

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE FUTURE OF THE LEAGUE: CANADIAN RAILWAYS: JEWS
AND ARABS: THE MOOSE RIVER MINE.

WHEN the Italian forces entered the city of Addis Ababa, the subjugation of the Ethiopians was almost the least important defeat sustained. The sudden overwhelming of an ancient kingdom by the dastardly use of noxious gases dropped from the air was tragic enough, and even the modern world, with its diminished capacity for moral indignation, has been moved to deep-seated horror. Very few telegrams of congratulation arrived in Rome, and such as made their appearance came from highly significant quarters. We need not envy the quality of mind that can become excited about this kind of victory. When a bully smothers a child, civilised people do not applaud.

Even after the enormous preparation made by the Italians for their attack on a people of whom they never speak without references of contempt, the final victory was achieved only by a resort to ruthless terrorism. Despite the flatulent bombast of Mussolini's self-congratulation, Italian prestige can hardly be said to have increased by these happenings.

Nevertheless, the Italian victory has projected a world-crisis. Its ominous character is realised when we recollect that a considerable section of the civilised world, including Great Britain and the British Dominions, were not simply spectators of the Abyssinian outrage. Their indignation took the form of an attempted restraint on the assailant. But Mussolini has defied the world, in so far as the League of Nations can be so described. At the very outset of his activities against Abyssinia, the Council of the League unanimously condemned Italy, and demanded the imposition of Sanctions by a very great majority of their votes. All this the Italians have treated with cynical defiance. No doubt they have been exposed to considerable hardships, but not to the extent of deterring them from going on to conquer the wretched Abyssinians. Il Duce has shaken his defiant fist in the face of half the world's great nations, acting together under the collective authority of the League. The question that now remains is whether the League can survive what looks very like the gravest blow it has hitherto received.

Signor Mussolini thinks that the League may very well continue to act as if he had never undertaken his African excursion. The only difference is that there is one face fewer at the League, and that Italy now bears the proud title of an Empire. According to the Italian view, the Abyssinian affair was not a war at all. True to the modern manner, there was no preliminary declaration of hostilities. Fascist warriors were engaged in a primitive expedition against savage Africans, who could not be dignified by being called civilised. The Ethiopians were continually disturbing the Italians in their colonisation of Somaliland. Those African tribes were still engaged in their slave-raiding; they were guilty of the most revolting outrages against Europeans; and their so-called Christian faith was hardly more than a name. Their pathetic Emperor, who now appeals to the world as a martyr, was really only a weakling who held his throne through precarious intrigue, and who never had any genuine authority over his so-called Empire. The Italians suggest that they have only done in the twentieth century what other European nations did in the nineteenth. They raise their eyebrows in innocent astonishment at the indignation of Geneva. Now the affair is ended by the final settlement of overt action: Abyssinia is Italian: Emmanuel has become an Emperor: and the Italians may devote themselves to the work of extending the blessings of Fascist civilisation to their new African territories.

It is the omissions in the Italian version of the affair that disturb the world. All the accusations that Signor Mussolini brings against the Ethiopian warriors probably contain a good deal of truth. But the vital facts for the modern world are that both Italy and Ethiopia were, and still are, members of the League of Nations, and that both had solemnly covenanted to have no recourse to war. All this region of relevant circumstance Italy has dismissed in contemptuous silence, and she has held to her defiant way as if it did not exist.

There has been a clear recognition by the League of the challenge which Italy has offered to its authority. Japan had previously defied the weight of League opinion, and had come under a like condemnation; but the Japanese had at least quitted League membership, while Italy had the effrontery to sit the whole affair out at the League table. The issue of the Sino-Japanese encounter had left grave questionings behind, and unless the League was to be reduced to a farcical organisation, it was obvious that when Abyssinia appealed to Geneva, something had to be done beyond mere investigation and report. Some kind of collective pressure

had to be exerted on the aggressor and, for the first time in the League's history, resort was had to the policy of economic Sanctions.

