and I would sit beside the fire and she would read to me until Dad came home at about half-past six. Usually she read poetry, and I could recite many of our favourite poems long before I was able to read. As I read some of them to-day, or recall a verse on some occasion that evokes it, I can still see in my mind's eye that little room with the flickering firelight reflected on the walls and the tall, handsome paraffin lamp (one of our prize possessions!) glowing above her head. I realise to-day that mother was a beautiful woman, with excellent features and a mass of coal-black hair; even at the age of five I had a feeling of something utterly lovely and secure as she sat there, reading splendid things in a quiet musical voice.

Frank senior was the son of a railway engineer who had gone off to make a fortune building railways in Brazil and died of fever in Campinas; his grandfather and his great-grandfather had been blacksmiths on Tyneside. James never referred to the fact that he and James McGill both had forebears in the smithy, though he must have noticed it. He knew that his roots were solidly spread in the working class of England. (There was also a maternal grandmother who came from Kilkenny in Ireland.) But as the references to books and poetry show, there could be in a London workman's home in the first decade of the twentieth century a meaningful awareness of beauty, literature, and culture.

As Frank James junior approached adolescence, two other influences largely took over from the home the shaping of his future. Theses were his life at school and in the church. The first resulted from that peculiarly English institution, "the eleven-plus examination." Before World War I (and indeed long afterward) children were required without warning or special preparation to write examination papers in arithmetic and English composition. Among the working classes there was little awareness of what was at stake and, for most children, none of today's parental anxiety and feverish coaching. Those children who passed the first set of exams were then set to repeat the performance, presumably with questions of increased difficulty. The few who slipped past both entrapments (the success rate in 1919 for example was 2.04 per thousand)[2]

were given free places at "grammar" schools by the London Educational Authority. Grammar schools offered secondary education and the opportunity to pass the matriculation examination of London University. A college education and a university degree then became possible, and a considerable first step had been taken on the ladder of "upward social mobility." In the early decades of the century, especially for a boy from the average working-class family, these possibilities were even more significant than they are in England today.

At age five, Frank James went to elementary school and so in due time encountered the eleven-plus examination; but he was not one of the fortunate. As a result, a career as an office-boy and subsequently perhaps as a clerk was the best to which he could aspire. He had already had a taste of the life of the respectable poor for which he appeared destined. In his autobiographical chapters, James wrote:

> Economically, the years from 1908–11 were probably those in which the family was most comfortable in economic terms. ... By 1911 business was once again brisk, and retail prices were rising, but the wages paid by institutional employers like the Metropolitan Water Board did not keep pace with inflation. For the decade that followed ... the family was never wholly free from financial worries ...

During the 1914–18 war, Frank James senior was in a protected occupation, but because many younger men had enlisted he had to work longer hours, and the family saw much less of him. The increased income from overtime pay was still insufficient, and James' mother responded to the government's appeal for women to release manpower from the work force by taking a job in a small-arms factory at Ponders End. This solved the financial problem for the time being but disturbed family life still further. Almost equally disruptive were the shortages of food and fuel that meant somebody, often Frank, had to spend hours lining up outside a shop or coalyard to purchase a small portion of the newly available supply. In addition Frank had a series of errand-boy jobs that took up a few hours each evening and most of the day on Saturday. The family was by no means immune from wartime inconveniences and disruptions.

Before we leave the early home, there is one matter that calls for comment. In this careful account of a family of father and mother with three boys, there is no mention of a sister. Yet a sister appears without explanation in Canada at later stages of the

James story. Possibly she did not live at home, and may have been the earlier child of either the mother or the father. She immigrated to Canada at an early age, a year or two before Frank left for the United States, and she finally settled in Vancouver. Why James should not have mentioned her can only be surmised; every family is entitled to its own secrets. But this reticence does suggest that James' account of his early home was to some extent an edited one and possibly an idealized one. In his later years he renewed bonds of sympathy with his sister. Frank James was to travel very far from his beginnings, but he never wholly lost touch with home and kindred, and as we shall see, his later family relationships accord well with his account of his earliest years.

