

Four Years of War.

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It is now over four years since the world was staggered by the news of the declaration of war by the various European Powers, and the strain is now relieved by the continuous flow of cheering news, which shows that the stream of victory is gaining in power. That the end is not far distant, the worst pessimist in the world cannot deny. It may not be out of place now to look back over the past four years and appreciate a few facts in regard to the progress of the campaign. Such a review can be of much good to the Colonial, because of the veil which such a review can now draw aside. It must be evident to all, that anything which could encourage the enemy, or discourage our friends, could not be uttered aloud in the days when the strain was at almost breaking point; but now that the issue is certain, we may readily admit the grave circumstances which our Statesmen had to face.

If this great Empire were to be judged by the abuse, doubts, empty vapourings, etc., which the Press has steadily published, a very false idea of the value of such an Empire must be formed. The words of Kipling admirably appreciate the situation, wherein he says:—

If England were the England that she seems,
And not the England of our dreams;
But only putty, brass, and paint,
How quick we'd chuck her—BUT SHE AIN'T.

By England, of course, Kipling meant to refer to the mind that created, and, according to the public, mismanaged the Empire. That the head of the State is situated in England is sufficient to justify the common use of the word, although "Empire" would be better. Whatever term we use, however, let us acknowledge the greatness of that Empire to which we belong, dispense with the "camouflage," and appreciate the substance.

To attempt to explain all the momentous issues that had to be handled, would be to attempt the impossible, but if it is possible to deal with a few of more than ordinary interest, because of the publicity which they have received, we may learn to arrive at more genuine opinions, and perhaps reap a better after result from the mutual understanding which must result. Trying to avoid all technical phraseology, and taking only the well established facts as our guide, we may well look back and wonder that this grand Empire is yet existent, and what is more, that this Empire is the deciding factor in this war, for upon the financial power of this country, coupled with the mastery of the seas which the British Navy has secured and maintained, the success of the Allies depends.

To sum up the broad situation in 1914, Germany was ready for war. She had prepared for years, had stored immense supplies in food, ammunition, and gold, and had trained the largest Army in all Europe. Great Britain was not ready; France was re-organizing her Armies; Belgium was in the midst of a re-armament and re-organization; Russia was powerless, from the strong grip which Germany had secured on Russian public life. The Allies were not ready therefore. We are not concerned at this time with the situation of the Allied powers, but only with our own country, therefore we shall stick to that.

Great Britain was not ready for war. Why? Not because we did not know our danger; on the contrary, many able men had warned us, but because the people refused to get ready. You ask why? Because the British nation was staggering under the increasing cost of maintaining the control of the seas, as exemplified by

the Royal Navy, and which is the life of the nation, since the arteries which they protect represent the blood vessels which feed the whole Empire. Canada, without that Navy, could not have existed; our wheat is valueless unless it can be sold, and useless to the buyer unless it can be shipped, and our buyers are all overseas. Therefore, the Navy has to be maintained. But the Army has no claim upon our sentiment or pockets, and therefore is a subject of constant bickering and pruning when its cost is under discussion. Our soldiers were as wide awake as the Germans. They knew the danger, realized its extent, and did all they could to overcome the prejudice which crippled its very existence. To appreciate the power of the people in regard to the Army, let us grasp one or two plain facts.

The Army is authorized by Parliament in an Annual Act, which grants the necessary money, fixes the size, armament, etc., and makes allowance for its maintenance for the period of one year. That Act comes up for review annually, and it is the politician elected by the people, who must cast his vote to increase the size of the force. Increased expenditure means increased taxes, and draws the attention of every ratepayer to the man who created the extra tax. The Government suffers by the retaliation which the people can and will make. For this reason, our Army did not grow, despite the threat which our soldiers appreciated, and tried to make the public realize. It is not to our credit that a man who served us in a hundred battles, was described as "in his dotage," when he plainly stated the truth in regard to Germany. What applies to Britain, also applies to Canada, Australia, and every other part of the Empire, for the creation of the Army depended upon the annual goodwill of the people. Our soldiers wisely adopted other methods. Formerly, the Army demanded seven years' service from the Volunteer, but the short service, or three year enlistment Act was passed, and the number of men trained annually was increased by training two and one-third the number at the same cost. The soldiers went further, and established a standard that meant that every soldier was qualified for higher employment in his profession. The N.C.O.s and men were trained to perfection, physically and professionally, and were quite competent to become instructors to the masses, which history told us, would flock to their country's call. The officers were trained for higher command, and we can rightly claim that the British Expeditionary Force was quite easily the most efficient Army that ever took the field. What it lacked in quantity, it made up for in quality. In round numbers, it only represented 75,000 fighting men, but it proved that it was equal to fifteen times that number, or one and a quarter million men, for it actually repelled that number of Germans. The Territorial Force, the equivalent of our Canadian Militia, but more permanent in actual numbers, was as well trained as any force can be, when the individual enthusiasm of the members can decide the amount of training taken, and proved a good first line support to the Army, in as much as it was able to relieve our forces from garrison duty abroad, whilst its best units took their places in the trenches beside the gallant "Contemptibles."

It may be of interest to many to know, that the real reason why the First Canadian Division spent three months on Salisbury Plains, was not because of lack of discipline, as was so slanderously stated by many who were not fit to serve as lackies to a force of its calibre, but because there was nowhere in England at that time, a force sufficiently advanced in personnel and equipment, to take the field and repel any attempt at invasion of this country, and they were therefore