If these Sanctions had been applied with the hearty assent and the united action of the League nations, there is no doubt that they would have been completely effective. Therein lies the trouble. The international situation in Europe is a scene of distracting confusion. It is strewn with irresponsible dictators, who have nothing to lose but their own bubble-reputation. We may well sympathise with perplexed statesmen who hesitate to take any decision for action that may easily lead to unimaginable disaster. Under these circumstances, it is almost impossible to expect a disinterested defence of international justice, which alone can make the League effective; nor will any ingenious demonstration of the fact that international altruism and national self-interest find a meeting-point in a sturdy adherence to the League overcome the hesitations of Powers which put their own security first and last in their foreign policies.

The events of the next few months will determine the future of the League. There is much talk of the necessity for its reform. The suggestion is made that there must be no future talk of resort to Sanctions, and the clauses in the Covenant that provide for their imposition must be deleted. The League will then become an organisation for international conference, but without any authority to enforce its decisions. Even so, the League would not be entirely worthless, for the method of discussion face-to-face is better than the dispatch of telegrams from Foreign Office to Foreign Office. And yet, we must sadly confess that the real difficulty lies not so much in the League organisation as in the want of the League mind in, at least, some of the great nations composing it. They may wish for peace, but not with all their heart and mind. In this respect, the British people must accept the rôle of pioneers in the leadership of world-opinion. Every great moral enterprise has its reverses and minor defeats. In the substitution of arbitration for war, we are endeavouring to withstand traditions as ancient as the human race itself. Even if economic Sanctions fail (and that question is by no means finally settled), it is well that some attempt to restrain an international outrage should have been made. There is an honourable failure that leaves the real prestige of nations and individuals untarnished. A spiritual interpretation of historical forces will reveal such defeats as the prophecies of future victory. In the moral economy of the universe, we may be very sure that the attempt to induce moral sanity in the Italian people will not be entirely lost.

SIR EDWARD BEATTY, in his Presidential Address to the annual meeting of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company on May 6th, took occasion to direct the public mind in general and the minds of the shareholders in particular to our Canadian Railway situation. This question has now become a hardy perennial, but, unlike some other blooms, it does not increase in attractiveness as it emerges from the frosts of winter to assert its vitality with the returning spring. It is, indeed, one of the ugliest weeds in our economic landscape, which, after the manner of its kind, is matched in offensiveness only by its tenacity of life and its capacity for growth. There was a time when Canadian railroads had a world-wide fame. Their construction had a legitimate place of glory in the heroic record of Canadian settlement. But what was once a source of national pride has now become a major occasion for public anxiety. The President of the C. P. R. has issued another grave warning that these arteries of our body politic have become infected with economic disease which, if it does not prove fatal, at least seriously impairs our social health at a time when we have need of all the vital strength we can command. Even in a world which appears to have unbelievable powers to defy financial disaster and to mock in practical affairs what were once the accepted maxims of economic order, the Canadian Railway situation has reached a condition of dangerous crisis.

There is no need, nor will the exercise prove helpful, to traverse the circumstances that have led us to this entanglement in our great systems of railway transport. The experimental wisdom that comes after events is easily reaped, and has its own lessons to teach, but the real question that now comes upon us is concerned with the future. Until fairly recent times, by every estimate, our railways were a great and essential national asset. Next to our natural resources, which without transportation would have been unavailable wealth, the railroad systems were our most valuable possession. Canada could never have been developed without them. Their history is a reflection of the achievements and also of the mistakes that we may reckon inevitable in the record of our rapid national expansion. In every aspect of Canadian settlement we can trace the same mingled story of heroic adventure and greedy exploitation, of bold investment and sharp practice, of statesmanlike projects and political intrigues. The lights and shadows of the tale are the Canadian version of the universal experience that has attended the development of our western civilisation, and they are as kaleidoscopic as human nature itself. To apportion blame or indulge in recrimination on the counsels of the past is the least useful attitude for our present guidance.

