

IF ENGLAND HAD

By WILLIAM H. MOORE

A Short Study in a Strange Bond of Empire Based Upon Universal Tolerance

BUT England didn't. She is bearing the big end of the Imperial war burden, a far bigger end than is her due, and bearing it without complaint, without reproach to the partners within the Empire; partners who once upon a time called loudly for a decisive voice in the management of the Empire, partners who were wont to boast of their superloyalty, who looked impatiently forward to the day when they would displace England's leadership.

Of the 439 million people within the British Empire, only 34 million are within England. Of the 439 million people within the British Empire, there are 25 white millions, mainly of Anglo-Saxon birth, outside of England. And yet when four men go "over the top" of the trenches which are called British, three are Englishmen; when four men are killed or wounded within the British lines, three are Englishmen.

The other man—the fourth—may be a Scot, an Irishman, a South African, a Hindu, an Australian, a Canadian, or a man from some other part of the Empire upon which in happier days we boasted the sun never set. And yet that other man, the fourth man, may also be an Englishman, one of those who, called by the spirit of wanderlust, went out into the Overseas Dominions, into the United States, to "foreign parts," only to return as a Canadian or as an Australian in the hour of the Empire's need. With singular generosity, England has not claimed these native sons; she calls them Canadians, Australians, and unsparingly gives the Overseas Dominions credit for their service. She may wonder at the "shire" dialects of the Canadian soldiers who walk the streets of London; she may look askance at the English addresses of their next of kin; she may be puzzled as to what has become of the native-born of Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba—but she says nothing. It isn't English to say anything, and besides—

IF England had found fault with Ontario because Ontario's contribution of men was deficient as compared with her own, would Ontario have sent more? If, at the commencement of the war, England had called the men of Ontario "traitors," "cowards," and "slackers," because they had not realized their responsibilities of service, were not volunteering with the alacrity of Englishmen, would more—would as many—from Ontario have volunteered for overseas service? If England had sought to force Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, into bearing a proportion of the war's burdens more like her own, had attempted to force them by derision and damnable words, would these provinces—or any of the nine provinces—have exerted greater efforts in the cause of Empire?

Heaven knows there was need of men! And more men! Would sneers at inferiority, reflections upon loyalty, charges of treason, have brought them?

If England had damned Australia as disloyal because the majority of its mainly Anglo-Saxon population had voted against conscription, would Australia have contributed more men, borne greater burdens of war? Would Australia before now have revised her decision on conscription?

The Empire needed unity, needed solidity, against a common foe. The Overseas Dominions have not done their share as compared with England—Australia, Canada, South Africa, none of the self-governing Dominions, have done what England has done, have done what is necessary to defeat Teutonism, to save the Empire. If Englishmen and the English press had, day after day, harped upon the failings of the Overseas Dominions, would we have had greater unity, greater solidity, within the Empire?

If England had said to Ontario what Ontario has said to Quebec, would the war be nearer won?

When the war broke out, we were all voluntarists. Voluntarism was a prided principle of British politics. Men might perform military service or not, as they pleased. The principle may have been wrong, but it was our principle. We boasted of it. But pure voluntarism had to go down in the cataclysm of the Great War which is shaking the foundations of idealism. And then came that unhappy era which has been called "compulsory voluntarism," in which men made themselves keepers of their brothers' conscience, in which men strove to drive their fellowmen into the trenches, by derisive words prodded them, goaded them—with words—to the front.

Ontario constituted herself the guardian of Quebec's duty to the

Empire. I will not pretend to say which way the Kaiser would vote in the election; but, if the Kaiser had had the selecting of a recruiting agent for Quebec, he would have named Ontario, for Ontario was doomed to failure.

Ontario, having undertaken the task of recruiting Quebec, Ontario's press gloated in the task, and day after day denounced the French-Canadians as disloyal, because Quebec's native-born sons were not volunteering as readily as her own.

A SHROUD fell upon recruiting in Quebec. There were French-Canadians who threw themselves wholeheartedly into the cause of French-Canada's contribution to the Empire, gave their sons—could give no more. It is true they fought an up-hill struggle to make a people, who had no near of kin in the war-zone, who had only a tradition of the European land from which their fathers sprang, believe that this war was theirs. A realization of responsibility, of the seriousness of the situation came none too readily to any of us. But the enthusiasm of the French-Canadian recruiter chilled and died with Ontario's interference. The task was hopeless. Ontario had paralyzed Quebec's French-Canadian war effort.

It seems incredible that the Press of Ontario should not have known that they could not raise soldiers in Quebec; should not have known that their activities in Quebec would not produce men, should not have known that they were daily harming, rather than helping, the cause for which they so volubly professed their love.

If England had said to Ontario, to Canada, to Australia, and to South Africa, what Ontario has said to Quebec—and she might have said more, with better reason—the Empire could not have held together. The Empire must have foundered in a turbulent sea of reproach. Nothing but England's generosity, England's sympathy, England's bigness, have held the roughly joined organism which men call Great Britain.

Was England's action, founded upon a wisdom acquired through centuries of experience with the men of all races and all religions, not good enough for Ontario? If England followed the path towards unity and success then Ontario trod the way that leads to disunity and failure.

Compulsory voluntarism came at its best from the bluff, honest, impatient, recruiting sergeant; at its worst from the able-bodied, serviceable civilian. The most violent denouncer of "slackers" I know, has a son of military age overseas—a civilian. The father may fume and condemn, may prate of loyalty, but he remains a totally ineffective recruiting agent—an object of scorn to those who know. And Ontario was mainly in mufti. One-half of Ontario's army has been drawn from one-eighth of Ontario's population—the British-born. And Quebec knew. Did Ontario make its irreparable blunder in an honest attempt to help the Empire, or did Ontario sacrifice the Empire on the altar of race-prejudice?

If England had—but England didn't. She just notched her belt more tightly and went "over the top" more often; she did as far as she was able what had to be done, what others might have done and ought to have done. That's England's way.

Criticizing Other People's Opinions

TWO letters have been sent to the editor expressing anger over the publication of an article about the Pope in a recent issue of the Canadian Courier. The article in question was not a Canadian Courier article, but was reprinted from a high-class reputable magazine whose name was given and which, according to habit, assumed authority for the signed articles which it contains. In reprinting part of this article in a section of the Canadian Courier devoted to that purpose we made no profession of either endorsing or repudiating it. All we aimed to do, as in the case of any magazine on any subject, was to give the facts as they appear to the writers who may be right or wrong, reprehensible or otherwise, but whose opinions have nothing whatever to do with the opinions of the editor.