

Some Features of National Service.

In these times, there is no difficulty in finding a subject upon which to address any audience in the British Empire, in fact these strenuous times offer ample material for addresses before any group of individuals in any part of what we were once pleased to term the civilized world. Nevertheless, it seems impossible to fix on any subject without being forced to touch upon this world holocaust into which we have been plunged during the past two years. At times, I am forced to feel that Bret Harte unconsciously sensed the truth when in levity he asked:

*"Is our civilization a failure?
Or is the Caucasian played out?"*

When your Honorary Secretary was good enough to convey to me the invitation of your Executive to appear before you at one of your club luncheons, I therefore did not hesitate to accept, because I felt it would be an easy matter to fix upon some subject in which I could in a measure interest you for the few moments one is expected to speak at these functions. And, as a matter of fact, it was my desire to say a few words in public upon the movement in which the Right Honourable Sir George Foster was at that time deeply interested. Hearing, however, that he was to address you at, I believe, your opening meeting of the present Club season, and expecting that he would deal with preparedness for after the war problems, I concluded to stand aside for the time being. The subject is of such outstanding importance that I feel it cannot be brought too often to our attention. It is linked up to national service. What is national service? It is the opposite of that extreme individualism which has been running rampant in recent years. It is true that each one of us should strike a balance—placing on one side what Canada has done for us and on the other what we are doing for Canada—I do not mean the generous giving of wealth alone, but that more potent factor—the use of our brains in furthering the country's good, especially in a time like this when the ball is at our feet. May I further express it this way—while we seem to be prolific wasters on this continent, efficiency was understood fully two hundred years before the time of Nero—that Nero who fiddled, and burned, and wasted. It is traceable back to the time of Euclid whose method of reasoning has not been improved upon down through the Christian era. Euclid appeared to be charged, as no man since, with the idea that we assemble our facts—our opportunities—and what we wish to determine, otherwise expressed, our ambitions—then he proceeds in a scientific way to use facts or opportunities to obtain the desired results. Now, gentlemen, have we as citizens any ambition other than for our individual advancement—have we any collective ambition for the advancement of the State? When we have, then we will have enrolled ourselves in national service.

Preparedness is no new subject. It was preached nineteen hundred years ago, and in language that cannot be equalled in effectiveness today. You remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. How the former had their lamps trimmed and filled with oil. They were prepared and theirs was the reward.

As you are aware, in the early part of June last, the Minister of Trade and Commerce issued what is known as his "Call to Action." It was a message freighted with importance to the people of Canada. It was based upon