

THE OLD KNOWLEDGE AND THE NEW

This year marks the half century, the Jubilee, of the union of the original Canadian Provinces into what is known as the Dominion of Canada, and which now comprehends one half of America north of the Gulf of Mexico. As a Jubilee year it would, under ordinary circumstances, be fitly celebrated, as the passing of an era in our national history, with a ceremony that in times of peace we would observe at the passing of any lustrum of national life. We will, indeed, celebrate it, but with a ceremony which will not engross all our thoughts, for the advent of our Jubilee year has found us as a nation engaged as one of a group of democracies in a gigantic struggle against another nation with its allies, wholly dominated by palæolithic conceptions of humanity and warfare, a struggle which, unparalleled in history, has already cost enough in blood and tears to make mankind hereafter look back upon it as a time of tragedy and sorrow. The importance of our Jubilee year will, accordingly, be dwarfed beside that in which everything we hold as making life worth while appears at stake.

And yet this Jubilee of our national life, submerged as it is in the thoughts of the titanic struggle, must not pass without some tribute to it for what it signifies to us as a stage in our national life. From the union we have derived all the strength which we exert in the great war of to-day. From it we have received and developed by degrees in the decades as they passed a consciousness of unity of purpose and a high aim which has molded and will mold our will as a people to serve for the furtherance of human happiness and liberty. Because of it to-day we have a steadiness of resolution, an insight as to duty, and a desire to do our part in the maintenance of the forces making for the progress of the world, which have won for our country an unstinted admiration from the best elements in the great democracy which has just entered as a combatant on our side in the great war. It is, indeed, no mean achievement to have gained the prestige of a virile people, endeavouring to maintain at an incalculable cost the priceless heritage of freedom which we have received from our fathers.

Had it not been for this union, we would have been ineffective in this war for liberty. We would have been condemned to be, if not interested spectators, at best only casual and uncoördinated assistants in the struggle, and we would have had in our consciousness the element of helplessness, the feeling that we were playing a very