

(November 15th, 1915.)

A Message from Australia with Reference to Universal Military Training.

BY LIEUTENANT J. J. SIMONS.*

AT a meeting of the Canadian Club held on the 15th November, Lieut. Simons said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—It is indeed a great pleasure for us to be able to appear before such a distinguished Club in the city of Toronto. While we are travelling to learn, we hope also to be able to leave in our track some few new thoughts which have developed in Australia.

Among the many ideas that we are absorbing in Canada is the inadequate knowledge Australians have of the English language as employed in the Dominion. (Laughter.) The Doctor (Dr. Doolittle who made an announcement asking for motor cars to convey returned soldiers to their homes) just now referred to a man with a "grouch!" Well—recently I looked up Webster to see what a "grouch" is,—we don't know whether it means an automobile or a physical defect. (Laughter.) That is one of the extraordinary differences in language as it is spoken here. But the other day we were in a city where the Mayor was working very hard for us, and I wanted to find an Australian superlative to express our gratitude for his attention to our comfort, so I said, "Mr. Mayor, we will never forget you! You are the greatest grafter we have met in our travels! (Roars of laughter.) And he didn't seem to want to be friendly after that! (Laughter.) You know, at home, a "Grafter" is a man who is very anxious to please, very self-sacrificing, who if he is paid for eight hours' work will do ten without charging anything extra. Now that is the Australian interpretation of the word "grafter;" in Canada there seems to be a great difference. (Laughter.) So if during the course of my remarks I say something you don't approve of, put it down to our woeful ignorance of the use of English as it is used in the Dominion of Canada. However, while there is some dissimilarity in the language, and its uses, I feel

*Lieutenant J. J. Simons' address was of special interest by reason of the intimate knowledge he possessed of the Australian system of universal military training. He visited Toronto, as head of a party of Australian Cadets.

that in the great essentials which count in the upbuilding of a nation and an empire, there is not even a colour of difference known. (Applause.)

We know, in coming to you as messengers from the Australian Commonwealth, that we have a great mission to perform, because, no matter how we may analyze it, I think each of us have to admit in self-confession we don't understand or know enough of those parts of the Empire outside of our own boundaries. (Hear, hear.) This tendency in great measure arose in times gone by when instead of thinking of the whole British Empire, we thought in compartments; but now our vision is growing broader, bigger, grander, than ever before. (Applause.)

How many people in the world realize when we speak of Australia, that we refer to a great continent,—not an island, gentlemen, but a continent, larger than the whole of the United States! Think of it; you might take the forty-eight states of the American Republic, place them in Australia, and after that your real estate men could still find 600 square miles of territory to gamble with. (Laughter.) That will give you some idea of the expanse of the Australian continent.

Think for a moment, too, of the unique opportunity of that country, one continent, under the control of one people, unscarred by boundary lines, with no bilingual problem, and everything under one great Government! There is something inspiring about the possibilities Australia has to offer as an integral part of the British Empire! (Applause.) And our Federal Capital—we feel that this is going to be, when it is completed, a great metropolis, a place of pilgrimage for architects, artists and lovers of culture, from all parts of the world. (Applause.) That Capital will be the centre of government and influence from which will radiate all the power necessary to regulate the affairs of Australia, the only Government on earth with a single Capital to control a whole continent. Little wonder that this thought gave inspiration for the lines of one of our poets:

"O Australia, fair and lovely,
Empress of the Southern Seas,
What a glorious fame awaits thee,
In the future's histories!
Only let thy hand be stainless,
Let thy life be pure and true,
And a destiny awaits thee,
Such as empires never knew." (Applause.)

. That was the great vision of a writer many years ago, possessed as he was with a foresight of the possibilities that lay in store for the people of the Australian Commonwealth. (Hear, hear.) And while we are working out what we are proud to refer to as our distinctive nationality (hear, hear), which we think of with the same pride as that with which the Scotchman refers to himself as a Scotchman, or when an Englishman speaks of an Englishman, above all is the exalted patriotism, one which over-towers the local pride, the pride we inherit as a part of the British Empire. (Applause.) We have, therefore, developed what you might call a twin patriotism; our nationalism is not in conflict with the higher ideas of a sane and intelligent Imperialism; we believe we have been successful in promoting both without one injuring the other. (Applause.)

Now, gentlemen, we feel that as it has been allotted to us that we should occupy that part of the British Empire called Australia, our pride and ideals would be but so much flimsy tinsel and empty poetry unless we did something to secure to posterity that wonderful domain of which we were made the keepers. Many years ago we began to think about this. Of course we talked peace, and hatched doves of peace as fast as they could be incubated (laughter), but we thought several times that they would not be much good matched against eagles; in other words, we wanted to develop a peaceful fighter, one with the nature of the dove and the eagle combined. (Laughter and applause.) You can call it hybrid if you like, but the Australian system has the elements of peace and war, and either can be used just as suits the purpose. (Applause.)

