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When the Boys Get Home.

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One has only to spend a little time amongst the boys, and listen to their dreams, to realize the many and varied events that are to follow. As I have stated in previous articles, the individual soldier makes his plans of a very rosy nature, and as I have also said, will probably find them far from the pictured dream. His personal interests will naturally have a first call upon him, and for a time he will be fully occupied with them, but after a while the call of his old associates will be heard, and he will long to mix with men from "over there." At this time he will turn toward the various associations formed by the returned soldiers, and will enrol as a member. The call of which I speak will be so insistent that there need be no fear of failure on his part. On his first enrolment it will be the desire to meet his former associates that will call him, but after arrival he will find much to interest and hold him.

I have too often condemned the "conquering hero stuff" to need to dwell upon it at any great length at this time, but I do not want to make the soldier feel that there is no true appreciation on the part of the Canadian public, and that consequently he must merely merge his identity with the crowd, and forget the part he has played in making history. Far from any such intention, the soldier can, and should, play a very prominent part in the future history of Canada. It is in regard to the afterdays that I want to speak now, not so much as far as they affect the individual, but more in regard to the effect upon the whole of the future Canadian life.

Without resorting to camouflage in assessing the reasons why we all enlisted, it may be truthfully said that several factors carried a proportionate weight. The forces may be said to be composed of the finest citizens Canada could produce. There is no need to get "swelled head" over this description, because in many cases we did not even appreciate the fact when we enlisted. What our actual feelings were, we alone can say, and we are not likely to be strictly truthful if we do. In our hearts, however, certain things were felt. Although we did not perhaps call them by their proper names. To make a successful Army it is necessary that it should be composed of fit men, and be supported by the moral assurance of necessity and right. That we are fit men can be safely assumed, as a result of the medical examination that we had to pass, and that our cause was a just one, and further that our part in the game was a necessity to the country we love, we all know and believe. As a consequence, it is truthful to say that the Canadian Forces were composed of a num-

ber of men who were morally and physically fit, and further, that the land of their birth or adoption, and the cause in which they fought, was such as to warrant the gift of their lives if that should be required.

Was it always, however, a mere question of moral right? Was there not a sense of insecurity behind the whole? We realise to-day what would have happened to Canada if the Germans had been able to dictate the peace terms to the Motherland. We have only to look back to the days of 1870-1 and recall the severity of the terms given to our ally, France, to know how much more severe would have been the terms of Germany to the "hated British." We responded in self-defence, and therefore as a duty in defence of our rights. Again, discarding the camouflage, we have therefore a body of Canadian citizens defending something that they considered worth fighting for, and that something was of immediate value to themselves. It was in defence of our rights and privileges that we fought, and it was our duty to do so. The conquering hero business fades into a duty performed, and apparently has no basis in fact. Such is not strictly the case, for Canada does appreciate a duty well performed, and is anxious to show her gratitude.

It is just as well to be quite honest with ourselves, and if we admit the truth of this situation, then we shall only make our demands in such reasonable spirit as to ensure a ready ear and response. It is no good trying to build up a lifetime of hero worship that will never mature, and even if it did it would become pretty tiring and silly. We shall want something more substantial to live on than words of praise.

What are we going to get out of it, then? That is the one question that everybody is asking, and it is that which we should try to think out for ourselves. The answer is simple. It is simply this: "All that we deserve." What we shall deserve is not decided by past history, but is for the future to show. We did our duty, not only to Canada, but also to ourselves, and our immediate benefit to the country at large is an equal benefit to ourselves as individual citizens. That is the primary principle, and cannot be denied or enlarged upon. We did our duty.

Is the past all dead, and is there no hereafter in regard to our sacrifice? No! The past can never die, nor will it ever do so. The call that will bring us together in times of peace makes past history indestructible. The chums we knew; the unit to which we belonged; the hardships we endured; all make the bonds too strong to be broken, and despite ourselves we shall