Relegated with the majority of working-class children to remain at the primary level until he finished his schooling at age fourteen, Frank James junior had no prospects of any better way of life than that which his father had achieved. But the first of many happy accidents was about to befall him. The London Education Authority had further elaborated its grammar school scholarship plan, instituting a supplementary examination for children aged thirteen. This time James was fortunate, and he gained a place at Hackney Downs School, founded in 1874 by the Grocer's Company. He also received a bursary of £15.00 a year, which released him from his part-time employments. In the Fifth Form at age sixteen he attempted the examinations for matriculation at London University, but failed miserably. By way of explanation, he says that his brother Mervyn, then aged twelve, had died of influenza that summer and that he himself had engaged in a number of time-consuming extramural activities.

But once again a kindly fate watched over him. The university had recently decided to offer a Bachelor of Commerce degree, and a dedicated master in Hackney Downs School suggested to the boys who had failed the summer matriculation that they return to the school in September and constitute something new: A Commercial Sixth Form. The master's name was Charles Davenport.

Davvy was one of the greatest teachers I have ever encountered ... short and thin, reminiscent of a Cockney sparrow, he was almost completely bald, and the cloth cap he habitually wore was in sharp contrast to the Headmaster's top-hat. But he taught each subject methodically and with enthusiasm, working every bit as hard as his pupils, and putting the whole of his great soul into the task ... There were seven of us ... Davvy's work bore fruit on December 19th. All of us had passed Matriculation

... As an evidence of Davvy's personality it is enough to say that each of us kept in touch with him by correspondence or personal visits ... when after his retirement from H.D.S. he went to live in Monmouth, there were two occasions on which we drove to Monmouth as a group to entertain him to a celebratory dinner. The last occasion was on August 18th, 1955, two months before his death, and even now [ca. 1971], fifty years after we left H.D.S., the five survivors dine together in London once or twice a year. Davvy's memory is still alive in us.

All of those seven men had noteworthy careers, and each of them recognized his immense debt to a man who regarded the teaching profession as a vocation.

The autobiographical chapters give us a nostalgic glimpse of a teenage summer at this time, but the closing sentences suggest that already James was not a typical young holiday-maker.

From September 11th to September 17th [my schoolfriend] Tugwell and I went to Southend for a holiday – the first that either of us had spent away from our respective families. The days were occupied by long walks, with time for swimming when the tide was high but what astounds me most as I look back over the record is how far money still went in 1919 despite the wartime inflation. We each started out with three pounds. The return railway fare was six shillings and sixpence; bed and breakfast for a week cost us one pound each – yet when we returned home I still had two shillings and threepence in my pocket as well as copies of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and A.R. Wallace's *Voyage up the Amazon* which I had purchased while we were away.

James records that on entering the Sixth Form he received an increased bursary of £22.50 and forthwith bought Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Chambers' *Encyclopedia of English Literature* and Milton's collected poems. He adds, "Before the end of November [1919] I started writing up notes on the various theologies, heresies and forms of religion, even though these subjects had no relation to the matriculation syllabus." In this way he began to form the habit of wide-ranging reading that was to characterize him all his life.

The other major influence in James' life in wartime and postwar London was St Mary's Church, the parish church of Stoke Newington. In school, he had not been attracted by football or cricket, although he did engage in some rowing on the River Lea and as stroke-oar led his team to victory in intramural competition. Most of his leisure activities revolved around the church.

Leaving aside the quality of religious experience, which can never be explained, it is almost impossible to describe to a generation familiar with radio, television, gramophones and easy travel, the place that the Church occupied in a comparatively static community fifty years ago. St. Mary's Church, consecrated in 1895, was undoubtedly one of Gilbert Scott's masterpieces in the Gothic perpendicular style and was cathedral-like in its proportions. The oaken pews were hand-carved; the organ splendid and the organist an accomplished musician. The choir was good and the great stained glass windows a riot of colour. Here one was caught up in a sense of beauty such as one could find nowhere else in the neighbourhood, and there was also a sense of belonging to a community of shared ideals and common worship ... I became a sacristan and, at that time [1917] my ultimate ambition was to become either a parson or a schoolmaster.

The rector generously gave James and one of his friends free access to the church records. They were thrilled to discover that the history of the parish went back to at least 1313, when the first rector "Thomas de London" was appointed. The two boys decided to write a history of the parish, and filled a drawer with laborious long-hand copies of fascinating documents, marvelling at the staying-power of James Clyve, rector in 1531, who, although ordained a Roman Catholic priest in the earlier reign of Henry VIII, could nevertheless acquiesce in Thomas Cromwell's anti-monastic zeal during Henry's later years, turn reforming presbyter under Edward VI, revert to Roman Catholicism when Mary ascended the throne, accept the Anglican Settlement under Good Queen Bess, and die rector of Stoke Newington in 1562. They also observed the ravages of plague in 1625, when each death from the pestilence was recorded in the burial register with a red cross, sometimes two or three such interments taking place in a single day. The boys' work was a labour of love that came to naught, but it gave them a first-hand experience of the significant past; James retained a reverence for history all his life.

