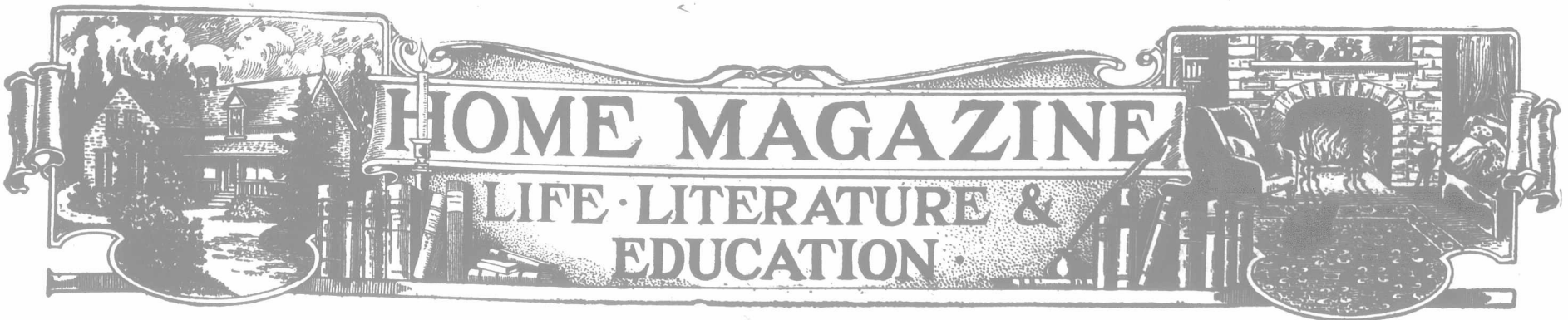




The Holocaust in Northern Ontario.

"The worst catastrophe in Ontario's history," say the headlines of the daily newspapers, in telling of the awful holocaust in Northern Ontario. The towns of Cochrane, South Porcupine, Kelso and Potteryville swept off the face of the earth; all the settlers between Matheson and Kelso burned out; a vast strip of forest eight miles wide utterly devastated; a property loss of millions, exclusive of the loss in pulpwood; when all this has been said, the least has been said, for the horror of the situation centers around the fact that probably many hundreds of human lives have been lost by fire and by drowning. The exact number will never be known, for although an estimate may be made of those who lived in the towns and worked in the mines, no record can be given of the prospectors scattered through the woods. In time, claims that no longer report may tell a story, the more eloquent because so silent; in time, friends who have waited long may come to sad conclusions; but who will tell of the lonely adventurers who so often stray into such places, free-lances in the world, without home-ties, lost in the world's wilderness to all who have known them?

What can be said of disasters such as this? Nothing. The heart grows sick in reading of them. Yet, even so, there may well come from time to time a thrill of pride as one reads of the heroes that such periods of awful trial and suffering have revealed. The first accounts in the newspapers, by their very bareness, throw such deeds more sharply into relief. At South Porcupine, for instance, where the entire population sought refuge in the lake, "the first thoughts in the minds of the men were for the safety of the women and little ones," and so the men stood in the water to drown and to die of heat and exhaustion, while the boats pushed off again and again. And tales of individual sacrifice are not wanting. In the same lake, William Moore "gave up the plank by which he might have saved himself to an exhausted comrade. He himself was drowned."—That is all. . . . At Cochrane, "Mr. A. S. Wright (Stratford, Ont.) master-mechanic of the Transcontinental, after rescuing his own family, returned to the burning area for an old lady, whom he had to carry out. When passing a building, an explosion threw him to the ground, and he had to dig a hole in the sand in which to bury his face to get his breath. His face was badly burned, but he saved the old lady."—That is all, but what a story! . . . "Thanks to Jack Munroe, Karl Willis and Constable Piercy, and their organization of fire-fighters, Golden City was saved,"—and so Golden City is now able to supply shelter and food to many worn and starving refugees. Thus the stories go, and heads are bared before the heroism of such men.

In what contrast stand the examples—for examples there always

are at such times—of selfishness and depravity. "The foreigners were the worst," says one refugee from South Porcupine, "but they were kept back by a young man with a revolver, who threatened to shoot any man attempting to board a boat until the women were taken off." Again, "All the good men at Cochrane were fighting the flames, but there were a few bad ones running loose. Some fellows broke into my store during the fire and stole the liquor," so tells a druggist of that place. What a contrast! Truly, catastrophe does not make men, but it distinguishes readily enough between those who are men and those who are not. Nor does want of manliness reveal itself only among the rough element. At one time, it is told, a man "who looked as if he might be a lawyer" was seen going out in a canoe, carefully taking with him a trunk that might have held papers, and pushing away from a drowning woman and child.

As the days pass, more and more of the details are finding their way into the newspapers, and ever the story becomes more harrowing. But it is reassuring to know that the rains that visited Southern Ontario on Sunday last reached also to Northern Ontario, falling copiously enough to remove practically the danger that threatened a vast area of the north country.

There is only one conclusion to reach in regard to these many outbreaks—that carelessness somewhere is to blame. This fearful lesson will surely be warning enough to all travellers pushing into the woods to exercise more scrupulous care in putting out camp-fires, and carelessly throwing away burning cigar-ends. Above all should precautions be taken by lumbermen and railway-construction gangs against leaving "slash" to dry in the sun and become as so much tinder. No doubt, a more rigid system of fire-protection will be organized, especially along railway routes, but what can ever so efficient a brigade of fire-rangers do to combat carelessness scattered broadcast through the woods in time of dry weather? It would seem that the distribution, among all travellers to the forest regions, of pamphlets devoted to warning against fire might be of some avail. Such literature has been found valuable in regard to tuberculosis; why not in regard to fire-danger also?

