

Personalities and Problems

6---George E. Drummond, Iron Manufacturer

To Whom Business is the Evolution of an Idea

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

PLENTY of people have ideas without money. At least a few in Canada have money without ideas to make it worth while. The men who have both ideas and money are not exactly uncommon in this country; and among them Mr. George E. Drummond, of Montreal, is one of the most conspicuous.

It may be said that the development of the Drummond interests in Canada is the evolution of an idea. What that is the Vice-President of the Canada Iron Corporation knows better than any one else. And there are times when he takes a notion to expound the concretion of ideas that has grown up along with his business. When he does it is not so much a matter of argument as of conviction.

There is no sign on any of the windows in the Hammond office building to show which of them are Mr. Drummond's. He has no need to advertise. He has a passion for public affairs in a private capacity; but he hates mere publicity. From one of his windows, at 28 Victoria Square, the Vice-President of the C. I. C. could carry on a sign dialogue with another man who has ideas along with his money. That is D. Lorne McGibbon, President of the Consolidated Rubber Co., over in the Eastern Townships Building. Any lounge on Victoria Square these summer days might occasionally behold Mr. Drummond hustling across the campus to have a confab with Mr. McGibbon; though he has nothing directly to do with rubber, neither D. Lorne McGibbon with iron and steel.

On the walls of Mr. Drummond's big general office—all in one room—are pictures of iron and steel plants in various parts of Canada. On a stand in his private office are chunks of ore. You understand—that he is a man of iron. At the present time, between George E. and his brother, Thomas J., about 12,000 men are employed from Sydney to the Soo making iron and steel products, not least of which are steel rails, from Canadian ore, employing Canadian labour and a large amount of Canadian capital. The word "Canadian" is thrice-repeated here because it has more than the usual meaning; as we shall see before we get through with appreciating Mr. Drummond. The Drummond iron and steel interests began in 1881, in the exporting houses across the water. In the days just following the establishment of the N. P. the name "Canadian," applied to anything costing much capital to produce, had almost a sentimental significance. Times have changed. Now it's the British label that carries most of the sentiment; and Mr. Drummond knows rather better than most men how little sentiment we really need in this country to maintain Canada as a common-sense unit in the Empire.

FROM this evolution one consolidated truth has become the property of George E. Drummond. Other men have come near expressing the same idea; but none that I remember with his matter-of-fact certainty. And it was the size of this idea that caused Mr. Drummond to stump-speak for his friend, Sir Max Aitken, and the Unionist cause, last general election in England.

Now there is a story concerning the two Drummond boys in the days when they went rollicking round town wondering where the first dollar might come from. A story that might be taken to illustrate the real genius of the Drummond family, if you did not feel sure that the mere manoeuvring of money plays a very small part in their make-up.

Anyway the story, or legend, or whatever it is, has to do with that sentimental period in a boy's career when he makes his first dollar; the dollar or the quarter that he carries with him through life like a scar; the coin that probably John D. Rockefeller remembers—and the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. Even a poet may remember his first honest dollar.

So the legend goes—there was a cat show in Montreal. The Drummond boys, George E. and Thomas J., understood that prizes were to be given for the best cats. But they had no cats, which to some lads would have been a real impediment; not so to these. Montreal was blessed with a large number of ownerless cats. The legend says that these lads corralled enough cats into bags to fill a good-sized packing-case cage, which, with due circumstantiality, was carted down to the cat show.

The entry was made and the cage of captive backyard cats was set up. In a very short while these cats became the most interesting part of the show. They fit and fought and raised Cain in a fashion that quite outdid the famous cats of Kilkenny. The management of the show did not wish to do anything unconstitutional. As a point of ethics one or more of these cats might win a prize. Had the first prize been for fighting the whole cage would have got it. The boys were offered a couple of dollars to take away the cats. Which they did. The



"No preference anywhere that interferes with a dominion building up its own industries."

cats were turned loose. A dollar went into each of the Drummond pockets.

