

## A MESSAGE TO OUR RETURNING SOLDIERS REGARDING THEIR EDUCATION FOR FARMING.

By DR. JAS. W. ROBERTSON.

Dr. Robertson was Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying for the Dominion of Canada until 1905. He left the public service at that time to found, for Sir William C. Macdonald, the Macdonald College with its three schools, the School of Agriculture, the School of Household Science, and the School for the Training of Teachers. He stayed at

Macdonald as the Principal of the new college until 1910.

He was then appointed Chairman of the Canadian Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, and in that capacity visited the United States and the leading countries in Europe. Since the war came he has given his whole time as a volunteer worker to the

Canadian Red Cross Society; to the organisation of voluntary co-operation in Food Control in all the provinces; and, during 1918, as Director of Increased Production of Crops in Eastern Canada. Recently he came over to England on the invitation of the Prime Minister of Canada as one of the members of the Canadian Peace Conference Mission.

My warrant for consenting to write a short article on this subject, for the first number of THE BEAVER comes from my faith in both the soldiers and education as determining factors in the coming greatness of Canada.

### Our Pride in the Past.

Canadians have unbounded and justified pride in their soldiers. We all expected a good deal from them towards winning the war. None of us ventured to believe that they could have done so much as they have done towards the achievement of the military victory over Germany before the armistice went into effect. Whether the going was good or bad they always got there to the discomfiture of the enemy. All honour to them and the officers who planned with sagacity and led with skill and courage beyond praise.

### Our Hope for the Future.

Likewise all of us expect a good deal from the officers and men when they come home. Perhaps none of us quite realises how large a part they will play in the achievements of Canada in years of peace.

The part you will take and how far you will carry it in the development of your country, as a land of contentment from equality of opportunity, happy homes, prosperity and high ideals for the service of humanity, will depend on whether you preserve and apply the same qualities which won undying renown in Belgium and France and in the air. These qualities cannot be compressed into definitions, but it seems to me that they were made up, in the main, of high intelligence, practical ability, co-operating good-will and courage beyond the end.

### Education is Necessary.

These qualities, for the most part, are fruits of training in men who are first class raw material to start with. In other words, they are products of education directed specifically to the attainment of worthy ends. Education for the tasks of peace is quite as necessary, and just as advantageous, as it was for the making of war.

### Farming is a Combined Trade, Business and Profession.

Farming is more than an occupation. It is also a way of living. It includes the processes of a skilled trade in the use of tools, machines, materials and living things; it is a complex business requiring a knowledge of costs, prices, markets and human nature; and it is a profession dealing with principles in taking care of a piece of old mother earth—to satisfy a fundamental need of her children and, withal, to so cultivate her face that there will be increase of fertility and beauty. The farmer is a partner of the Almighty in making the place where he lives a part of the new world wherein dwelleth righteousness,

### The Farmer Collects Sun Power, Serves the Community, and Develops Beauty.

The farmer's occupation is primarily directed to produce food and the raw materials for clothing, such as wool and cotton. He has to move and manage soil, select seeds and grow crops. Through these he collects sun-power into usable forms for the sustenance and service of the race. His business is to make arrangements, and carry them out as far as he can, whereby some of the power of Old Father Sun will be captured by wheat plants, potato plants and other plants. When these and their products are consumed as food the captured sun power is set free inside the eater and keeps him going. For carrying on that difficult and indispensable service, the farmer is entitled to a reasonable and satisfying share of what is produced. That share is what is known as wages and profit. He only is a really good farmer who grows crops at their largest and best, increases the fertility of the soil, improves the power of the plant, augments the service rendered to the community and develops the beauty of the place.

### Value of Selected Seed.

It is quite certain that if the crops in Canada last year had all been grown from selected seed, there would have been, from the same soil, the same labour and the same climate, not less than 70,000,000 bushels more grain. With a rich soil and a favourable season, there is not so much advantage. Under those conditions a feeble plant can get its living and accumulate a surplus, but when conditions are difficult and the season unfavourable, then the selected seed gives a plant with power to overcome these difficulties in an increasing measure. That indicates the advantage of having all the farm sown with selected seeds. The selected seed gives an assurance of the biggest and best crops that the soil and the climatic conditions will permit for the season. Seventeen years ago, I began a competition for boys and girls all over Canada with 1,500 boys and girls in it. At the end of three years the evidence was that those who had followed systematic selection of seed had made gains, in quantity and quality, equal to about 30 per cent. of the yield. From that competition arose the Canadian Seed Growers' Association; and now the grain sown on thousands of farms in Canada is grain improved by selection according to the plan of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association.

### Ability Organised through Education.

The farmer (and the man who is to be a farmer) must organise his own general and particular kinds of ability for use in the management of his business, and in doing the work of the farm. In large measure, whether the largest and best crops shall be gained from a constantly improving soil depends on the

capacity of the man. Capacity arises from understanding the system of farming which is suited to his land, his means and his available markets. It includes the making and carrying out of definite plans, and also ability to perform the skilled labour of farming and to utilise to advantage other labour, including that of men, horses and machinery. For the development of such capacity and ability he must have suitable education. Such education may be in part from schools, or reading, or observing, or learning from discussions which bring out the truth; but it will be, even through these as first agencies, from practical experience. Here, as in all education worth the name, the first fruits and the ultimate personal benefits will be an increase of intelligence, practical ability, good judgment, and co-operating good-will. These qualities, these powers do not come by instinct or by intuition. They are developed by series of experiences in observing, in gaining knowledge, in planning, in carrying out plans, in recording results and in coming to general conclusions for guidance in the next series of experiences. By such processes as these the farmer learns to organise his personal powers and to develop them for application to his business and work.

### First Steps under the Khaki University.

The beginnings of such education for soldiers who have not had experience in farming are to be found in the courses and classes of the Khaki University and through the training in simple jobs of farming work at practice or demonstration centres. I understand that provision has been made and will be ready for continuing the practical training, with the best of our farmers on approved farms, in all the provinces of Canada. These are only the first steps.

Now my space and time are up. Other pens will doubtless tell of subsequent steps, in future issues of THE BEAVER.

### Let us All Work Together with Good-will.

All our women, we who were too old to be of any use as fighting soldiers, and others, have done our feeble best to back you up from home. When you come back to us we want you to stand with us; and we want to stand with you as comrades to contribute our united best to the strength, prosperity, goodness, and greatness of our well-loved land. Many of the best of those who came over gave their lives for the preservation of her liberty, and that justice, honour and fair-play should not perish in our day. Our country, which has been bought anew by their blood and your service, can be no greater in character than we ourselves are; and it can be "a country fit for heroes to live in" only in so far as we together prove ourselves heroic enough in peace to make contributions of service such as will match your gloriously matchless contributions in war.