# A Canadian Community Carrying On*

By EDMUND KEMPER BROADUS

IT has been my privilege to spend the last nine years in a Western Canadian town. Since the fateful August of 1914, this town, like most other communities in Canada, has played its due part in the great war. The story of any one of these towns, during this period, would be worth telling for its own sake, for it would reflect and epitomize one phase of the great chapter of history which Canada is helping to write. But since April, 1917, another reason for telling such a story has developed. To those of us who were born in the United States and whose transfer of allegiance has caused no abatement of loyalty and affection for the country whence we came, the developments of the last months have had a double significance. There is not only a great thankfulness that the United States has played her part well, but there is also a profoundly moving consciousness that she has in some measure turned those pages of sorrow and high elation which we have been turning these four long years. That is why it seems worth while to record some of the experiences of an average Canadian community.

Edmonton, capital of the Province of Alberta, is, or was before the war, a city of between 60,000 and 70,000 inhabitants. It has two daily newspapers and a few minor manufacturing interests. It is dotted about by profitable coal mines. In addition to its legislative activities, it is the home of the provincial university. Around it and tributary to it is a mixed farming district, fairly well settled southward and on either side, but thinning out rapidly northward into a hinterland of trappers and of widely scattered Hudson Bay Company posts. From Edmonton and its tributary district, a little over 21,000 men, Canadian Expeditionary Force and Reservists of the Allied countries, have gone to the front since the war began.

Meanwhile, from the standpoint of the stay-at-home, the war has fallen into two periods. The first covered, roughly speaking, a year and a half—a period of intense recruiting, of khaki-filled streets, of exodus, of suspense—and, towards the end, of casualties that darkened many homes. With the passing of that period, the streets gradually lost their martial air and the recruiting diminished to a trickle —not because the spirit waned, but because there were so few left to go. To the stay-at-homes, as the spectacle of khaki faded, came a sense of enforced and intolerable detachment, and a hunger for some task—any task—that might help them to feel that they too were "carrying on." In some ways, indeed, it had been possible to carry on from the beginning. The confusion and haste of recruiting had been such that at first no adequate official record of soldiers' dependents was available. The "Daughters of the Empire" rose to the situation. Registration blanks were prepared, advertisements were inserted in the daily newspapers, coöperation of the druggists (who would be first to learn of cases of illness) was obtained, and by these means, and by personal search, approximately complete lists of soldiers' dependents were compiled long before the Government at Ottawa took any action. By the time Ottawa had organized the machinery for collecting and administrating the Patriotic Fund, the local activities were already well systematized and private relief had become the daily work of scores of devoted women.

When the official Patriotic Fund was finally arranged for, however, it was well planned and well administered. Only a little less than two per cent. of the great sums collected went to cost of operation, and this included office expenses and the travelling expenses of speakers who went through the country explaining the purpose of the fund and soliciting contributions. Though there were complaints at the time that the Government should entrust wholly to voluntary subscription a task of such national importance as the caring for the dependents of its soldiers, it seems to have been the wiser course. In the course of time, however, it became apparent that while the majority were giving and would continue to give gladly, a minority were withholding and would continue to withhold. The Provincial Government took charge and guaranteed the quota for Alberta.

Meanwhile the University, which had seen its student body diminished by half and its faculty deprived of some of the choicest spirits, also sought to help. From the very beginning, the Officers' Training Corps had taken the place of field sports and gymnasium training. In addition to the scattering enlistments of students in outside battalions (many of them in the "Princess Pats"), each of the four western universities, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, contributed a company to the "Western University Battalion." With most of those gone who could go, the problem of keeping in touch with the scattered academic family was energetically taken up by a member of the faculty who constituted himself editor of a weekly *Newsletter* to the boys at the front. At first a typewritten and mimeographed sheet occupied chiefly by news from the University, it developed rapidly into a printed paper whose home items were increasingly supplemented by news of soldiers themselves. In response to the appeals of the editor, letters from training camps in England and from "Somewhere in France" multiplied; and the sheet became a record, absorbingly interesting alike to the stay-at-homes and to the widely scattered boys at the front, of addresses, of transfers, of promotions, of decorations worthily won— and alas, all too often, of casualties. The girls, meanwhile, had organized themselves into a "Comforts Club," and boxes and parcels of delectables went forward in a steady stream.

