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WHAT IS A CANADIAN ?

A Problem That Never Was so Important as it is—Now

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AMONG the struggling groups of children that dotted six roads to the square wooden school, he was the smallest. He went alone between the ditch and the snake-rail fence, past the telegraph poles that droned a song he had never heard before, past the odd-looking frame houses with the woodpiles at the rear and the straw-stacked barns behind the woodpiles. It was a new picture to the lad on his way to school. He had never seen a school like this square tabernacle of knowledge next to a wintry orchard dotted with thawing frozen apples on the boughs. He had never known boys who dared to climb into such an orchard and eat such apples caring for nobody's dog or gamekeeper. And that two miles' tramp to the country school was to this lad a journey half across the world for the sake of getting the knowledge that would make it possible for him to grow up into a real citizen of Canada.

In that two miles' tramp he heard the song of the telegraph poles, dreaming that it was some mystic call to action across the plains of a new world. He watched a sleigh-load of elm logs pass and disappear along the vanishing line of those poles and the snake-rail fences, and he wondered to what great city they led, and if ever he should drive such a load somewhere to the mill that seemed to be the voice of industry as the droon of the telegraph poles was the sound of mystery.

That boy had a vision of Canada. It was his first. He had never seen such a country. Its mysterious, sombre bush-lines of a winter's day thrived him with immeasurable awe. He was filled with a passionate desire to see, to know, to get his hands and feet and what brains he had on the works of this great new land, that he might prove to the rest of those school-boys that he had as good a right to be here as they had—whose fathers were born in that settlement.

You may guess that the boy was an immigrant; and at the same time that the vision he had of Canada was different from any of the lads who had never seen any other land. To most of them that part of Canada was a mere fact. To him it was a fascinating mystery which he yearned to explore.

And that lad, born in England, was, we may say, in that tramp to the old square school a Canadian; a real, passionate, eager Canadian, who never could say that he was born in Canada, and never would need to boast that he was born in England.

ONE sure way for some people to certify themselves Canadian citizens is to see that their grandfathers get here before learning to vote. And even that is uncertain. Canada is one of the countries where the majority of the present generation's grandfathers were not born in the country. It's easy to define—a Frenchman or an Englishman, a Russian or an Italian. Nobody ever heard of a Frenchman who doesn't speak French, of a Russian whose native tongue was English, or of an Englishman who, wherever he might happen to be born, could not speak in some dialect or vernacular the language of Shakespeare.

On the score of both birthplace and mother tongue it is a difficult thing to determine whether and when a great number of people are Canadians. Quebec Province contains a large number of people who never expect to speak English, and a very small number of people who were not born in Quebec. But they are all Canadians; according to Henri Bourassa's latest pronouncement the only Canadians who can keep Confederation from becoming

a parliamentary relic. Ontario contains about 2,000,000 people who will never learn French. Saskatchewan has a high percentage of inhabitants who were not born in Canada, they nor their fathers before them. But the Mennonites of Rosthern and the Ruthenians of Alberta and Manitoba are, so far as the Immigration Department can determine, as much entitled to call themselves Canadians as the Ontario man who knows no French, or the Quebecker who does not speak English.

In the matter of tracing the evolution of citizenship, based upon language or nativity, Canada is in about the same predicament as the United States. We are under the necessity of importing a large percentage of our patriots. Not much more than half the population of Canada were born in this country. If we go into the business of nation-building by emigration after the war as extensively as we were doing five years ago, the majority of voters in Canada in the 100th year of Confederation may be people who were born somewhere else, and a very large minority of those who were born under some other flag than the Union Jack.

