

3 GEORGE V., A. 1913

In 1911 the same officer, referring to the French, Belgian, Swiss, German and Scandinavian emigrants, in the above order, says, 'These people are an unusually good class, and accept work at agriculture with great readiness.'

What could I add, but that the Belgian and French farmers by their perfect knowledge of mixed farming and soiling will be specially precious in a country like western Canada, where the cultivating of the soil is still in an elementary state, and that the French and Belgian workers, the most skilled and industrious of all Europe, would be an inestimable acquisition for our young industry, specially in the west. Belgium with a population of nearly eight millions and a territory about the size of some counties of Quebec, has only one colony, whose white population is not over fifteen hundred souls, after the most intelligent and persevering efforts made in modern times, for its settlement and exploitation. I met at Antwerp, on his way to Harwich, a young Belgian, who was going as agent for a commercial firm of Liege, to establish himself in Kantanga, presently the only region of the Belgian Congo, wherein white people can reside. This young man was going to Harwich by boat, from Harwich to Southampton by rail, from Southampton to Cape by steamer, from the Cape to Broken Hill by rail, through Boulouvay, from Broken Hill to the Kantanga in a cart drawn by oxen, that means with a half a dozen transshipments, and either by boat, rail or cart, a five weeks' trip costing for second class everywhere, except in the oxen drawn cart, four hundred dollars. He could have gone by Suez and through eastern Africa, but his patrons, all reckoned did not see any saving by it.

How many common people, servants, peasants, workmen, mechanics, tank-workers could afford a five weeks' trip of four hundred dollars, to try and try only to improve their condition? Is it not evident that the virtual impossibility of the return, in case of failure, will always impede the immigration of these different classes, with one which no serious settlement is possible? The Congo shall some day, perhaps, be accessible to white people's activity, although many even in Belgium doubt it, but it seems that, for the present, public officers and traders only can find any profit in it. The bulk of Belgian emigration at the present moment directs its steps towards the north of France. It is reckoned that every year more than one hundred thousand Belgians cross the frontier to work all the harvest in the French provinces, but thousands of them remain in France, in departments where not only the price of land is higher than anywhere in Canada, except in the immediate vicinity of large towns and cities, but where the attachment to the land being stronger than here, it is more difficult, even at a higher price to acquire a large domain. The day is near when Belgium, in spite of its economic regime and social institutions which make pauperism unknown in that nice country, will no longer be able to nourish all its population, do what she might, and will have to resign itself to let tens of thousands of its children migrate to foreign countries. All the leading men which I have met are of opinion that Canada could easily draw the most part of that emigration. The committees named 'Expansion Mondiale,' sitting at Mons in 1905 during the Liege exhibition, adopted a resolution to the effect that Belgian youths should preferably emigrate to our country. In the high commercial schools, as the Saint Ignace Institute, at Antwerp, they already and very properly teach the economic geography and history of Canada.

France with a less dense population, with births scarcely equal to deaths, a more exacting military service, still differs from Belgium in the fact that it does not lack colonial territories, and itself needs farm labourers. Nevertheless the difference is not as great as it appears at first view. Although France has always been and will always be in need of labourers on any point of its territory, and for any of its industries, it does not follow that it can or even ought to, hold its people by force. In England also, which after all does not suffer by it, emigration is strongly objected to by the large agriculturists.