

Reconstruction.

By MAJOR G. R. N. COLLINS.

I have been asked by the Editorial Staff to inflict another article upon the defenceless readers of THE SAPPER. On this occasion, I have been asked to write about the Khaki College, but as I am now commanding the Seaford College, I am rather diffident about occupying a large space with purely advertising matter, which is written by the more or less biased head of the institution. I propose, therefore, to try and embody a twofold subject, and follow the dictates of my heart, namely, to give the Canadian soldier something that is going to be useful to him in the times that seem to lag so much in arriving, namely, "demobilization days."

Of my views regarding that wonderful period you have often had a small taste, and I know that many of my patient readers do not agree with me that those days are not altogether unalloyed pleasure, but a certain amount of regret will accompany them. I do not propose to speak about that aspect of the situation to-day, but instead to try and get down to the material, rather than the sentimental side of the problem.

We are all in such a desperate hurry to get the "civvy clothes on" that we do not often pause to consider what we are going to do when we get them on. The pictures we conjured up when we marched away from home, of a smiling debonair soldier, crowned with laurel leaves, moving in a struggling crowd of patriotic citizens who are throwing roses in the path of the "conquering hero," local deputations of the Board of Trade, Canadian Manufacturers Association, Labour Unions, etc., all clamouring for the services of the brave soldier. It is all so wonderful and so silly. We all have to thank our lucky stars that we are not going to be treated as a pretty doll, and made to look like a fool. It is true that certain steps are taken to ensure a welcome for the returned soldier, but it is surprising how little they attract when we actually realize them. I have had some of it and know.

Let us look at "the real thing." In the first place, we shall find a very practical military organization handling our return, handicapped by enthusiasm on the part of the soldier, which makes discipline appear irksome, which, in turn, serves to delay the programme as arranged. This military organization has no time for sentiment. It is constantly looking behind and beyond you to the other thousands "over there" who are yet to come, and who are just as keen to get home as you are. Their work is tiring and not crowned by glory, therefore it demands patience on the part of the recipient of their practical instructions. They have no time for sentimental foolery. Then will come the mad joy of reunion. That is the real reception, and the only one that counts. Even that loses its attraction in a few days, and then we take a fresh breath, and begin to realize all we lost. First we miss the Q.M.S. and his clothing store. Having reduced the stock of a "civvy" tailor, and simultaneously the contents of our pockets, we shall begin to consider another view of the work of the late departed Q.M.S., namely, the ration store. Here again we suffer both financially and physically from the necessity of fending for ourselves. About this time we shall begin to get down to practical things, and we shall soon tire of being told what good fellows we were. Then comes a period of unrest, wherein we refuse to call a spade a spade, and profess to be glad

to be free of the Army, whilst the whole time we know that we miss the chums, the organization that we like to blackguard nowadays. However, crying will not restore spilt milk, and eventually we have to get down to hard tack, and count the cost. Three months pay and "finis." That is the cold verdict. Where are all these wonderful jobs?

Canada is doing yeoman service in trying to find them for you. As far as her whole organization can do so, she is making openings for her sons, but you cannot make jobs for four hundred thousand men in a day. It may be well to consider a few material facts in regard to the commercial and industrial situation in Canada, after which we shall be in a better position to appreciate the possibilities, their limitations, and our own prospects.

Canada had to carry on her commerce during the war, and, to meet the urgent needs of the Empire, to open up new enterprises for the manufacture of war materials. Large industries were thus developed, staffed and operated. Where did the staff come from? Canada was sending her men in hundreds of thousands to the war area, and our women had to undertake the duties which the men left behind. We know to-day how well they carried out their tasks. They have demonstrated a fitness for industrial employment, and mark this point well, a keenness for their work, accompanied by punctuality, honest effort and proficiency, that has permanently established their position in civil enterprises, and it now remains to be seen whether they will relinquish their positions and return to the domestic fireside. New avenues of employment have been opened, and following the modern feminine thought, they will try to maintain their advantage. We therefore find that the loss of men was compensated for by the patriotism of our women, in which they undertook our work, and have, in many cases, beaten us on our own grounds. We are not as indispensable as we thought.

To come to the present, we find ample labour for the present needs of Canada, supplemented by additional labour from the returning troops. In other words, there are two applicants for every job. Coupled to this we have the transition of war factories to peace industries, requiring time and special labour, with the consequent temporary cessation of employment. These factors all help to aggravate the complexity of re-establishment of the Army. Let me here point out, that these things affect you individually: whether your city be in the east or west, whether your work be in office, factory, or on the farm, the same conditions apply. It will be said at once that conditions look gloomy. That is so. The one saving factor is going to be, the proper appreciation of the situation, and the same resolute energy, on the part of the returning soldier, as enabled him to win his place beside the professional soldier in the forefront of the attack. Properly applied and directed, that energy will be the solution of all difficulties. I propose to say a word or two regarding them.

We have said that there are two applicants for one job. Who will get it? The most efficient. Upon what does that efficiency depend? Upon the ability of the applicant to satisfy the employer that his attainments can and will produce better results than those of the other applicant. I have said before, and I repeat again, "You cannot run a business on sentiment or patriotism." The employer who tries to do so will speedily go into bankruptcy. He must, for your sake as well as his own, demand an adequate return for all he outlays. Grasp this important point, that efficiency is only