BUT, of course, our immigration may be different after the war. It is some hundreds of years since we got any numbers of Frenchmen. It may be as long before we get any more. Migrating Frenchmen will be scarce after the war. It is a good while since we got any native Germans. Kaiser William curtailed German emigration to any country—except for purposes of the secret service. The war is expected to abolish the German spy system. Whether we get German immigrants or not seems doubtful, even if we should decide to want them. That paternal system along the Rhine will need all the male Germans it can keep, and will probably take good care to keep them. It is doubtful if for some time to come we get many Russians. Farming in Russia is easier and less expensive for the moujik than farming in Canada, and Siberia has more vacant land than the Canadian Northwest. We shall probably continue to get Poles and Russian Jews, and perhaps Galicians. There is no reason to expect any decrease in the immigration of Italians.

As to British immigrants—what? We don't know. If Great Britain is to keep her place in the world's work along with her place in the Empire, she will not be able to spare large numbers of workers. If she decides that the Empire is of more importance than the seat of Empire, it may be considered wise to direct extensive immigration to Canada, as well as to Australia. But here the number of people who are either fit or willing to migrate may be too small to make a big yearly total to any country. We shall probably get an increased immigration from the United States when the prosperity born of war and the illusion of gold-wealth have passed into something else.

Calculating on the commercial value of a crippled humanity is quite too horribly Prussian to be comfortable in a free country. We should like to dream that somewhere in the world—outside of China—after the war is over, there will be limitless hordes of migrating people unharmed by the war and anxious to become citizens of a country whose soil has been unravaged by great battles. But it is only a dream. We have to take humanity as the war leaves it and make the best of it. Heaven knows civiliza-

tion in general has been reckless enough of human life. We have killed and crippled and prematurely aged millions upon millions of people in factories and mines and railroads, in sweatshops and tenements and slums, in palaces of the idle rich and all sorts of places where the mere spending of money made the value of a human life one of the cheapest things on the market. The war has been comparatively more humane because it sacrifices men for some sort of principle whether right or wrong, bigger than the mere accumulation of wealth for the few or the pursuit of pleasure for the many.

In a general way it will be a much dislocated world that will be knocking at our doors when the war is over. What we shall do with it we shall not be able to find out till the movement of the world's population has long since ceased to be the moving of the world's armies.

These are problems too remote for even philosophers. It is far more practical and important for the greatest new country in the British Empire to take stock in itself—now—in order to be sure what position we may expect to occupy in the readjustment of the world. It never was so necessary to determine what it is to be a Canadian; what Canadianism as such is and what it is worth; what are the forces that will make this country fit to take up the business mapped out by the Hon. Sir George Foster as effectively as we have already taken up the much easier programme of our contribution to the war.

This is no subject for the learned elect, most of whom live in a world that makes national feeling either impossible or absurd. It is a matter for the average workaday person on whom the sentiment as well as the business of Canada naturally falls.

Knowledge helps any man's nationalism, but is a mighty poor substitute for it. The only worse thing as an exclusive quality in the national makeup of any man is ignorance.

Not to know one's country is not to believe in it, or else to have a belief that amounts to nothing. A Canadian first of all has the right to know Canada. That is a large piece of work. Canada is a number of countries in one. It has as many angles of interest as the United States. And because it is a hundred years younger in political nationhood than the United States it offers the average citizen of Canada in this part of the 20th century a much greater field for studying his country.

HOW? Not by travel. Few of us can afford to travel all over Canada. Railway passes are for the favoured few, and mileage comes high. But that is no excuse for the Ontarioan who has never seen any city bigger than Toronto, except Buffalo, Detroit or Cleveland; no excuse for the Manitoban or Saskatchewaner or Albertan who knows no place bigger than Winnipeg, except Chicago or Minneapolis; none for the British Columbian who, outside of Vancouver and Victoria, takes no stock in any city except Seattle and San Francisco. Neither does it condone the Maritimer who, after he has seen Halifax or St. John, takes a trip to Boston or New York and thinks he has travelled enough; or for the Quebecker who, in thousands of cases, has not even seen Montreal. The least any man can be expected to know is 300 miles any direction in his own Province. If he knows that well he can postpone seeing the rest of Canada until he is too old to work and has money enough to travel.

Some of the best Canadians we ever had were men and women who had never seen any part of