

Some Christmas Thoughts for Canadians

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ONCE more the Christmas bells are ringing, and "Peace on earth, Goodwill to men" is echoing round the world. There are few lands in which the words are more earnestly sung, and no country in which their spirit is so fully realized as in our own Dominion. For a hundred years we have lived at peace with our great neighbor to the south, and our history has been a history of peaceful development. The wresting of our heritage from the wilderness has been our battle, and the conquest of the wilderness is a nobler game, and demands heroic sacrifice not less than that demanded by the red game of war. But the early struggles and hardships are over, and we enter on the still nobler work of nation building, and at this Christmas season it may not be out of place to consider some of the things that enter into the making of a great nation. For it is the cherished hope of her sons and daughters that Canada will one day be a great nation: a leader in civilization that will be an example to the rest of the world.

Has this hope any foundation? Is there any reason for thinking that it may be one day a realization? The past history of the race cries "aye" loudly and clearly. There are those to-day, who scoff at tradition, but tradition counts for much in the life of a people.

He who reads the article on the Kildonan settlers which appeared last month in this magazine, cannot help but feel a thrill of pride and a renewed courage in his heart and a brighter hope for the future of his country. Strong, brave, enduring men were these who laid the foundation of the West, and far reaching has been their influence. It is our boast that no land has ever been settled with so little lawlessness and disorder as the Canadian West. I wonder how much of this we owe to the lion-hearted, loyal, law-abiding men and women who sleep so peacefully now in the quiet "God's acre" in old Kildonan.

And surely, their descendants, and the descendants of others equally faithful, cannot fail to live up to the high standard of life and devotion to duty set by them.

It is a fine thing for a man to be well born, to come of clean living, hard-working, God-fearing parents; to be able to look back to father and grand-father and great grand-father toiling for their daily bread over plowshare and spade, or at the carpenter's bench, or in the office, it may be, but bearing in the community a good name, whose word has been their bond; whose honesty of purpose and uprightness of character have never been called in question. Surely it is a great heritage. For a good name is better than riches, and rather to be chosen than much fine gold. Strong and enduring will be the nation, and a high and leading place it must hold amongst the nations, whose sons and daughters are true to such a heritage.

"Civis Romanus sum" was the proud boast of the old Roman; but the British born Canadian can make a prouder boast

than that: for is not he a Canadian and a loyal son of the British Empire. Regions Caesar never knew, are ruled over by the men of his race, and the Union Jack waves over lands undreamed of by the old Roman. To the dark places of the earth it has carried liberty and hope and a new life.

But while we are a peaceful nation, these privileges had to be fought for in the past, that we might enjoy peace and freedom. We have been developing our country and its resources, under the protecting arm of the old grey mother, who has well cared for her children. Her ships have guarded our commerce on the seas; her sons have been ready to aid us, and how can we better repay her than by living true to the best traditions of the past and laying a safe foundation for the future.

And what a task lies before us; what an edifice we have to build. The foundation indeed must be laid broad and deep.

Other peoples with strange tongues, and ways that are not our ways, are seeking homes in our new land. Today we have pouring into Canada men of all races and creeds. Doukhobors and Galicians, accustomed to toil and poverty and tyranny, and with little idea of citizenship, or what is meant by a true national life. Germans and French, with all the good qualities and thrifty habits of the people of these two great nations, but with ideas and customs and speech that are not ours. In time they may become good Canadians, but in their love for the home land and for German and French traditions must still be strong. From Russia and Poland they come, from these lands of political bitterness and political unrest, and in whose peoples is an inborn hatred of all governments.

Here, too, God's ancient people have found a home and an abiding place, after having been driven from pillar to post, and harried and harrassed in Christian Europe.

Crete and Scythian, bond and free, our rich mines and wealthy forests and fertile plains draw them all. Some of them we could well spare; most of them we welcome gladly. To weld them into one magnificent whole is the task of the British born Canadian, and he must face it manfully.

"Strong with the strength of the race,

To command, to obey, to endure."

And we must remember that example is better than precept. While we are developing our natural resources and wresting wealth from the soil, the forest, the mine and the sea; while we are building railways and developing our great water-highways, that these are material things, and in themselves do not make a nation great, not these, but men; men with a deep-seated reverence, a high courage, an un-failing sense of justice and right, these are what make a nation.

"Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,

Lest we forget, lest we forget."

Duty has ever been the watchword of our race, and Canadians must not fail. We must set before our children, and before the strangers within our gates, a high

and worthy example. We must teach them to hold dear their heritage and cherish the ancient liberties so hardly won. We must not allow ourselves to become selfish and indifferent or to be carried away by a too ardent desire for wealth.

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

In our political life we must set a high standard, we must combat with all our strength, that which is false and wrong, and stand for that which is true. We can do this by regarding the franchise as a sacred thing, and by teaching our children to regard it as such. We must elect to office men of high character and unbending principle. Men who will stand four square to all the winds that blow, men who will not sell the truth to serve the hour, but who will discharge their duty faithfully, be the consequences what they may.

In our land, justice must be even-handed: there must not be one law for the rich and another for the poor, and we must learn to temper justice with mercy. Not to punish the wrong-doer, but to reclaim him should be our aim. Crime cannot go unpunished, but the erring one must be lifted up and given a chance to win back his lost manhood. By adopting a system of dealing with our criminals that will help them to become good citizens, we will, as a nation, but be carrying out the mission of Him whose birthday we celebrate so joyously this Christmastide.

Evils in our social life must be rooted out if we are to become a great nation. The old home life, the family altar, the reverence for father and mother, and seniors frequently absent from our life to-day, should be restored.

We have a good educational system in Canada, and our children can have all the advantages that accompany the blessing of a good education. If we are to take the place we hope to take and hold in the world, our children should be educated, nay, must be.

The Church, too, must continue to hold as it has always held, the foremost place in our national life. Let her change in a measure, if she must, to meet modern conditions, but the old, old story of the Babe in the Manger never changes. The old simple faith has made our race what it is today, and so we must keep the faith, the faith our fathers sealed us.

"For except we pay the Lord single heart
and single sword

Of our children in their bondage—

He shall ask it treble tale."

It is a great task that lies before the people of Canada, a great destiny, if her people bear themselves manfully and live up to the traditions of the race. But while the task is great, the advantages, too, are many, for we have the experience of all the world to guide us. From that experience let us take what we know to be best, and cast aside the things which are harmful. And may the God of our fathers guide our people and their leaders through the perplexing years, until we emerge, all our different races welded into one magnificent whole: a great nation, indeed.