The existence of the Canadian National Railway alongside the Canadian Pacific Railway is the source of the difficulties that make our Dominion transport situation so anomalous and complicated. Here we have two great railway systems, both well-managed and efficiently maintained so far as the public service is concerned. Both are absolutely essential for the transportation necessities of our country. The duplication of services is not so serious as it is sometimes represented to be. A study of the railway map shows that, on the whole, the systems serve distinct separate communities, and that a re-adjustment of their provisions would not prove insuperably difficult. But the C. N. R. is a nationalised railroad, directly owned by the Canadian people, under the immediate direction of the Government, and, most important of all, with state-guaranteed financial backing. On the other hand, the C. P. R. belongs to its shareholders, who have invested their capital in it as they might in any other business concern, and with the same kind of expectations of return, but with the same absence of public provision for the making good of incurred losses. In effect, the C. N. R. is financed by Dominion bonds which pay interest without direct reference to the earnings of the system, while the C. P. R. can reward the investment of its shareholders only when the profits of the railway produce the actual money. The thing is unequal. The C. N. R. has gone on piling up deficits, and, at times, the rate of expenditure has been reckless and extravagant. It has not been subject to the strict economic checks that must govern the relations between spending and earning in every private enterprise that hopes to continue. Even when we allow for the huge investment of capital sums, probably necessary to clean up the evil inheritance that made the national assumption of responsibility an imperative duty, and realise that the maintenance of the Intercolonial Railway was a provision guaranteed by the Constitution without special reference to questions of profit-earning, the whole business is highly unsatisfactory, and cries out for drastic action.

We must have a very proper sympathy with Sir Edward Beatty's plea on behalf of his company. The C. P. R. has had its great days in the past. It has had many privileges, and it has not been slow to reap the rewards of its opportunities. There was a time when its prestige was almost synonymous with the credit of the Dominion. We may suggest that, like every other business concern, it must take the lean with the fat, and if it paid large dividends in the years of national expansion, it cannot hope to escape from the blight that has fallen on the financial conditions

of the country in a period of depression. All that is true enough, but, at the same time, every plea that is advanced to support the running of the C. N. R. as a national necessity, and to suggest that our railroads are really great public highways and therefore legitimate objects of tax-contributed expenditure, is equally applicable to the C. P. R. system. In any case, it is not just to an honoured public utility that it should be asked to maintain its equipment and service alongside, if not in competition with, another similar organisation, but without the guarantee of national payment for its dividends, whatever may happen.

These facts are not seriously disputed by most responsible people; but the solution of the problems they present does not meet with a similar unanimity of judgment. Sir Edward Beatty advocates a unified management. Common sense would suggest that we must make our choice between one system of railway ownership or control and another. Arguments can be advanced to support the private ownership of railways: and arguments of equal cogency can be advanced for their nationalisation. Both methods have been tried, and it is a matter for consideration and discussion which is more applicable to our Canadian needs. Or we may adopt the British system of private ownership, modified by Government control. But no argument, except that of necessary acquiescence in an unfortunate heritage, can support the maintenance of all three systems at one and the same time. Already there have been some minor attempts at co-operation, but these only point the way to some larger measure that must result in unification of one kind or another, and, above all, in such arrangements as will put our railways on a sound economic basis.

Every attempt to carry out such a project will meet with stout resistance. Sir Edward Beatty plainly states that the main obstacles in the way will be erected by political parties. That is an added reason why the railway question should be settled. The transport system of a country should not be made a political football to be kicked from party goal to party goal. Whatever solution is adopted, we must put the railways of our country into such a position that no group or sectional interest will hold the public purse to ransom in exchange for its votes, whether it be big business, or the scattered company of bond and shareholders, or political partizans, or the railway employees, or the far-too-numerous body of pass-holders who travel free of charge. Whoever attempts this urgent task will certainly not gain in public popularity, but he will serve his country by stepping in boldly where, at present, everyone fears to tread.

SERIOUS conflict has again broken out between the Arab and Jewish sections of the population in Palestine. It has been necessary considerably to re-inforce the normal garrison of British troops which is always in residence for purposes of public order. The number of casualties inflicted by the rioters, including the death of British police and the wounding of British soldiers, indicates that this disturbance is graver than any previous conflict. A Commission is to be set up to investigate the grievances that have stirred the smouldering inter-racial resentment into new flame.