For a boy growing up in the church community, it was not only the sanctuary and its services that were influential. Peripheral to the worship, liturgy, and festivals were sunday school, the bible class, the Good Templars, and the Alliance of Honour.

On January 1st, 1919, I began to keep a diary, and its pages reflect my increasing variety of extracurricular activities, as well as some of my thoughts. On January 14th, 1919, I joined the Victoria Park Lodge of the International Order of Good Templars – and two weeks later was elected

secretary. On February 9th, seven members of the Bible Class at St. Mary's decided to form a Stoke Newington branch of the Alliance of Honour – and once again I was elected secretary.[3]

These and similar societies, whatever their proposed formal purpose, served to provide a social life for the church members. They organized outings in summer to local beauty spots and socials in winter in the church hall; they arranged debates, discussions, and lectures. Such activities require organization, direction, and leadership, and Frank James found he had the ability to supply what was needed.

In particular, he discovered he had the gift of public address. While still in his teens, he was being invited to other churches and congregations, to give talks to their societies and organizations. On one occasion he addressed the Upper Holloway Baptist Church, where he had an audience of 350; a little later he became involved in the Harbour Light Mission, situated in a poor district behind the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street.

On December 22nd, 1921, I gave my first address at the Harbour Light – on *Christmas Legends*, which was the germ out of which my annual lecture [on that subject] at McGill was to develop – and during the spring and summer I gave several lectures to the Young Peoples Association of which I became a Chairman, and occasionally took the Sunday evening service and preached ... The chief advantage for me lay in the fact that I was learning to marshal ideas, to express them clearly and to gain that confidence which enables a man to get up and face an audience. I have never entirely gained it, and even today have butterflies in my stomach immediately before I start to talk.

In England, in the years before and between the wars, it was the churches that gave many future labour-leaders, politicians, and other public figures their first social opportunities and training, and it was in these activities that Frank James began to develop those powers of administration, committee diplomacy, and public address that in his mature years were to prove so effective.

It was also in these church activities that the young man first found himself in mixed society. In the Good Templars Lodge there were both older and younger members, some of them women with daughters Frank's own age. He discovered he enjoyed their company. In particular, he was attracted by a Mrs Leeper and her daughter Irene, whom he met in 1920 and with whom he shared

many country excursions. Six years later, Irene Leeper was to become his wife.

After the important hurdle of London matriculation had been surmounted, Charles Davenport was not finished with James and his six fellow students. Knowing that London allowed external students to register for its degrees, he proposed that the seven boys continue in the Commercial Sixth Form and prepare for the Intermediate Examination of the London Bachelor of Commerce degree. James' school tuition fees would continue to be paid and he would receive the increased bursary of £22.50. Although he would be dependent on his parents for board, lodging, and clothes, with careful managing he could meet his other expenses. With his parents' consent he decided to remain at school and register as an external candidate for the commerce degree.

Davenport had not only coached the boys for the matriculation examination, but had also taught them how to work hard and how to manage their time. He brought them to his house for an hour before school in the morning or met them for a session at the end of the day; he also required steady application in periods of self-directed study in school and at home. James learned to budget his time with prepared schedules, and in this way he was able to continue in moderation his social activities without endangering his academic ambitions. At a club whose members came mostly from St Mary's, he played tennis, and at school he continued his interest in rowing.

Realizing the unusual determination of this group of senior boys, the headmaster at Hackney Downs School brought in lecturers with specialized competence. Consequently, at the end of the first year in the Sixth Form, James passed the B Com Intermediate Examination papers in geography, French, and economics. In the second year, even though Davenport was absent a great deal because of ill-health, James passed the remaining subjects: accounting, banking, industrial history of Britain, and world economic history. These successes meant he had completed the equivalent of the first year of the three-year Bachelor of Commerce degree. At the end of the academic year, he received the Form Prize, a splendid leather-bound *Anthology of English Prose*. The headmaster's summation of James' final school report read: "He is keen and intelligent; can always be relied on to do his best."

