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WHAT DID THEY BURY THIS TIME?

Laying of the Parliamentary Corner-Stone at Ottawa Suggests a Few Relics

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago Queen Victoria placed a finger on a map of Canada fair on top of the name Bytown and said—so they say—"Let that be the new capital of united Canada." That story has always seemed more probable than the famous picture of the Afghan potentate who asked Victoria what made England so great, and the Empress Queen had a Bible brought in, saying, "That is the secret of England's greatness."

We seem to be growing out of these old-fashioned things. The laying of the corner-stone of the new Parliament buildings in Bytown last week brings a few of them back. We must not forget that the name Bytown was changed to the Indian word Ottawa, at which time the Duke of Connaught was not yet born; that just twenty years later when Edward, his elder brother, the Prince of Wales, was touring the Empire, he laid the original corner-stone of the buildings that were burned last winter. Now fifty-five years after that event in the old city of Bytown the Duke of Connaught lays the new stone in the presence of a large number of important people. The Duke made a speech. Since he himself became the corner-stone of the Empire in this part of the world he has never had so good a chance to say so many unusual things when he felt himself compelled to do just the opposite. Corner-stone speeches are never unusual. This one may have been no exception. But the Duke, perhaps, reflected that never again would he do such a thing in this country. He may have remembered that about the time he came out here two other parliamentary corner-stones were laid in Canada. Responsible government was domiciled in Saskatchewan and Alberta at about the same time.

Now we remember Bytown again. Had Sir Wilfrid Laurier been present he might have remembered the choice of the new Capital very vividly, for he was born in 1841, the year when a united Canada was made out of the English and the French province with Bytown as the capital. In that seventy-five years Canada has become a big country. Bytown died. Ottawa took its place. The saw-mills vanished from Ottawa. The politicians came. That always means development.

They make a custom of burying in corner-stones certain records which in generations to come may be exhumed as relics of a bygone age. Bytown was buried in Ottawa. Saw-mill Ottawa was obliterated by Parliamentary Ottawa. In the fifty-five years since the first corner-stone was laid on Parliament Hill no doubt a great many things have become relics. If one should have pried under the old stone with the eye of a prophet he might have seen sealed up there for all time to come most of the little-Canada ideas that used to dominate this country in the saw-mill times.

AND with still more of the prophet's eye, Sir George Foster might have looked under that new stone as it swung to place and the silver trowel flashed over it and have seen being buried there for all time to come many more things that a greater Canada has flung into the discard. It takes a political expert to know what these things are. All we can do is to conjecture a few of them. On a rough estimate one might find buried under that new corner-stone of a great future Parliament for a land of coming millions of people, the following items:

Little Canadianism; party-worship; provincialism whether in Quebec or Ontario or in any other integral part of the country; narrow sectarian bigotry; mutual desire on the part of any communities in Canada to know as little as possible of one another so that they may continue to argue more; lack of faith in the essential greatness of Canada as a nation; the failure to believe that when we say the building of a new nation is in the lap of the gods it does not mean that it is in the hands of politicians, big interests and little patriots; the spiritual blindness that prevents Canadians from realizing that unborn people are more important to a nation than unexploited wealth; the smug belief that what

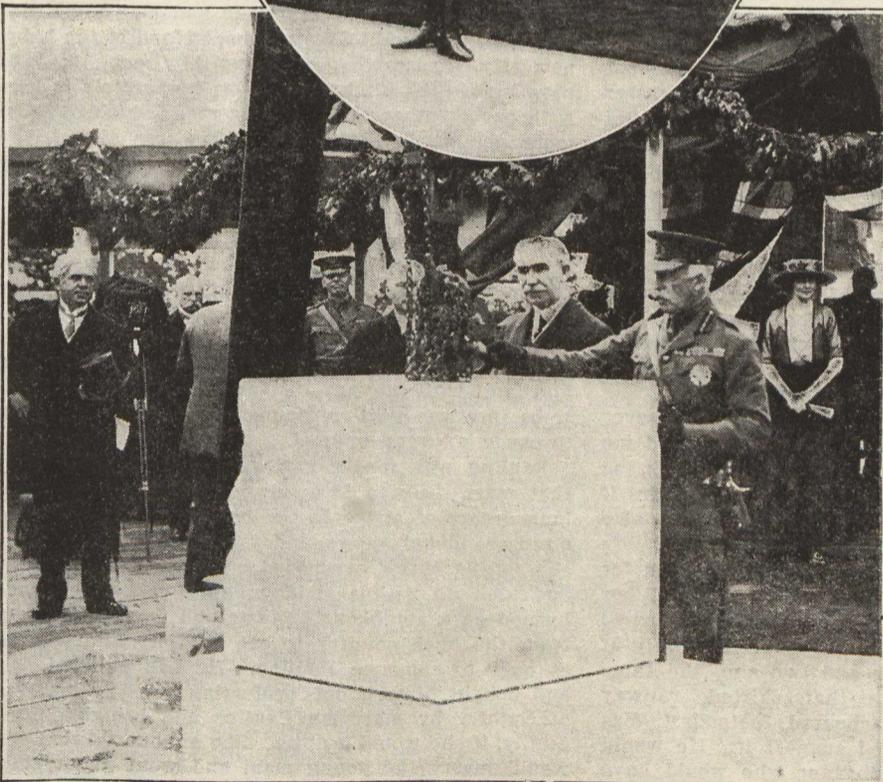


Sir Robert Borden proposed three cheers for the Duke of Connaught who laid the stone. In doing so he probably included new Canada in the compliment.



H. R. H. the Duke, flanked by Hon. Robert Rogers, made a good soldierly, statesmanlike speech.

And on this stone below the Duke saw in imagination not only the new Parliamentary building but the newer Canada that will arise after the war.



was good enough for our grandfathers is good enough for our grandchildren; the equal fallacy that the big inspirations which led to the discovery and settlement and the pioneer upbuilding of this country died a natural death in the Victorian age.

As a parallel to this the words of Royal Dixon in his recent book "Americanization," mean much to Canadians:

"Let us put this first then—the lost epic consciousness of the American is at the root of the unprepared, timorous phase of our national life which to-day puts us in a dilemma. Epic consciousness is the consciousness which makes America a poem in the mind; it is the very thing which makes the French people one and all and everywhere refer to 'La Belle France.' It is epic consciousness which fires the Briton not only to sing but to believe his 'Rule Britannia.'"