The immediate causes of the present outbreak are concerned with the question of setting up a legislative Council. This may seem to be a proper, and indeed an inevitable step, in the political development of a mandated territory. But behind this pretext there are much more practical developments that have inflamed Arab nationalism to a new frenzy of excitement. There has been an abnormal increase in Jewish immigration during the past year. In 1935 over 60,000 Jews came into Palestine, and now they number considerably more than one-third of the entire population. Along with the Jewish immigrants, new Jewish capital has poured into the country to the extent of \$75,000,000 during the past year. This money has been applied to new developments in industry and, most notably, to the acquisition of land, which is now passing rapidly out of the hands of Arabs into Jewish possession. The Felaheen or Arab peasant class have been either bought out or induced to part with their small farms, so that they now find themselves landless in a country where they have lived from time immemorial.

These momentous and sudden changes in the character of Palestinian life go back to the Great War. On November 2, 1917, following upon the conquest of Palestine by the Allied forces, the famous Balfour Declaration was given to the world. There can be no doubt that, while it was a sincere enough pledge of British interest in the future welfare of an ancient people, the Declaration was also something in the nature of a *quid pro quo*. The promised gratification of the age-long Jewish hopes was a realistic tribute to the remarkable power which is exercised by the Jew in the modern world. To get his influence and his money on the side of the Allied cause was a worth-while hazard at that hour of crisis in the world-conflict. Mr. D. Lloyd George in his War Memoirs (vol. II p. 586) traces "the fount and origin of the famous Declaration about the National Home for Jews in Palestine" to the request of Dr. Weizmann, a scientist of Jewish race, who rendered

the greatest service to the British Government. When he was offered a public recognition for his work, this distinguished man set aside all desire for personal reward in favor of a request for the repatriation of his race. We may well believe that he was not alone in his approaches to the Allied leaders. Long experience has taught the Jew to wait patiently, to bargain shrewdly, and to learn that the sword is not the only instrument of conquest.

The Balfour Declaration promised a "National Home for the Jews;" but even in that hour of reckless pronouncements, it was impossible to ride rough-shod over interests that were afterwards to find expression in the doctrine of political self-determination. This project, which was to fulfil the ardent aspirations of Zionism, and to realise what for much religious sentiment among Christian people seemed a magnificent act of historical justice, was also to be carried through without prejudice to "the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine". This has proved to be immensely difficult, and the tensions created by the attempt to implement these war-time promises have increased rather than diminished in seriousness. Now they have reached a point of definite crisis.

During recent times, the Jew has attracted considerable attention in the world. He has come out of his ghetto, culturally as well as physically. He has been the object of solicitude, and also of detestation: he has made his way into the highest places of government, commerce and intellectual accomplishment, and he has also been the victim of ruthless pogroms. One thing is certain: he cannot be disregarded. Anti-Semitic feeling has not characterised any considerable section of the British mind in dealing with the Jew. On the contrary, the most exalted offices of state have been occupied by men of Jewish descent. A sense of shame for the long and dreadful record of vilification and oppression, and an appreciation for the amazing persistence of this race in the world, as they have continued for centuries without country and, often, without citizenship, have bred in the British people a sentimental and sympathetic desire to give the Jews, at last, a country of their own, with their ancient Zion as its capital, so that their age-long exile may come to an end.

There can be no doubt that the Jewish immigrants have made excellent colonists. The land had not been developed under Turkish rule, which was corrupt and unenlightened. The exaction of *backsheesh* was a leading method of administration, and the poor were grievously oppressed. The Jews who came into Palestine under the British mandate were not, by any means, elders of

Israel, eager to devote themselves to the revival of an ancient way of life. They brought with them the manners and outlook of New York, Berlin, London, Budapest and Moscow. They proceeded to build a very palpable new Jerusalem outside the ancient city walls. Telaviv became a splendid modern city. You might discover them ploughing in the great Plain of Esdraelon with motor-tractors. On Mount Scopus they set up a great Hebrew University. The Jordan River became a means of hydro-electric power, and the Dead Sea a source for the development of great chemical industries. The pieties associated with the ancient law were not the only religion prevalent among them. Karl Marx, rather than Moses, was the prophet of not a few, whose dream of a restored Israel was based on Russian ideals, rather than the model of the Pentateuch. But they were all alike aggressive, eager to be up-to-date and to make modern Palestine an improvement even on the Biblical prophecies of a land flowing with milk and honey.