Gradually, as the war wore on, the period of enforced detachment from the khaki passed. Scatteringly at first, but soon more numerously, uniforms began once more to be seen upon the streets—but with a difference. In place of the former pulse-stirring spectacle of buoyant marching men, the period of crutches set in. Of the 21,000 who have gone from the Edmonton district since the war began, 2,400 have come back. The hospital on the university grounds was taken over by the Government as a hospital for soldiers; another building was taken over as a Convalescent Home. A new phase had begun.

Next in importance to the man at the front, who is doing so much for the stay-at-homes, and for whom the stay-at-homes can do so little, is the man back from the front, for whom the stay-at-homes can do so much. Let us fol-

*In view of the impending return of our own soldiers, this account of Canadian experience has special interest at present.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low one of our 2,400, a private of the C. E. F., from the moment when, incapacitated from further service, he finds himself on Canadian soil again, to the moment when, turning the last page of his great chapter, he becomes merged once more in civilian life.

Awaiting him in Edmonton (as, of course, in any other Canadian town, were he bound elsewhere) are a variety of organizations interested in his return. Some of these, such as the Red Cross, the St. John's Ambulance, and the V. A. D., have been primarily concerned with his welfare overseas, but these and the next-of-kin are eager to share in his welcome home. His companions who have preceded him and who have organized themselves into a local branch of the Great War Veterans Association are ready to greet him. The local authorities and the next-of-kin were notified by wire when our soldier entered the special train which has been bearing him on his long journey across the continent, and whether he arrive with few companions or with many, he will be amply met.

At the railway station space is roped off for his family and friends, and around the enclosure gather other citizens who have come to take part in the welcome. From these scenes, as they have been any time these last two years, certain faces haunt one's memory. Down in the southern city of Calgary, the distributing point for the Province, a quaint old woman used to meet the trains when soldiers came in. She had no sons at the front for whose return she might be watching. She had no money to give to the patriotic fund. But she had—a cornet, on which she could play one tune, "Keep the Home Fires Burning," and every time the soldiers came in, she got off in a corner of the station and played her tune. As the branch-line train with the soldiers on it came up from Calgary to Edmonton, it was boarded at one of the little stations down the line by a white-haired fragile old man who was "father" to many of the Edmonton boys when they were training here at the beginning. As a "Y" secretary, he was with them still in England and France, and in France his own son was killed. It is written in his fine old face that these men who are coming back are also his sons, and as he went from seat to seat in the train during these last few hours of their journey and welcomed them and planned with them for their welfare, they did not fail to read what was written there. Times change and faces change with them. The fragile old man is in England now, but he remains a part of the picture; for he has simply moved on to the beckoning finger-tip of the long arm which the home-town stretches overseas.

But we return to our soldier at the railway station. If he is incapacitated, an ambulance bears him directly to the Military Hospital. If, as in the majority of cases, he can get about but still needs hospital treatment, the motor cars bear him to the Veterans' Club, where the Mayor greets him with a word of welcome, and his comrades gather around him. Here, too, temporary accommodations are provided for him if he lives out of town. Thence he is borne to his home, where the soldier enjoys a ten days' leave of absence before reporting to the military authorities. If his condition is such that he can continue to be an "out-patient," he reports thenceforth at regular intervals for medical treatment. He is still serving under the colors, still wears his uniform, and may not seek other employment until his discharge.

For many a man, however, with health shattered by gas or shell shock, or with wounds requiring constant attention, hospital or convalescent home is the only resource. As I write, there are three hundred such cases in the local hospital, and they will, of course, multiply enormously as time goes on. When the hospital first began to fill, a quiet professor of mathematics at the university suddenly turned himself into a sort of amateur lyceum bureau. Anybody who had a song to sing or a joke to crack or a story to tell was hunted to his lair by this indefatigable spirit. From these beginnings he went on to the coördination of the various elements wishing to "do something" for the returned soldier, until now the erstwhile devotee of conic sections has become the mainspring of a concerted activity remarkable for its harmonious coöperation.