On the strength of his success in the university examinations, James applied in May 1921 for entry into the London School of Economics and to the London County Council for a Senior Schol-

arship, worth £90.00 a year. He was not successful in winning a scholarship, but this is not surprising given the fact that the *Scholarships and Training of Teachers Handbook* published by the Council for 1921–2 records that only 66 Senior County Scholarships were provided for the whole of London that year. (As part of the post-war economy measures, the number of scholarships was being drastically reduced: In 1919 the number had been 102. By 1922, it was 59.) However James was offered a one-year extension of his Intermediate Scholarship, which gave him a free place at the London School of Economics and his old bursary of £22.50. He was now eighteen, and acceptance would mean the limitations of a very tight budget and continued dependence on his parents. In later years, he came to appreciate more and more the sacrifices his parents had made for him, especially at this critical time in 1921. Ten years later, when he began to earn a respectable salary, he responded by assisting his parents to obtain a new house in a very pleasant location in the London suburb of New Southgate. His first book, published in 1930, was "affectionately dedicated to my Mother and Father."

But if money was in short supply, there was much else that made the first years in the university a memorable and pleasurable experience. The London School of Economics, commonly known by its initials LSE, was at that time still confined to the Passmore Edwards Hall in Clare Market. East of Kingsway and south of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the area was a tangle of narrow streets and filthy lanes that for centuries had been one of the worst slums of London. Dickens, with a quick eye for a lurid background, located his *Bleak House* in this notorious neighbourhood. It had been cleaned up considerably in the decade before World War I, but Janet Beveridge's story of the birth of LSE in "environs which maintained their Dickensian character"[4] was annotated by James with the comment: "Dad still thought it rather unsavoury when I went there in 1921." It was indeed a long way from Clare Market to the quadrangles and dreaming spires of Oxford, but Frank James made his way each day from Stoke Newington to LSE with a sense of great privilege and adventure. He kept a meticulous record of his experiences; one of the more lively comments concerns one of his teachers, the redoubtable Lillian Bowles.

Rather untidy in her dress, with hair awry because she was always running her fingers through it, she had a mastery of economic history and could express herself in a fashion that held an undergraduate audience spell-bound. Even today, half a century later, when I re-read the notes

that I took during her lectures, I can recapture some of the excitement that she aroused in me.

Another of his teachers was Hugh Dalton, who went on to become a socialist politician and chancellor of the Exchequer, 1945–7, in the postwar Labour Government. James remembers him as "a brilliant lecturer who used few notes and expressed his rather dogmatic opinions in splendid English."

Less regularly, James also attended some courses not on his prescribed schedule, including one on politics given by Clement Attlee, the future prime minister, and others on social philosophy by Leonard Hobhouse. James also audited some lectures on the social background of education by R.H. Tawney, "with whom I was to receive an honorary degree at Birmingham in 1952." A short series of addresses by Sir Walter Raleigh on modern poetry impressed him deeply, and their influence was to remain with him all his life. Two visitors who gave him his first distant contacts with McGill were Professor Frederick Soddy, who "outlined the strange monetary theory that he was later to expand in his book on *Wealth, Virtual Wealth and Debt*," and Professor Stephen Leacock, who must have talked on an academic subject, and unremarkably at that, for James had no particular memory of it. But the young man's mind was wide open, and he was ready to learn about anything and everything. "It was a fascinating way of life and on 16th February 1922 I wrote in my diary (somewhat priggishly but with truth) 'Work occupies so much of my life that I almost love it and am jealous of its company being intruded on by social engagements'."

James was in fact revelling in his first year at university, and was crowding a great deal more than just lectures into his busy schedule. He records that most days he walked from his home in Stoke Newington to Clare Market – a five-mile journey that must have taken him well over an hour. The morning was spent in lectures, but after a light lunch he went, presumably by the underground railway, to Hammersmith for rowing practice on the Thames. He had continued his school interest in this sport by joining the LSE Boat Club and subsequently the University of London Boat Club. "The climax (or anticlimax) of my rowing career came on June 24th, 1922 at the Marlow Regatta when LSE was beaten by Henley Rowing Club in the race for the Borgnis Challenge Cup."