The Arab has continued to regard these developments with ill-concealed resentment that has broken out occasionally into active hostility. His position demands to be considered. The name Arab does not convey his real character and outlook. There are wandering Bedouins, desperately ignorant and of low culture, but the Felaheen are essentially indigenous peasants. They have been in Palestine as long as the Jews, probably long before them. They are the real ancient people of the land. For the most part, they are poor and ignorant, and incapable of collective action, except in so far as they are incited by fanatical religio-political leaders. Now they find their land suddenly invaded by an aggressive race, who are eager to assert a claim to possession, and who have all the resourcefulness of a people trained by long experience to fend for themselves. In less than twenty years the Jewish population has increased six-fold, and if the tide of emigration keeps flowing at its present rate, soon they will be in the majority. All is obviously far from well in the Holy Land.

Economic disabilities have been intensified into profound emotional antagonisms by religious hatred. The faith of Islam has immense capacities for fanatical zeal. Palestine is on the edge of the great Moslem world. Jerusalem is a sacred city, second only in importance to Mecca itself, for the followers of the Prophet. It is only too easy for unscrupulous people to make use of religious bigotry for political ends. The suggestion is already whispered abroad that the stirring-up of Moslem feeling may be a way of twisting the British Lion's tail and pre-occupying his attention

in that rather irritating fashion. All of these considerations point to the necessity of dealing with the Palestinian situation by some kind of resolute and fair-minded action.

ON April 13th, three men went down a gold mine at Moose River in Nova Scotia. While they were in the mine working, there was a subsidence of earth and rock, so that the hapless men became entombed. A period of ten days elapsed before a rescue was effected, but that short space of time was long enough to concentrate a world-wide interest on normally obscure Moose River, and to put Nova Scotia into the forefront of the world stage. The pre-occupation of the public mind with the fate of these unfortunate men was an almost unparalleled incident in modern history. Not only in Nova Scotia and in the city of Toronto, where interest might be expected, and where the printing presses could hardly keep pace with the public demand for latest details, but throughout the entire North American continent, the happenings at Moose River swept all other news from the headlines. In Great Britain hardly less prominence was given by the press to the dramatic sequence of events, and throughout Europe radio programmes were interrupted to supply listeners with the most recent information. Countless people sat up all night, and others carried their radio reception sets into their bedrooms in their eagerness to follow the progress of rescue work. Conversation among all sorts of people turned inevitably to this one topic, and the normal subjects of public interest, international affairs, sport, domestic politics and the like, faded into a dim twilight of secondary importance before the intensity of solicitude that was focussed on the Moose River gold mine.

It must be confessed that newspapers and other instruments of publicity made the most of their opportunities. In one case, at least, our staccato-voiced radio announcers, always waiting to pounce on any scrap of news that will "thrill" their jaded listeners, earned a well-merited public rebuke for their anxiety to stage a dramatic moment. But the ease with which the public mind was stimulated to demand news is not sufficiently explained by the zeal of publicity agencies to supply it. The public interest was sincere and unforced. The Moose River mine incidents were not a "stunt" exploited by the artfulness of the press and radio. On the contrary, these means of news distribution were only serving what became a demand amounting to an obsession.

