

A MESSAGE FOR EMPIRE DAY.

BY DR. GEORGE R. PARKIN.

I have been asked by the editor of the EDUCATIONAL REVIEW to write something that may serve as an Empire Day message to Canadian teachers. I comply with pleasure. The request brings back the memory of many strenuous and happy years spent as a teacher in the schools of my native Province — at Buctouche, Campobello, Bathurst, Fredericton; in the small country school, the grammar school, the collegiate school; with University life in Canada sandwiched in between the first two of these and University life at Oxford between the last two. They were years absolutely crowded with work, dreams, friendships, experiences which have moulded the whole of life.

Looking back on all these years the thing that strikes me most about them is, that after seeing a good deal of the world, I cannot think of any better preparation for the work I have been called upon to do in later life than that which they gave me. The country school gave time for reading and reflection amid quiet, wholesome and simple surroundings. The larger schools tested and developed the teaching powers, enlarged the field of influence over young minds at their most interesting stage of growth, gave opportunities to take part, by speech and writing, in church and civic life. The University interludes brought close contact with young men who were to take a large part in public life and were thinking out the problems of Canada and the Empire. So these years were full of inspiration as well as strenuous effort. They had the merit of being comparatively free from the haunting and sometimes narrowing cares of business life. They involved, it is true, small pay and simple living, but certainly gave more opportunity for serious thinking and study to anyone inclined that way than most occupations that bring a higher money reward.

I begin with this personal reference because I wish to record my conviction gained from experience that a teacher's life in New Brunswick, somewhat despised, I fear, by ambitious young men of to-day, offers opportunities for usefulness, happiness and mental development of a very exceptional kind.

But to gain the most from such a life the

teacher's mind and heart must be given unreservedly to his work. His inspiration must come from a strong sense of the importance of his task and its potential influence. The strength of a state or community depends upon the character and efficiency of its individual units. In all countries responsibility for the character of the people is shared between the home, the church and the school. Each has its important part to play, but when a strong personality directs the school, it does not take a second place even to home and church in the formation of character. In the creation of efficiency its place is unquestionably first. Without a clear realization of this relation which he holds to the community the teacher cannot gauge his responsibility. When he does grasp it he will find that he has one of the noblest inspirations to effort that life can give.

Now it seems to me that there never was a time in the history of New Brunswick, of Canada or of the Empire at large when the call to teachers to rise to the height of their great vocation was so imperative as in this year 1916. Empire Day, which we are soon to celebrate, comes to remind us of the tremendous issues with which we are faced. We know that it must be a year of infinite suffering and sacrifice. Through that suffering and sacrifice Canada is finding a new place in the Empire — the Empire is finding a new place in the world. In the terrible struggle going on for national ideals and national existence our own nation has more at stake than any other. Even before the war one-fifth of the world's area, and one-fifth of its population were under the British flag. Should the success we anticipate crown our arms that proportion will be raised to one quarter. No such responsibility has ever before in the whole course of human history been placed upon any single nation. Shall we prove equal to its demands? It will depend upon the amount of character and disciplined efficiency that we bring to our task, and for these we must, as I have said, look largely to our schools. Our British people are committed to the ideal of democratic government, as opposed to an autocracy such as that of Germany. An ignorant democracy is not fitted to govern even a city, a province or a dominion, much less a great Empire.

The school is responsible for training the intelligent citizen capable of using the governing