We did not like the idea of conscription,—a detestable term, we believe, in any democratic community. We have, therefore, arrived at a solution which should give us an adequate and inexpensive means of defence, without invading the rights of citizens; we have made military training not a matter of choice but a matter of obligation for every citizen. (Hear, hear and applause.) Of course there were doctrinaires, theorists and faddists as you find everywhere, who said we were invading the sacred rights of freedom; but what's the use of freedom if you can't uphold it when it is challenged? (Hear, hear.) We had trusted to the voluntary system, quite a long while, and it resulted just the same way as voluntary taxation would. (Laughter.) I should like to see a Mayor or Premier or anybody else try such a plan in taxes, and say, "we will run our Province on the same system"—let everybody

pay what he is voluntarily disposed to, every property holder can pay taxes on this plan, and his rates according to what he thinks he ought! (Laughter.) We had been trying to run our military affairs that way. If you can succeed with a voluntary taxation system in your city, you may expect to make it succeed with your militia too, so we laid it down that every male had to be a soldier. The only thing he had to do to qualify, was to be born. (Laughter.) Of course, we recognized that it was a bold move, probably a risky experiment, for any English speaking community to introduce compulsory soldiering, but we thought it worth while to venture on it, we have done so and we think it has been a success. This is the fifth year of the experiment, and when it has reached its full stage of fruition we shall have from that small population of five million people six hundred thousand trained males. (Applause.) And here is the beauty of it, that with the exception of the instructional staff they are still citizens; there is no encroachment upon individual liberties actually speaking; there is no great demand upon their time which would interfere with their rights as citizens. (Hear, hear.)

Having engrafted that upon our civil life with such success, we feel that we have carried out something that is of value to the whole Empire. In every town, every city, every community you will find the drill hall and the rifle range, just as sure as you will find the churches and the hotels. There is no part of the civic make-up more certain than this. And we have taken to it kindly; we can't see a single fractional point in which it can be condemned. (Hear, hear.)

Just examine for a moment what the British nation expects, in times of stress: suppose to-morrow one of your seaports were attacked, theoretically every citizen would be expected to spring to arms to repel the invader; it would be an obligation no one would dispute, and would be required by the authorities. If that obligation is imposed upon British citizens, to be ready to spring to arms to repel invasion, is there not a relative obligation on the part of the Government to see that the citizens are able individually to do so? (Applause.) We think it would be nothing short of cruelty to send untrained citizens to fight against thousands of trained troops: it would be just like putting you or me up against Jack Johnson. (Laughter and applause.) We educate our youths in a commercial sense, to allow them to meet the battle of trade and commerce; we make it compulsory for that great fight, but for the sterner battle in which theoretic-

ally they are supposed to take part, we should surely equip them that they should be prepared to fight efficiently when they are called upon to do so. (Applause.)

Let us for a moment place this question before every person in this room, every bank clerk, every shop clerk; suppose, if this country were invaded, the call for arms came—how many, if given 20 cartridges and a magazine rifle, could load it, let alone use it effectively? It is not now like the days when in case of invasion they used to light fires on every hill top and the clansmen would spring to arms; those days are gone; high training is now essential. That is the lesson which the Australian Commonwealth set for every citizen in the whole community. We are visitors, and it is not our place to advise and suggest what you ought to do; but you will perhaps permit me to suggest what you might do. We will have from our 5,000,000 people 600,000 trained men; if that proportion were to rule in Canada, you would have ready for the defence of your Dominion an army approaching 1,000,000 men. (Hear, hear.) I don't like advising you to do it, because I know a number of people who come to our country from abroad, and know more about the Australian Commonwealth in ten days than all the Prime Ministers combined! (Laughter.) We remember an Englishman who was a visitor to our land, who was a spectator at a kangaroo hunt—you would call it a kangaroo "stunt" here I suppose (laughter)—and he did not like the way the Australian dogs mastered the kangaroos. He said he would bring a "dawg" that would show them the proper way to hunt; when that superior type of "dawg" arrived the whole village turned out to see the canine capture the kangaroo. One of the animals came along, and the hunt began, but the animals were soon lost to view; a shepherd came along the road, and the hunter asked him "Did you see a dog and a kangaroo pass here?" "Yes I did," he replied. "It was one of the most exciting races I ever saw, the kangaroo was only five yards behind the dog" (laughter), so sometimes when I feel tempted to improve things in Canada, I remember that dog and that visitor! So all we dare to do is to suggest what you could do if you wanted to.

Now, gentlemen, if we figure just for a moment, that we can carry out a scheme of that kind and still retain citizenship without inflicting particular hardship on our people, if applied to Great Britain as Lord Roberts wished to be done some time ago (applause), it requires but a moment's

reflection to show that it would bring to our Empire's service millions of trained men where we have only tens of thousands. Suppose we had given the same concentration of energy to the military arm, as we did to the naval, do you suppose our supremacy would ever have been challenged?

This is a family gathering, and in its circle we can confess a few facts. I think no one questions that we shall win in this protracted war, but at the start we set out with only our naval limb developed. (Hear, hear.) We feel therefore that if the Australian system were applied to the whole British Empire, and the military strength developed commensurately with our vast population, the members of the aggregation of nations would be able to look with greater security than ever upon the future.

Now, gentlemen, in a gathering of this kind, I know that the proudest thought uppermost in our minds is that of the great miracle of unity and oneness of purpose, this conflict in Europe has revealed to the world. A great statesman of France when he heard of the American Revolution said: "That is all right," "when a pear becomes ripe, it falls from the parent tree," but if he had studied botany as he should, he would perhaps have remembered the British oak, and observe that wherever an acorn falls there springs up a new plant, just as like the pear and oak in nature as it is possible to be. That is figurative of the great British Empire. (Hear, hear and applause.) One little acorn was planted where the Dominion of Canada now flourishes, another in Australia, another in New Zealand. Where these acorns have fallen off they have taken root, and their branches are reaching toward maturity, so responsively attuned to the parent that it is impossible for the slightest hostile breeze to stir the branches of one of those trees, without its vibrations being taken up through the whole Imperial forest until its music wells up into the mightiest sounds. That is why with each passing decade our peoples are blending together, becoming cemented, unified, understanding each other more effectively than ever they have understood or comprehended each other before. (Prolonged applause.)