Meanwhile, our soldier is slowly convalescing, has joined the local branch of the G. W. V. A., and is beginning to think of his future. At present the returned soldier remains under the charge and absolute authority of the Canadian Army Medical Corps until the time of his discharge. Of Dominion scope again is the Invalided Soldiers Commission, which has to do with vocational training and with further medical treatment of the soldier in case he undergoes a physical relapse after his discharge. Coöperating with these is the Returned Soldiers Commission of the Province of Alberta, which consists of the Premier, three members nominated by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and three members nominated by the G. W. V. A. One would imagine that it would take a hardy broth to survive this multiplicity of cooks, but fortunately it is the individual, not the red tape that counts. The Secretary of the Provincial Returned Soldiers Commission, himself an old-timer and, again, fortunately, a civilian, is the saving grace in this complexity. He cuts red tape by ignoring it, and is alike beloved by the soldiers and indispensable to the authorities. Through him our soldier's way is smoothed as he struggles with his complicated relations with the authorities and, emerging from the hospital, turns his face forward to the problem of fitting himself once more for civilian life.

During his stay in the Convalescent Home, our soldier, if he is not already master of a trade, has been encouraged to begin vocational training.* When restored to health he is sent on to the Dominion Technical School in Calgary, or to the vocational school in Edmonton or the College of Agriculture of the University. Meanwhile, a vocational allowance for such time as his technical training requires is added to his regular pay. At the end of this period, equipped with the necessary technical knowledge, he need have no fear. In a new and rapidly developing country, which was suddenly stripped of its man-power, there will be no dearth of opportunities. If, on the other hand, the soldier is ready to seek a position at once, without waiting for the vocational training, the Returned Soldiers Commission and the G. W. V. A. stand behind him. All available sources of employment—banks, department stores, and small shops, factories, agencies, and mines—have been brought into coöperation.†

It is impossible to mention the G. W. V. A. without paus-

*At present this privilege is granted only to those who have had no previous special training, or whose physical disabilities prevent their resuming their former trade. It is characteristic of the activities of the G. W. V. A. that they are now urging upon the Government the extension of this opportunity to those who already have a trade but wish to "better themselves" by learning a new one.

†As an instance of local coöperation, it is worth noting that the Edmonton Board of Trade prints, as a part of its letterhead for all correspondence, a reminder that "the G. W. V. A. conducts an employment bureau. Give the veterans the first chance."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to reflect on the enormous significance this organization and the corresponding organization, sure to develop on American soil, will have on the future of the two countries. What part the American organization may be expected to play is outside of my text. With the numbers already enlisted in the States and the enormous additions which will probably have to be made, that influence cannot fail to be great; and it is possible of course that enlistments may ultimately reach such a proportion that the story of the G. A. R. in the twenty years following the Civil War may be parallelled. But the army now contemplated in the States, large as it is, bears of course no such proportion to the total population as the army which sparsely populated Canada has sent. As we here in Edmonton, for example, look about us, the question that rises to our lips is not so much, "Who has gone?" as "Who has not gone?" And when these thousands come back, with a basis of organization and a sense of solidarity such as no mere political party has ever afforded, there seems no imaginable limit to the power for good or ill which they can and will exert. The present membership of the G. W. V. A. in Canada, about 25,000, is, of course, only the thin edge of the wedge; but their monthly magazine, the *Veteran,* contains in its opening number the significant announcement that it proposes not merely to concern itself with "problems and news more closely affecting returned soldiers," but also "fearlessly and strenuously to attack all proven abuses and injustices in our national administration and public life, and lend its independent support to all sane and enlightened policies of reform and progress." If the G. W. V. A. can really be independent and stay independent, and can save itself from the inevitable danger of becoming a political tool, there is literally no limit to the good it can do in a country where there is surely room for purgation; and there is also food for reflection in the thought that the two G. W. V. A.'s which will develop on either side of the international boundary, consisting of men who have fought shoulder to shoulder, will develop an intellectual and spiritual reciprocity between the two nations which will utterly transcend any mere economic relations.