To obtain a degree the student must have spent three years in the college program. So although in September 1922, James sat

and passed the examinations for the first part of the finals, he still faced two more years of university study. The extension of his London County Intermediate Scholarships had now terminated and he again applied for a Senior County Scholarship. This would have afforded him a free place at the LSE plus the £90.00 bursary; had he been successful he would have been, like Goldsmith's parson, "passing rich." However, the number of these scholarships had been even further reduced from the previous year and James was not among the successful. He was offered the continuation of his free place at LSE, but the lack of bursary was calamitous. He had no alternative but to seek employment.

Later, he was not able to recall why he opted for the banking world, but it proved a choice of considerable importance. It was in and around banks that he was to finance his future career and to make a name for himself in influential circles. His initial experience, however, was scarcely propitious; he was engaged as a junior clerk on probation at a salary of £87.50 – £2.50 less than the bursary he had missed.

But he was determined not to lose sight of the B Com degree. His free place at LSE was tenable in an evening program and after work he hurried across the city, from Bishopsgate to Clare Market, three or four nights a week according to his course schedule. Sometimes his work detained him long after the lecture hour had begun; sometimes he was forced to miss lectures; sometimes he left the bank with permission to return to complete his tasks after lectures were finished. He rose at six A.M. and regularly walked from home to Bishopsgate, Monday through Saturday. The weekend began when the bank released its staff at about 2:30 Saturday afternoon; the rest of the day he generally spent with Irene Leeper. Sunday was fully taken up by St Mary's, the Alliance of Honour, or the Harbour Light Mission. It was a busy and demanding schedule, but he gained an insight into the significance of banking, and he was not too tired at the end of the working day to respond to the challenges of lectures.

At this time, James' intention was to sit the remaining papers for the second part of the B Com final examinations the following summer (1923). If successful, he would have gained the academic credits necessary for the degree, but would still have another year's attendance at lectures to fulfill. In such a situation, a student was permitted to spend that third year at another university. Two of his professors suggested to James that he could take advantage of this regulation by means of a Sir Ernest Cassel's Travelling Scholarship. In October 1922 James made his application. At the

interview with the awarding committee in November, he expounded a proposal to study the rapid growth of the shipping and ship-building industries in the United States. No doubt coached by his teachers, he named the American professor Emory Johnson as the reason for choosing the University of Pennsylvania.

This application for a scholarship to take him to Philadelphia was a major turning point in Frank James' career. It is ironic that the topic chosen and the choice of university have all the marks of A.J. Sargent, a teacher with whom he was not particularly impressed. However, by his own account, he was sent as a junior bank clerk on an errand to the Great Eastern Railway head office. Perhaps a receipt required the signature of the chairman of the company, Sir Henry Thornton; at any rate, for whatever reason, James was introduced into the chairman's office. In conversation, it came out that Sir Henry, who was an American, had been captain of a famous football team at the University of Pennsylvania in 1894, and he warmly approved of James' choice. In telling this story, James added, "Many years later, I was to know him even better as the President of the Canadian National Railway." In commenting on the form of his proposal to the Cassel's Awarding Committee, he wrote, "How much this prospect was inspired by Sir Henry Thornton, how much by Sargent and [Emory] Johnson, I do not now remember." The likelihood is that Sir Henry had very little to do with the matter; as for James knowing him even better in his later career, Thornton had fallen into political disgrace and had died in March 1933, six years before James arrived in Canada.

When the all-important letter arrived at 92 Nevill Road on 2 December 1922, informing Frank James that he had been successful and would receive a bursary of £230.00, almost three times his bank salary, he was overjoyed. He applied to Barclay's Bank for a year's leave without pay, to the University of Pennsylvania for admission, and to Irene Leeper for her hand in marriage. His intention was to spend his third university year in the United States, and then return to England and a banking career. He and Irene were engaged in June 1923, and in September he sailed for Philadelphia.

CHAPTER TWO

The Young Philadelphian

The story of Frank James' first year in America reads very much like one of the G.A. Henty adventure stories popular in the 1920s among British schoolboys. The young hero goes off to a strange country, faces all kinds of new and exciting experiences, is threatened many times because of his inexperience by potential disaster, but each time escapes the danger in a way that greatly benefits him, so that every incident unexpectedly furthers his career.

