

CANADA'S FUTURE*

By David H. Browne.

Down here in New York, when we get together, Canadian, Englishmen and Americans who know Canada, one topic is sure of discussion; that is the future of the Dominion. Upon one thing we are all agreed; that this war has pulled the country together as nothing else could have done. The National Consciousness is self evident. It jumps to the eyes, as the French say. With this feeling of unity to begin with, great progress in organization and large developments in commerce and industry follow inevitably. At present these rest upon an abnormal condition, and whether these benefits can be retained in normal times is a serious question.

Let us talk it over, as we do here around a lunch table, for many a true word is spoken in jest and it is by such informal conversation that sentiment crystallizes into belief and belief into action.

Our good friend Gilbert Rigg, who has gone to Australia to assist the smelting of zinc and lead in the Commonwealth, is a man of great intellectual penetration. He gave me some very good ideas before he left, and to these I have added some of my own. I will lay the whole before you, in the same spirit of indifference with which the waiter hands you the menu and lets you choose for yourself. My only comment is to inform you that I wrote those parts which strike you as sound and logical. The ideas which are evidently foolish and visionary Rigg must take the blame for. He is on the Pacific now and cannot help himself.

This war has taught us a good many things, but the one thing of all others which it has taught us is to look a fact squarely in the eye without blinking. If we can apply to the future of our industries that same clarity of vision which we apply to the purposes of this war, we may be able to see a path through the wilderness.

In the first place, we can admit at once that men are not all they should be. There would not be such a large percentage of rejections at our recruiting stations, or such a number of men dropped from the paymasters' books every month in our industries, if the average of physical and mental efficiency were satisfactory. All these agencies for doing us good must have some reason for existence.

Yet any recruiting officer can tell you of men, who, once rejected, have made themselves fit and joined the colors; every shop foreman knows of mechanics who made a failure in one position only to make a success in another; and the records of all religious revivals are full of instances of drunkards and wastrels who have become decent, self-respecting citizens.

Evidently, reform is quite possible, but in every case it is to be noted that whatever agency has given the initiative, reform is an effort of the will, in answer to an overpowering conviction. Reform in every case comes from within, and is achieved by the surrender of a man's individuality to some ideal. This possession of some ideal, reasonably attainable and constantly striven for is what distinguishes the man from the human machine.

So in dissecting the ideas of those who propose to make the world better by changing men's natures, we can agree with them that anything which gives man higher ideals is worth while. There is really some-

thing in this position that men can be made better, and any agency which attempts this is worthy of encouragement.

So as far as these agencies can create an ideal in men and make them better men, they fill their part.

The main idea of life, however, is to be happy and to make other men happy; and into this happiness enter the conditions we find around us, many of which require to be changed.

Looking back over this preachment, we do not seem to have made much progress, Rigg and I. It is dry reading so far and does not seem to lead anywhere. Light a pipe and read ahead. Give us a chance.

Some while back one of us said that the war has taught us to see clearly. One of the things it has taught us to see is that men will unite, work together, suffer together and die together in order to achieve some common purpose which appeals to them as desirable. They are trying to realize certain conditions which seem to them to be good, and to rectify certain other conditions which they look upon as abhorrent. Further, they do all this on their own initiative as impelled by one purpose.

Admit that a good many enlist "because everybody is doing it." Everybody wouldn't be doing it if there was not some ideal seen by all and more clearly seen by some. Put it into concrete terms, and the argument is somewhat like this: Certain principles are at stake, certain ideals which we believe to be right are menaced. Our national existence and our future welfare depend on what we do now, upon what I do this minute. Plainly then, "it is up to me."

There you have it, the idea of individual service for a common ideal, which is to retain and maintain certain conditions of life.

These conditions of life which appear so highly desirable are summed up for us in one word—Canada. It's our country; it's a white man's country. It's home and mother and wife and children and all that's good. It's a place where a man has a chance, where one can go ahead and make something of himself, and where our children can go further and fare better than we have done. This isn't simply patriotism, it's a fact, a concrete something that we can lay our fingers on.

Now for this fact, in order to perpetuate this fact, men will join the colors and fight and suffer and die. In this service they meet conditions which appeal to them, which are so real and vital to them that when they come home wounded they are anxious to get back to some muddy ditch where they may go through the same experience and do their bit all over again.

What is it they find in this service that calls them in such an irresistible way? The main thing seems to be the common purpose; the feeling that they are getting something done, that must be done and that they alone can do. They feel their own individuality and their own personal worth.

This feeling of individual responsibility, the necessity of giving the best that each has is emphasized by the fact that in the ranks the former distinctions of caste are entirely lost. Eating, sleeping, working together, the laborer, the clerk, the employer, the poor man and the rich man, the scholar and the professor, all thrown together in the same service, come to know each other and to understand each other in a way that is never realized in normal times. The trenches are a

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