Meanwhile, with the fruition of these great matters still in the future, the little community has been doing what it could. The efforts have seemed like mere gropings in the dark, and the waiting was not easy. But the darkness was occasionally irradiated and the tedium relieved by experiences which enlarge one's faith in human nature. Boys come back, still boys in mere tale of years, but in all else veterans. Perhaps the sense of this sort of thing comes home more intimately to those of us who teach than to other persons. Teaching has a way of laying bare the mental processes of the student and we catch ourselves wondering how minds so immature and apparently so deficient in analytical ability and power of expression can ever cope adequately with serious things. The great call comes. They volunteer, don khaki, and go, and still we wonder a little. Then news begins to filter back of how this boy or that has displayed a man's resourcefulness and a hero's courage, and how all of them, whether chance has distinguished them or not, have done their duty. That would be enough in itself to teach us humility, but one thing remains to clinch the lesson. Slowly as the months of long agony of war grow into years, many of those boys who seemed so incurably young are invalided home and meet us in the halls or reappear in our classrooms. They bear external marks of what they have been through but these marks are as nothing compared to what is written on their souls. They conduct themselves naturally enough. There isn't a suspicion of swank. They are indeed quiet to the point of reticence. But in all their demeanor and in every word they say, they are men—not merely technically but literally, veterans. Here is one instance out of the many that crowd upon my thought. Among the sophomores is a quiet unassuming boy in civilian garb. Save for a shattered hand, there is nothing to mark him for what he is—a veteran of the Princess Pats. He has taken up his education at the early stage where he left it when the call came. He was no genius when he went away, and his experience has wrought no sea-change in him. But when he comes into contact with life as it is portrayed in literature, he judges it as a man judges. And there is a power of illumination in these boys that transcends speech. They have possessed themselves of a demesne of grim realities beside which one's own little plotted field seems pitifully insignificant. I had been reading Barbusse's "Under Fire" and the concentrated horror of it had seemed to me rather a triumph of the creative imagination than a credible thing. I met this boy next day with the book in his hand and phrased my doubt to him. "The story is true, every word if it," he said, very quietly and soberly. I read the book over then and peopled it with the boys—those incredibly young boys—whom I knew so well.

There are many lessons to be learned in this new world which is a-making. The great ones—economic, social, and moral—are for those who have the wider vision. But even to those of us who move within the narrow academic circle, the war comes home in unexpected ways. And it will be no inconsiderable gain if, by it, we shall have attained to a better knowledge of what is the true measure of a man.

# Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

By ALBERT SCHINZ

AS American correspondent for the past ten years of the *Annales Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* the writer has reviewed an average of five American articles or books a year dealing with Rousseau, some from the pen of well-known scholars and men of letters, many of them college professors. The attitude of these men has been—with one exception only—one of antagonism or contempt; they simply followed the lead of John Morley (1873) in holding that while Rousseau as a writer was a genius, as a man he was a scoundrel: "Rousseau's repulsive and equivocal personality has deservedly fared ill in the esteem of the saner and more rational of those who have judged him." This judgment of Morley's has been echoed and re-echoed by later writers, who have heaped abuse on the great Frenchman.

An article in the *International Journal of Ethics* of October, 1915, may be mentioned as typical. Its title is "The Conversion of Rousseau"; its thesis that all the discussions on the mode of Rousseau's conversion are idle for the simple reason that there was no conversion; there may have been "emotional crises," but there was no "moral" reform.

> He had been a liar in his youth, he remained one now; he had stolen . . . he was not above the same yet . . . Whither he would go, he went; what he would do, he did; what he wished, he took . . .

*The *Nation* is in no way responsible for the views of Rousseau expressed in this article, but it is glad to give space to an examination of the case in a presentation so interesting and provocative as that of Professor Schinz.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED