

(September 28th.)

Labour and Patriotism.

BY WILL CROOKS, M.P.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject "Labour and Patriotism," Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., said:

Mr. Chairman and Friends,—I should have been delighted as a Labour man, notwithstanding that there are those who say that Labour men are wanting in loyalty to the throne, to the Crown and to the British Empire—I should have been delighted, I say, had the President opened these proceedings with a toast to His Majesty the King. The King is a true type of that love of the Empire which knows neither party nor creed. I was almost slipping out another word concerning his character, for I know him and I know that personally he is one of the finest and best of men. There is none better. He seeks to be the father of his people and their personal friend.

I am wearing the King's decoration to-day because I am the guest of the Canadian Club, and a number of you don't know me. I don't have to wear it in England, because every one in England knows that I got it. It reminds me of the sailor lad, a grimy young salt, who was called by his captain as the vessel neared the port of London and instructed to wash himself. "Wash!" declared the boy, amazed. "What need to wash? Nobody knows me here." A short time after, however, when the vessel was coming in to Newcastle the captain repeated his injunction. "No need to wash," quoth the lad. "Everybody knows me here." But sometimes it is a disadvantage to be known.

Your secretary tells me that this club knows no political party, that here you have an open forum where every visitor speaks his mind freely. It is a splendid idea. Under ordinary circumstances it is sometimes very difficult to make men understand. I have been amazed sometimes at the atrocious

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things I am supposed to have said. Until I read them I had never even known of them, but I read them in the newspapers so I know I must have said them. After all what is the difference in party names? We may have our Tories and our Liberals and our Nationalists and our Loyalists and our Independent Labourites, and they only differ on how to bring the Empire into line for the people. The difference is only one of method, after all. I belong to the Labour party because it stands for the race, because it believes in looking after the people first. Others seem to place this great obligation last. "You will have the Dominions of the Empire leaving you unless you do such and such," they say. I will tell you now what I have told them at home, and, having come in contact with you, it has now a much greater meaning to me. "Don't tell me," I say, "that the loyalty of the Canadian Dominion and the Australian Provinces depends upon the Post Office orders England sends out to them. It depends on something far higher, and better, and brighter, than pounds, shillings and pence.

You agree with me, don't you? Ours is, after all, the bond of blood. Mothers and fathers at home have sons and daughters out here. It means much to both. It makes the bond one of sympathy and love. And when the letters come home let me tell you this, and I don't need to tell you, for you know it as well as I do, that the first question they ask is: "How are they? Are they doing well?" They never ask: "Is there a Post Office order in it?"

But, they tell me, we would do better if we were friends of the "parties." We are. Like the priest who associated with the prisoner, we are the friend of all sinners; but we believe we have a real mission to perform for the state. They tell me I am on this tour partly to shirk work. Well, the world is full of willing people, some who are willing to work, and the rest who are willing to let them. As a Lancashire man, who had been arguing with me, once said, "We can't be all of one mind. If we were every one would want my Sally." I thought, "If everyone was of my mind nobody would want her." So we get through life, differing here and there, though the Labor party is the best party after all, because it looks after the people and their homes.

There is need for such a party nowadays when the papers are filled with war talk. Some noble lord visits Canada and tells you that war is inevitable. Everybody gets the shivers. Then somebody sees an airship and says, "Here they come!" It is astonishing what men can see after they have dined well.

Others put on a long face. They say, "Old John Bull is finished. He had nobody to find the north pole." And the man on the streets asks, "What is it, a 'pub'?" I have no wicked prejudices about geography. A man's a man for a' that, no matter where he first saw the light of day. Old England is not done yet; far from it. She has capacity and initiative equal to anything in the civilized world. The Old Country has furnished the civilizing brains for the whole world. You have fine engines, but ours are as good. You have good railways, and we have ours. You have food in plenty, we get some, too. England is not played out, not by any means. But you of the Canadian Club have a sacred and solemn obligation to see that some of the mistakes made by the Old Country are not made in the new. God has blessed you. May He be as kind to you as He has been to the old land in furnishing the amount of brains necessary to build up a great country. May you be blessed by big men who are not always engaged in the pursuit of the Almighty Dollar, but have some passing thought for suffering humanity. You want not so much of colossal wealth as men of initiative and inventive genius. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being poor.

I remember on one occasion when I was engaged in an election campaign the opposition issued a leaflet against me. It declared that I occupied an administrative position out of all proportion to my worldly wealth. They said I had a house which was only rated at £35 and that the landlord paid the rates. Well, that was good of the landlord, I must say. I took that leaflet to the next meeting. I took it to the front of the platform and told the people, "I hold in my hand the certificate of my honesty. It says 'I am poor.'" "Well," said they, "We knew that. Why talk about it?" "Because it proves I am honest. If I hadn't been honest I shouldn't have been poor."

In the Old Country our trouble is to deal fairly and justly with the poor. And sometimes, yes, and often, friends, the poor include many of our bravest sons. Through an accident to the bread-winner they are thrown upon the labor market. Too often they are not ready for the emergency. They have not been trained for it. They are unable to secure and hold employment. I remember once going into a fishery district, where some good people were seeking to get the fishermen to take on some boys who needed employment. "He is a god-fearing lad," was the recommendation in one case. But the answer came quickly, "Is he? Can he pull?"

The motto of the Labour party is a good one. "Give us this day our daily bread,"—that is the Labour party's motto in England. It is a privilege and a blessing to help the poor. The mission to humanity was the mission of Jesus Christ. It was to the poor that He ministered chiefly. You know it is as difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The reason the churches make the rich man welcome here is because his chances are small in the other place. So we are hoping to develop great statesmen who will realize their duty and obligation to common humanity.

Last December a man came to me wanting work. He did not ask for sympathy. He had been hunting for a month and had got no job. The iron was gradually getting into his soul. He appealed to me to do something. I was an M.P., a member of the County Council. He did not want me to go on the public platform and ladle out public sympathy. I could only hang my head in shame at the helplessness and hopelessness of it all, this condition that was robbing him of his manhood, that was destroying an asset of the British Empire—the sheer neglect of a valuable man at its disposal.

Oh, friends, it is a work of real loyalty, of patriotism. We are all equal in the eyes of God and each of us is our brother's keeper. When some of us were appointed to the office of poor law guardians we got into hot water at once. Some friends demanded that an enquiry be held on myself. "You are making the poor house too comfortable," they said. "Well," I told them, "with ordinary luck and the misfortune to live till I'm old, I'll end there myself. So you can't blame me for trying to make it comfortable while I've got the chance."

When you see a man looking for work on the streets don't set him down as a loafer and a lay-about and walk on. He may be an old veteran of industry who has fallen upon evil days. But these good people went on with their enquiry. They said, "You have no business to undertake duties that are not within the pervue of poor law guardians. Your duty is to relieve poverty. It is no part of your duty to adjust social inequalities." What a mouthful! I kept saying it to myself all day and all night to get used to it. They interpret our duties to see that the poor were kept poor and the work-house kept up. Great Heavens! What did they think these institutions existed for. What do we create our parliamentary laws for but as a terror to evil-doers? Of course, it doesn't always work out that way, but that's the way it's intended.

Be warned, Brother Canadians, in time. Don't have any social inequalities.

I read with much interest the striking and startling account Mr. Macdonald gave of his impression of our unemployed. The picture is not overdrawn. Yet all these men are not bad when you know them and they are not difficult to know. Of course there is the fellow who dresses well, with the jam-pot collar and the cuffs and the eye-glass, who says, "That's the unemployed. They don't believe in work." Of course there are many men who don't believe in work, and the most of them wear top hats. But down below, take it from me, the man wants to work.

Not so long ago a man came to my door with a mat over his shoulder. "Buy a mat, sir, won't you? For Christ's sake buy a mat." He was a big strapping fellow, six feet tall, but the tears were running down his cheek. "I've been at it all day and haven't got a copper and there are five starving children at home." I gave him something and told him to go home and give them a feed. I have in mind another case, the unfortunate man sitting on the handle of his barrow. He had toiled all day and his assets were nothing. Whose duty is it to look after him? It was Cain who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Friends, our work is a great one. It is the mission of humanity. It is the mission of Heaven. We seek to move the powers that be in the cause of the greatest assets of Old England and the British Empire. We want to see her taking good care of her best asset in building up fine, healthy men and women. We are told our efforts are faulty. Perhaps they are. Let them go on saying it. But let England boast, not only in the glory of her navy, not only in the might of her army, but, first and foremost, in the happiness and contentment of her common people.
