

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL LESSONS ON THE WAR FOR CANADIAN EDUCATION.

My subject is The Spiritual Gains of the War. The word "gains" suggests losses. The losses of the war are beyond human computation; losses in things material; losses in certain things moral. But we are concerned with the spiritual gains, and great as are the losses, it is my conviction that the gains we have won from the war will far outweigh the losses. I refer not so much to those gains that our Empire won. We have secured the Freedom of the World, Honour and Good Faith among the nations, and the reign of International Law. These things are arms brought back with victory.

There are other gains, too, that we have won. The discovery of ancient peoples, long forgotten, with their rights and wrongs, the creation of new states out of dismembered parts; the emancipation of enslaved peoples from a tyranny intelligent and cruel; the grouping of free states under great ideals, a notably great group being the League of Nations. In this class of gains the most important, I would consider, is the formation of the greatest League of Nations the world has yet seen, the Anglo-Celtic league. In that group lies the hope of the world for permanent peace, and for a steady advance in civilization.

But it is of the spiritual gains that are available for us in Canada, for immediate and practical use, that I would briefly speak.

I. First among these I would say that there is the *Re-affirmation of Conscience as Supreme in Human Conduct*. I am not going to attempt a philosophical discussion of conscience. I shall simply accept a definition of conscience which we have from a great German—I mean a German long since dead. Immanuel Kant called conscience the "categorical imperative." This allows for all variations in standards of conduct, but it asserts an imperative demand that, according to his own standard, a man should do the right thing. The right thing as against the challenge of interests; the right thing as even against the possible, because it is always possible for men to die.

This was, as we all know now, and as all the world knows, the fundamental issue in the war. Conscience was challenged by the greatest military power the world has ever known; challenged by its interests, reinforced by a distorted view of revolutionary law and by appeal to irresponsible force. The cause of humanity was transferred from the court of conscience to the arena of the gun and the bomb. The judge gave place to the G. O. C., the pleading of the advocate to the bludgeon and the bullet. All this our Empire and our country definitely challenged, and challenged with all the resources of their power behind their challenge, maintaining that not the thing that was politically astute, not the thing that paid

must be done, but the thing that was simply right. The rule of right was demanded as fundamental to Christian civilization in order that the citizen of the world should be secured in all his relations. For instance, it was maintained, as the Chinese schoolboy said, that Belgium "was not a road but a country." It was further maintained that Serbia, being a sovereign state, had right to the freedom of her courts of justice. Also that France, though weaker in a military sense than her great adversary, had still the right to have her coasts inviolate. The treaties bearing the signature of certain nations should be maintained by the full might of these nations.

Now one of the fruits of victory is this, that before the Court of International Conscience nations stand to be judged. From this Court there is absolutely no appeal. This thing our armies have won for the world.

And for us, too, in our individual relations, the principle is re-affirmed that when once recognized in every department of life, the right thing should be done, without parley and without argument, and without the counting of the cost. Laws henceforth in national affairs, in our Canadian National affairs, ought to express the thing that is right between man and man, and should so be enacted and preserved. They should represent what is right between class and class, what is simply right between man and his community.

Customs based on right should be cherished, those otherwise based should be ruthlessly uprooted. Institutions that preserve the rule of right should be cherished; all others should be removed. The man who stands for the thing that is right in any department of life should be honoured and supported, and all others should be removed.

There is a double advantage in the simple assertion and maintenance of this principle. First of all, Right rules, and secondly the vision of right standards is clarified. When I was in Britain last year there were, if I am not mistaken, a dozen or so Royal Commissions seeking to find out what was the right thing in the various Industrial and Social activities in Great Britain, trying to find out what was the right thing to be done in the various human relations. I have wondered whether the difficulty would not have largely disappeared if the simple principle had been frankly and loyally accepted throughout Great Britain, namely, that the thing that is right between man and man should rule. There came to my mind the words from an ancient book: "If thine eye be single, thy body shall be full of light." Not only does this determination that the right thing is to be done at all costs, secure for us the rule of right, but, as I have said, it helps both to right thinking and right doing. This only is the way of peace, this the way of sound prosperity. Woe to the man that under whatsoever pressure would settle difficulties by any other law than this; woe to the