The Windrow.

The suggestion that the British National Anthem be altered, to breathe a more peaceful spirit, has been sanctioned by the King. The stanza to which objection has been taken runs as follows:

"O Lord our God arise,
Scatter his enemies,
And make them fall;
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks;
On Him our hopes we fix,
O save us all."

This will henceforth be sung to Dean Holt's rendering:

"O Lord our God arise,
Scatter his enemies,
Make wars to cease;
Keep us from plague and death,
Turn Thou our woes to mirth,
And over all the earth
Let there be peace."

Little Trips Among Eminent Writers.

John Ruskin.

(Continued.)

With the publication of "Unto This Last," a storm of hatred and bitter reviling burst upon Ruskin's head. It had been arranged that the work should appear periodically in The Cornhill Magazine, of which Thackeray was then editor, but so great was the resentment which the articles occasioned that only four were permitted to appear. Hitherto, Ruskin had shown himself chiefly as an entertaining writer on architecture and art, who could, on occasion, write prose as beautiful as poetry, and sarcasm of a rarely rich quality. True, this sarcasm had made many of the artists of England and the Continent wince, but the non-artists rather enjoyed seeing the artists wince. And so the reading world had smiled upon Ruskin.

Now, however, the refined, delicately-nurtured reading world was itself assailed, and there was a different story. Who was this man that he should dare to set his puny strength against the prevailing order of civilization? What manner of mad preaching was this?—that all men should work with both hands and brain (Tut! Set a nobleman, a wealthy capitalist, to work with his hands?); that people should only possess what they earned; that, if all thus took part in the necessary work of the world, over-heavy burdens need rest on none; that great inequality as regards riches and comforts should not exist; that all men should have the benefits of a liberal education; that character is the one thing worth striving for, and that conditions should be so directed to develop the best in every man; that Government should be "paternal," deeming it but its duty to provide work, and so a living, for the unemployed. What wild, impractical teaching was all this? Who was this Ruskin that he should dare to cry out upon luxurious living as one of the deadly sins? That he should arraign men of large estate because they did not give up their substance for the sake of a riff-raff poor? That he should decry the charging of interest, and all sensible things? Let him go back to his art!

And so, with the publication of "Unto This Last," and later, of "Munera Pulveris," Ruskin made enemies everywhere. Yet he held the more closely friends among those whose friendship he might well value. Among these were Carlyle and Froude, who hailed this iconoclastic writing as "a high and noble sort of truth, pressingly needed in England." And in Russia, even at that stormy time, was working, quite independently, but along somewhat similar lines, the young man upon whom Ruskin himself was one day to hope that his own mantle might fall. And yet Tolstoi's ideals differed, in many essential respects, from those of Ruskin. Ruskin was not so anarchic. Kings he believed in—but the king should be the very flower of the nation, in character, and for service to his people; governments he believed in, but governments made up of men who were the wisest and best of their time, men capable of thinking less of their own advancement than of the welfare of the people. A government that was not

"paternal" he considered lacking in any conception whatever of its duty.

In 1864 Ruskin's father died, leaving considerable property and a fortune besides of £120,000 to this only son, but Ruskin worked none the less strenuously.

In December of that year he gave the lectures in Manchester which were afterwards published as "Sesame and Lilies." During the winter he also contributed to the Art Journal the papers now known as "The Cestus of Aglaia," and delivered at the Camberwell Working Men's Institute the lectures which eventually appeared in book form as "Crown of Wild Olives." All the while, too, he was becoming more and more interested in the working-people, more anxious that they should have better representation in Parliament, more anxious that they should have better and more uniform wages. He insisted, however, on better workmanship from the workmen themselves. Men should work for love of their work, and should endeavor to produce perfect articles, strong and honest. In order that they might have such love for their work, he argued that they should be encouraged, as much as possible, to make complete articles and to originate design. Hence he hated the whole competitive system, and especially the establishment of factories which compelled men to specialize in but one detail, such as dropping a wheel on a peg, month in, month out, year in, year out, work that a machine might do, necessitating speed only. If rich people, he argued, did not demand so many luxuries, but were willing to take their share in the world's work, and to pay for good hand work, then there would be no necessity for this slavery or for "sweat-shops" anywhere.

And so he added to "Unto This Last," "Time and Tide," and "Fors Clavigera," a series of letters addressed to working men, but written, it is to be feared, in a style little likely to recommend the series greatly to the men for whom most intended. Ruskin is sometimes tedious, and the characteristic (from which, it may be noted, "Unto This Last" is especially free) appears not infrequently in "Fors Clavigera." In these letters, however, appears an outline of the experiment for social improvement which Ruskin himself carried out, to the complete disaster of his own fortune.

He had, in short, conceived the idea of starting several ideal, co-operative settlements, as nuclei, in England, settlements in which high thinking and plain living should prevail; in which manual labor should be exalted, everyone working with his hands part of the time, and having time left for mental improvement and recreation; in which there should be none very rich, yet none poor or uneducated, or vulgar; in which there should be no factories or railways (which he detested, except for main lines), no capitalists, "people who live by percentage on the labor of others, instead of by fair wages for their own"; no ugliness of dress, nor of architecture, nor of lives—in short, a series of settlements providing Utopian ease and health and beauty and common sense, such as men have dreamed of since men have cared for the suffering and mistakes and foolishness of this off-erring world.