Which may or may not have been the intention.

Anyway, though the legend may not be an illustration of the Wordsworthian adage, "The child is father to the man," it proves once again that boys will be boys. And the two Drummond brothers have hung together in business and ideas with the same pertinacity that they exhibited in the cat show. Their own boys never had such experiences. But so far as George E. Drummond is concerned, he has made it a principle that his own sons are to have the glorious privilege of taking hold of the world at least while they are boys, in as nearly as possible the practical, strenuous fashion the father did when he was a lad. One of Mr. Drummond's two sons is at present employed in the iron works at the Soo. When he graduated from college it would have been the most natural thing in the world for the boy to have gone into

the office at Montreal. But a talk with the father settled it—that if that branch of the Drummond family was to take its real place in the iron and steel business of Canada, there was plenty of time yet for the office. The lad went to the Soo. Every morning, winter and summer, he lugs his tin dinner pail down to the works and takes his place among the iron workers. When he gets through with that he will have more knowledge of how iron ore is made into steel rails than any other millionaire's son in Canada.

This is a sample of the plain common sense without ostentation that has developed the Drummond idea. George E. Drummond began business life as a clerk in an iron and steel merchant's office in Montreal. In 1881 he started the firm of Drummond, McCall and Co., importing iron and steel commodities from Great Britain. In those days there wasn't a pig of iron produced from Canadian ore. The iron business of the world in the order of magnitude by countries was—England, Germany, the United States. The Drummond firm put a nail in practical Imperialism by importing from England.

Six years the firm with the two young men at the head of it had its invoices and bills of lading checked in the counting houses across the water in L. s. d. And in that six years the Drummonds began to evolve the idea that makes the Canada Iron Co. possible. Business and experience are great teachers.

At the same time things were shaping up for what at this distance of looking back seems like a remarkable change in this or any other part of the Empire. It was the sort of change likely to be most evident to men who were importing goods from England, paying their bills in L. s. d. At least a few thinking Englishmen had begun to discover that the dominions overseas were not merely dependencies—but possible autonomies. Sir Charles Dilke was one of the visionaries. He traveled the Empire and wrote a book about it. Professor Seeley, at Cambridge, was another. He also wrote a book, much concerning the politics of the Empire.

I don't know whether George Drummond read either of these books; but I have a notion that he read both of them not long after they came out. Anyway his practical convictions just about that time were right along the line of the remarkable change that came over the minds of men regarding the somewhat curious countries across the seas. It was the time between the building of the C. P. R. and the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria, in 1887—which was the first real spectacle of Empire in London. That was eight years before Joseph Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary; when it was said by his critics—"He actually believes that he has discovered the colonies as Columbus discovered the new world."

BUT there were men in the colonies who—but of course the first name that comes to mind will be Col. George Denison, who is supposed to have taught Chamberlain what the colonies meant to the Empire. I suspect that George Drummond had begun to put his ideas into practice before he knew much about the Colonel, whatever he knew about the ironmaster of Birmingham. Anyway it was in the year of the golden jubilee, which was the first time England began to realize what the colonies really were, that the Drummonds quit importing iron and steel from Great Britain and began to manufacture in Canada, from Canadian ore, by Canadian labour for the Canadian market.

That was a phase of swift evolution—at first in a small way—that Sir Charles Dilke and Professor Seeley might have missed, but one that the ironmaster of Birmingham must have appreciated.

"And I might have been a much richer man now if I had kept on importing," said Mr. Drummond, in his office—one of the plainest in Montreal. "But it's not a question of how much money a man makes. We're all rich enough if we can pay our just debts and live according to our needs. A man can't be judged by the money he doesn't make; neither by what he makes. I'd rather be doing my share towards developing a big Canadian industry than making twice as much on some other basis."

How consistently the Drummond interests have worked to carry out the Canadian idea may be judged from the fact that in 1887, when the firm started to manufacture in Canada, they employed