Once the tragic situation of the entombed men passed from being a mere accident (sad enough indeed, but not very unusual) into a fierce fight with natural obstacles and a race against time, it assumed all the qualities of a great drama. The point of transition was the morning of 19th April. On the previous evening, after six days of attempted rescue, hope of extricating the men alive had fallen very low. Water was filling up the mine-workings, and it seemed hardly possible that human life could survive under the conditions that must, by that time, have prevailed underground. But worshippers on their way to church on the morning of 19th April were astonished to learn that the rescuers had actually got into touch with the entombed men, who were still alive and able to make signals. Swiftly the whole situation changed. Relays of experienced men rushed to the rescue from all parts of the Province. These sturdy draegermen toiled with heroic endurance at the difficult and delicate work of getting through to the unfortunate victims, one of whom died before rescue could be effected. The Premier of the Province, with the Ministers of Mines and of Health, was in attendance, and the Minister of Mines, a brawny figure, with practical experience of mining, took even more than his share of the arduous labours at the workings. When, at last, the men were carried out from their terrifying prison, the spirit of those who had been immediately engaged in the work of rescue reached such an exalted state of excitement that one felt its natural intuition had found an inevitable outlet when the whole company joined in singing a fervent Doxology. Thus, what began with a private venture into the depths of a gold-mine in Nova Scotia ended in a heroic drama, with the raising of a fund to reward the rescuers, the striking of medals by the Government to commemorate their devotion, and a message from the King himself.

Nobody with moral sensitiveness will desire to add a discordant note to the praise that has been bestowed on all concerned with the rescue at Moose River mine. Apart from the fact that one of the entombed men, Dr. Robertson, was a distinguished surgeon, who had attracted well-merited popular regard, the saving of human life makes an inevitable appeal to the healthy-minded. But, even during the course of the dramatic events, there were suggestions that the public excitement was a little over-wrought and disproportionate. The emotional prepossession that hung on every whispered word that came up from the unfortunate men, intruding even on the intimacies of converse between husband

and wife, carried on under these desperate circumstances, was regarded, by some at least, as morbid and almost indecent. It was pointed out that, while people were denying themselves sleep to hear the latest news about the rescue of two men, a whole nation was preparing to subdue wretched Africans by a foul resort to poisonous gases, and to leave helpless creatures in a ghastly trail behind the imperial sweep of their death-dealing machines. But nobody seemed to mind, or even to protest that these events, which may well affect the future of the whole world, should be crowded out of public notice by the parlous plight of three men in a Nova Scotia mine. At least one article has since appeared to point out that there were 142 fatal accidents in Canadian mines during 1934, and that the rate of death among Nova Scotia miners directly due to accidents in the course of their employment is over two per thousand.

It is doubtless true that every day in the year men go down mines in Nova Scotia and that, not infrequently, in the course of their work, they find themselves in situations of extremity as critical as that which befell the men at Moose River. Prodigies of heroic labour are frequently achieved, within their own measure as noble and worthy as the self-sacrifice of the men from Stellarton at the gold-mine in question. But such facts should not induce reflections that are, in the main, of a cynical temper. Rather, one is inspired by the experience of observing how swift, spontaneous and unselfish is the response of men to the summons of human need, when that necessity is presented in terms of urgent desperation, and when it becomes concentrated on precise particular individual men. Those who are zealous for the moral health of the people should be heartened by the sincere sentiments of appreciation that applauded the work of the rescuers, and because the masses were able, if only once, to give to a great human drama of heroic quality an even greater concentration of interest than is normally bestowed on engagements between hockey-teams or the exploits of Hollywood. If we are anxious to have the public mind applied to the problems of the day, many of which, in weight of destiny and urgency of need, leave the Moose River mine happenings behind as a mere incident, we ought to realise that they must be presented concretely in terms of dramatic interest; for, as Shelley once wrote, "The great instrument of moral good is the imagination". We ought not to be surprised that you cannot stir up the public mind about the accidental death of two statistical men per thousand of the Nova Scotian miners, while you can move a whole continent

by the problematic fate of two actual men in a mine. Statistics and systems will never stir the mind to that emotional intensity which issues in action. Probably the task of those who are eager to induce the attitude of self-amendment in the world is to direct social emotion to situations that are direct, immediate, and urgent, and above all, to living persons rather than abstract problems.

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