The theme began to develop while he was still in London. Five days before he was due to sail on the Red Star liner SS *Zeeland*, the shipping company wrote that it could not accept him as a passenger because the new restrictive US Immigration Act made it unlikely he would be allowed to land in New York. James immediately went to the US Consulate where he was received by no less than the Consul General himself, who volunteered to give him a letter to the immigration authorities, proposing he be allowed to land in New York and wait a decision on his case by the Secretary of Labor. Shown a copy of this letter, the shipping company allowed him to travel, but he nevertheless faced the prospect of a stay of indeterminate length on the notorious Ellis Island. However, a fellow passenger and his wife were so taken with young James that the husband, a lawyer, offered to post an appropriate bail-bond so that he might spend the waiting period in their home on Long Island. In the event, the immigration authorities allowed him to land as a student visitor and he had no need of the assistance so generously offered.[1]

After a brief look at New York, he travelled up the coast by steamship to Boston, and from there by train to Concord, New Hampshire: "in 1923 New England was a green and pleasant land of small farms, orchards and woodlands, dotted along the route

of the railway with pleasant little towns where all the buildings, including the church, were built of wood and painted white."[2] For a young man whose previous journeying in Old England had never exceeded a hundred miles from London, this seavoyaging and train travel in New England was an odyssey of enchantment. His hosts in Concord were only friends of a bank-clerk friend, but they lavished hospitality on him, and at the end of his stay, the son of the family extended a further invitation to pass a week with him in Hartford, Connecticut. James comments that his diary was filled with names of those who, although complete strangers, "helped, entertained or befriended me during a period of nearly three weeks, so that I took the train to Philadelphia on September 24, carrying a sheaf of happy memories."

But James was by no means idle during this leisure time, either at sea or in the new country. At LSE he had paid particular attention to the business of marine transportation, and during the voyage across the Atlantic he took advantage of the opportunity to gain practical experience of a ship. "I managed while we were at sea to explore every nook and cranny of the ship from the bridge to the engine room and coal bunkers." Similarly, finding that Hartford was at that time a major centre of the US marine insurance interests, he contrived to meet some of the underwriters, "So that I was pleasantly able to combine business and pleasure."

Knowing no one at the University of Pennsylvania, he picked from a lodging list a room in a boardinghouse simply because it was the cheapest offered. Had he received the best of advice, he could not have chosen better. The owners were a kindly couple and the other two roomers congenial young men who befriended him and gladly showed him the ropes of American university life. One, Sydney Hernandez, was a medical student and the other, Chester Comer, a dental student. The latter's home was on the New Jersey coast, and it was not long before all three roomers were taking occasional Sunday day-trips to enjoy the warm hospitality of Chester's parents.

An organization called International Students' House also provided James with social activities, including the activities of the Women's Hospitality Committee (held on Friday evenings).

> The whole thing was voluntary and independent of the University, but it worked splendidly. During the academic season I seldom missed a Friday evening, and was entertained – usually on Sundays or holidays – at several Philadelphia homes ... I also met several foreign students studying in other faculties, with whom I should otherwise have had no

contact and ... more than a score of us got together to create l'Académie Cosmopolite. I was elected President ... we wanted to return some of the hospitality that we were receiving, by taking over responsibility for some of the Friday evening sessions and offering to our American friends an entertainment that was specifically Chinese, Japanese, Philippine or typical of some country. When it came to my turn I could think of nothing more typically British than a program of readings of modern English poetry, but my effort was well received...

James had found his way back into the student world from which he had been earlier excluded, and in a gracious setting far removed from the plebian grime of Clare Market, he was settling into its pleasant patterns very happily.

Pennsylvania was quietly proud of its history and I was proud to be a member of it. In 1765, it had established the first Medical School in the United States and more than a century later, in 1881, the Wharton School was created as the first university school of business administration in the world. There were many other firsts, and many great names in its history, so that almost from the day of my arrival, my affection for and loyalty to the institution grew steadily.

But James' new life almost ended before it had begun. Naively he seems not to have realized that he would have to pay tuition fees; certainly he was not prepared for the American scale of fees. He had registered in the fourth year BSc (Econ) class, and was asked to pay $325 for the year. With the costs of lodging and subsistence as additional items, this sum was quite beyond his resources. He took his problem to his professor, Emory Johnson, who was also dean of the Wharton School of Business in the university. The dean produced a remarkable solution: after studying James' academic record from LSE, he declared James eligible to register in the graduate school. In the curious ways of academia, graduate fees happened to be much less than undergraduate – in fact, only $110. Disappointed that he could not be a candidate for the BSc (Econ) but relieved that his student career had been salvaged, James registered in graduate courses the next day. He quickly found that what he had lost by way of academic diploma he had more than gained in quality of academic experience. Graduate seminars were conducted in small groups offering opportunity for close relationships with senior professors.

