

A letter to Sir George Parkin, K.C.M.G., D.C.L., LL.D.

19th December 1921.

DEAR SIR GEORGE PARKIN,

You have indeed been most kind concerning my visit to Canada, and it is at your suggestion that I now jot down a few points which may accompany your introductions, and present the facts about Toc H. in tabloid form. Those to whom you are writing on our behalf are, as you warned me, desperately busy men, and I therefore give in the barest outline the character of the work on which I hope soon to confer with them.

While it is probably true that most public-spirited men in England, and especially in the School and University world at home here, have already more than an inkling as to its origin and present aims, in Canada hitherto (apart from the Byngs themselves, and some 500 Foundation Members) Toc H. has scarcely begun to move, with the result that it will be best that my explanation should take nothing for granted.

ORIGIN.

Toc H.,* then, is a Movement that has sprung from the work of the old Talbot House in Poperinghe, which was founded in 1915 as a spiritual, social and educational centre for the officers and men of the 6th Imperial Division. The House thus established became widely known, and its membership, as the long years of agony went forward, included a great number of those who served and suffered in the Ypres Salient. The Canadian Expeditionary Force played a great part in the life and work of the House, and there are undoubtedly all over Canada many old friends beyond those with whom we are already in touch, whose allegiance to Toc H. it is part of our programme to recapture.

Toc H., however, is *not merely another Ex-Service Club*. Its surviving Members saw clearly from the first that to limit the sphere of its operation to those who had known the old House, was simply to produce yet one more backward-looking body, which would share the inevitable fate of all other ex-service organisations in the steady dwindling of its Membership, and the inevitable decay of its ideals.

GROWTH.

Our Foundation Membership, therefore, had before it from the first the ambition not merely to conserve, but to transmit; and the justice and wisdom of this step has been abundantly proved by the extraordinary progress which these last two years in the Old Country have seen accomplished. During these two years its Membership has more than doubled; some 70 Branches have been established; three great Houses in London have been opened; and several provincial Houses are rapidly nearing completion.

PROGRAMME.

The programme of Toc H. may be summed up in the word "After-Care." It is the task of these Houses and Branches to deal with the ex-school boy of all grades at the beginning of his career as a citizen; to offer him not only a welcome alternative to lodgings, but a series of working ideals, both in conduct and outlook, which can resist (and do more than resist) the narrowing and belittling circumstances of a life of loneliness at the bottom of the ladder.

These Houses, therefore, are not merely Hostels, but rather centres of influence of a unique kind. They are held in Trusteeship by a series of groups of resident Membership, representative of the widest possible area of contemporary life. These picked Teams focus an influence which extends far and wide among the Membership as a whole; teaching mutual respect and understanding between the classes as the only alternative to that system of organised class-war which so greatly menaces the Old Country, and is so utterly alien to the mind of our Dead.

The task, however, of the Houses is not merely one of Fellowship, for our War experience plainly taught us that there can be no real Fellowship unless based on the united spirit of service. The Membership of Toc H. is, therefore, pledged to social service of a very great variety, and the Movement is fast becoming the most powerful Agency of its kind in Great Britain for the recruitment from the ages of 17 to 35 of those who will voluntarily undertake tasks of this character.

Toc H. (which even the Purists of *Punch* and *The Times* now use unblushingly), is simply T.H., the initial letters of Talbot House "Toc" being signalese for T.