

(January 8th, 1917.)

## Recruiting in Quebec

By MR. O. S. PERRAULT.\*

AT a regular meeting of the Club held on the 8th January, Mr. Perrault said:

*Mr. Chairman and Fellow Members of the Canadian Club,*—Some few months ago Quebec Province had the honor and the distinction of receiving a great number of you and of bringing you into close intercourse with its citizens. To-day, we of Quebec are here renewing old acquaintances with our former guests of Ontario. With all the sincerity of which I am capable, may I state, in my opening remarks, that I am most happy to be here and to help, within the modest limits of my powers, to the getting together of the two great races which go to make up the population of the two Provinces.

Several who are here present have seen, and have even told their fellow compatriots, how the people of two races, in the neighboring Province of Quebec, have stood shoulder to shoulder, whether in business, or socially, or in other fields of human activity, without infringing upon the sentiments or the state of mind possessed by either one section or the other; how both races work in harmony for the prosperity of the common heritage.

Now, my good friends, therein we have an example. If two races, as I have stated, are able to live together side by side in the truest spirit of union in one Province, why should not the same condition prevail in the case of two races located in a larger area, when it is pointed out that these races are divided by only an imaginary line? Why should not these races be animated by the same spirit of harmony and work for the common good of both?

Are we not all Canadian? Do we not live beneath the same flag? Do we not breathe the same spirit of liberty, beneath the folds of that self-same flag? As British subjects, are we not all on the same footing? Are we not brothers?

Yes, I say! and I think that no one here present will rise to rebut me. We are a young and vigorous people filled with ambition. We have been set down by nature in a land endowed

\*Mr. O. S. Perrault, one of the leading French Canadian business men of Montreal, came up with the "Bonne Entente." Throughout the war he has been one of the leading spirits in the movement to stimulate recruiting in his province.

to the highest degree with riches. We are a people composed of races renowned for their energetic spirit, for their tenacity, and for their intelligence. What one lacks, the other comes forward and supplies. Then, I ask, why should we not get together and try to assimilate, each the ideas, the principles, the one of the other? Why should we not try to help each other? Why should we not try to better each other?

But, it may be asked, how are we going to do this? As far as my opinion goes, two factors can improve the situation: we must know each other; we must understand each other better. Here we are—two men of different mentality,—how are we to esteem each other? How are we to have regard for each other if we do not understand each other? And how are we to understand each other if it be not through personal contact,—through getting together? If we are to keep ourselves apart, if we are to wrap ourselves up in our prejudices, well, it means our own destruction. We will have lost all the object or end of existence itself; for, if I understand aright this object or end, it is that we get together and unite for the greater benefit of the greater number.

On the other hand, if we get together—if we try to reach an understanding one with the other, there will ensue an exchange of ideas, there will most assuredly be a union between the two races. I do not mean by this that there will not be some little misunderstandings; but I do mean to say that there will result some attitude of mind whereby each will endeavor to reach a common ground of understanding. And from this common ground, I feel sure, there will arise a greater spirit of union between the two great races which go to make up the population of this country. Needless for me to elaborate upon the question of bringing about greater solidarity between two individuals. What is it, I ask, which assures the success of a commercial enterprise? What is it that is at the bottom of success in business? Is it not union? Is it not the common interest? Is it not a good understanding between those engaged in such business?

Just as it is undeniable that some nations present vastly different temperaments, so is it assured that each race possesses its own mental state—may I call it, its own mentality? But it does not follow from this that there is incompatibility of temperament between these different races? (I had to translate this from French into English.) Two races can at the same time present different temperaments, different characteristics and understand each other, have regard for each other and stand shoulder to shoulder with each other when

it is a question of entering upon the defensive. And the greatest proof we have of this is that, during the past three years, the Allies, composed of thousands and thousands of people of different temperaments and characteristics, are shoulder to shoulder fighting for the one and the same ideal—civilization!

What supernatural power was it that impelled them to battle, making them despise machine guns, making them disregard wounds, making them even pay no attention to death? What is it that makes them accomplish heroic deeds in comparison with which the exploits of the middle ages appear as insignificant? What is it, I ask, if it be not that these soldiers, rising from different races, have a common ideal? The ideal which compels them to mete out punishment to those who have cast under foot, dragged in blood the most sacred principles of Justice and Right, which, after all, are the pillars of civilization. It is incumbent upon us all to say what the future of our country will be. Each section of the population has its own responsibilities in the matter. One is bound up in the other. Upon us here present is incumbent the duty, in a most especial manner, of carrying on the campaign of wiping away all the prejudices which are the curse of a nation, and which hold back its development on the path of progress. Upon us is incumbent the duty of making each know the other better.

And our reward? Well, it will be given to us to see Canada growing better, with the union of the two great races going to make up its population. We will see these same races working together in harmony for the prosperity of our great country.

Your President has asked me to mention an incident which happened a few months ago in the Province of Quebec in connection with the recruiting. When Hon. Sam. Hughes sent a wire to Armand Lavergne to offer him the command of an overseas Battalion, and Lavergne refused, I immediately took up the telephone and called up Oliver Asselin, who was the founder of the Nationalist party and Bourassa's right hand man, and said: "I have got a car at the door, and I am sending it over to you to bring you here. I will keep you ten minutes, and I will send you back, so you will only lose half an hour. I can't tell you on the 'phone what I want." He said: "All right" and I sent the car. We talked about the matter a few minutes and I said to him: "I want you to enlist. Will you do that? I know it is a big sacrifice. You have a wife and children, and you are not a rich man; but I

think you have a great opportunity of doing a great thing for Canada." Asselin asked me which way I wanted him to do it. I said: "I don't know whether I can do it, but I will try to get you the command of a battalion." He considered a moment and finally said: "I will." He wrote me afterwards a letter,—I wish I had it here with me—in which he agreed to enlist. I took that letter up to Ottawa personally, and Brigadier-General Labelle, a flour merchant of Montreal, came with me to introduce me. The command was offered to Asselin. He refused and said he would take second place if the command was given to a man who was at the front, who had proven his worth, or who had come back from the front and who had experience.

Before I left, Hon. Sir Sam Hughes informed us that he had cabled to recall from France three officers of the 14th Battalion: Captain Roy, Major R. De Serres and Colonel Henri Des Rosiers. Asselin did all the drudgery of recruiting, and he recruited the battalion inside of five months. They were sent to Bermuda. People said their going there was a joke, and they would never go to the front. But a little while ago I saw that battalion off, and now they are at Bramshott Camp, in England, awaiting orders to go to the front.

Your President wants me to blow my own horn, but I won't do that. Thank you very much, gentlemen."