But the decline of his bank balance force him to seek some additional income. Naturally he turned again to banking, but since

his seminars took place in the daytime the only job he could accept was as a member of "the night clearing staff" at the Corn Exchange National Bank. Although this meant he had to work from midnight to seven A.M., he found the work not only enjoyable but also an excellent source of practical banking information. Nevertheless, after only four weeks, his academic work had suffered noticeably and he had more than once fallen asleep in class; reluctantly he resigned his position.

The same day he resigned, one of James' professors, E.M. Patterson, called him into his office. Although he knew nothing of this banking episode, Patterson had noticed the deteriorating quality of James' work and wanted to spur him on to renewed effort. He pointed out to James that if he did well in his seminars and presented an acceptable thesis topic, he could qualify for an MA degree. In a moment, all regrets for the missed BSc (Econ) degree vanished, and James immediately began to look for a thesis subject. The $130 he had earned during the four weeks at the bank would be enough to carry him through. The dean readily accepted the subject "A review of the international shipping situation, with special reference to the policy of the United States and that of the United Kingdom."

James found his university courses challenging but enjoyable. He was required to participate in six seminars weekly, each gathering fifteen to twenty-five students to read papers in rotation for group criticism and discussion. Taking part in seminars, presenting papers, and joining in discussions came easily to the young Englishman. His basic preparation by Charles Davenport and the LSE lecturers had been of a high quality, and the years of participation in church societies and mission-hall preaching had honed his ability to organize his thoughts quickly and express himself clearly.

So the academic year passed pleasantly on its way. Friday evenings were spent at the International House, Thanksgiving in the home of Chester's parents, and Christmas Day and New Year's Eve in the warm hospitality of a Philadelphia family. When the Pennsylvania baseball team went to West Point to play the US Military Academy on 14 May, James and his friends made the excursion up the Hudson River, not so much to watch the game as to see that lovely part of the country and wander around the splendid buildings of the campus. On 28 May 1924, having passed examinations in all his courses, James submitted his thesis and presented himself for oral examination by a committee of graduate faculty chaired by Dean Johnson, who subsequently informed James that he had fulfilled all the requirements for the MA degree.[3]

With his first university year in the United States completed with success far beyond his initial expectation, Frank James was now more than ready to postpone returning to England in order to have further experience of this land of golden serendipity. The only problem was money. For the summer, his problem resolved itself in a manner once again unexpectedly advantageous. Chester Comer's family had political connections, and Chester had received a minor patronage vacation appointment at Valley Forge, by favour of the local congressman. There was a position available for another person on the team, which Comer sought and received for James.

This summer employment was another stroke of good fortune for Frank James, but the introduction it gave him to American history was perhaps even more important. It takes more than a book or two or a visit to Williamsburg to enable an Englishman to comprehend the depth of feeling engendered in American patriotism. During that summer at Valley Forge, James had an unusual opportunity to loosen the bonds of prejudice and find the freedom to appreciate and admire the achievement of American independence.

Suburbia had not reached Valley Forge in 1924. It was a small country village, twenty miles from Philadelphia, that nestled between the Schuykill River and the wooded hills behind it. Near at hand was the 'Battlefield' – more accurately an encampment – where George Washington and his army had spent the winter of 1777–1778, which was the turning point in the American War of Independence. One could wander for hours in pleasant scenery accompanied by a sense of history ... Dr. Burk,[4] whom I came to know well, might almost be called the creator of Valley Forge ... the hours that I spent wandering around the encampment with him as my guide, or sitting of an evening in his book-lined study at Defenders' Gate, were my introduction to American history. The preservation of the Memorial Chapel, and the tribulations of Washington's army during that terrible winter of 1777–1778 were his only subjects of conversation, but on each of these he was well-informed and eloquent, so that I was an eager listener.

The boy who had spent a summer poring over the medieval parish registers of Stoke Newington was now responding to voices from the eighteenth century, and was not at all dismayed by their American accents. It was the accent of a country that had warmly welcomed an unknown young visitor and offered him advantages beyond anything he had expected. James was probably unaware, in the excitement of it all, that he was being weaned from the