CANADA—A MOTHERLAND

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THE history of the New World is a study in settlement. Underlying settlement there exists that old wandering "urge", the nomadic instinct of the race, an urge which renewed its vigour consequent on the discovery of this continent, which was primarily responsible for its occupation, and which to this day explains in great part the restlessness and mobility of its inhabitants. Upon the great questions of settlement and movement of population is based the major part of the history of America. We in Canada can trace these phenomena with singular accuracy, for it so happens that, almost alone among nations, we have records of the growth of our population from the beginning. The picture of the surge and roll of the flood of humanity as it burst upon this country and spread over it can be painted in minute detail. Not merely as a part of the greatest occurrence in history—the peopling of a new world—but for its own sake, as giving us knowledge of our country's past and light on its problems as it stands facing a new era, is such a picture interesting.

It is peculiarly interesting in that it is more than a simple record of expansion. We have had our ups and downs in this matter. At times there has been a skeleton rattling rather loudly in our national closet. As a rule, our invincible optimism has insisted on ignoring its existence, but at periods the noise has grown so loud that even the most inveterate of optimists has had to listen. The years since the war have constituted such a period. For, during them, that venerable old *bete noir*, emigration to the United States, after lying for twenty years or so, if not dead, at least dormant, has been raising its head again.

Like all great problems, our problems of population, of which this matter of emigration is but a phase, though an important one, have their sources deep in the past, not only in the recorded past of our own history, but in the great dim past of the race, since most of them may be ascribed to this fact that at heart man is and always has been a nomad. Among nomads our own race stands preeminent, for it has always been on the move, and its present representatives show no more desire to stay quietly in one spot than did their old sea-roving ancestors. But the whole of European

civilization is one long story of migration, so that, apart from our ancestry, it would be strange if we were more satisfied than the rest of the species to continue where we are. The New World was born in a spirit of restlessness, and in restlessness has it continued ever since. Never before the discovery had it been, certainly never again will it be possible for mankind to give such unrestricted vent to its wandering instincts. Migration is the key which unlocks the history of the continent. From their first settlements the people of America, especially the Anglo-Saxons, have been wanderers. Since that early day when those old Puritans of Cambridge, seeking to found a new town in the wilderness of the Connecticut, gave as the most potent of reasons "the strong bent of their spirits" so to do, the illimitable West has beckoned. It was written of a certain set of men in the New Brunswick of the forties, but with a great measure of truth it might still be said of the people of this continent, that "no love of home, or attachment to the paternal acres restrained them; for these Old World feelings or notions have scarcely yet found a place among the Anglo-Saxons of any part of North America."[1]

The movements of primitive peoples are determined by natural forces such as the supply of game. While our nomadism has in it a large element of self-consciousness, still it too has been mainly instinctive. The desire to "better" themselves is the prevalent motive with immigrants; but although the pioneer, pushing further and further into the wilderness, abandoning his holding and moving farther on when a few neighbours came in and "crowded" him might give the same reason, it is to be assumed that mere restlessness, the mere migratory impulse, exerted a more powerful influence upon his decision than did the prospect of economic improvement. The same force is to be seen at work to-day among the prospectors of our north country. Each man has persuaded himself that some day he is going to find his gold mine; but it needs only a limited acquaintance with the psychology of the class to know that it is the love of the life, the lure of the forest which draws them, not primarily the love of gold. The prospector and his kindred frontiermen are among the last to be able to slake their thirst for the nomadic life in the old way, for the days of pioneering are almost past and backwoods settlement is becoming more and more just a matter of "taking up land." As the frontier of settlement constricts, the economic component of migration bulks larger and larger, until at last the old desire for mere change and adventure almost disappears. At the same time, the migratory spirit receives a

1 J. F. W. Johnston, *Notes on North America*, Edinburgh, 1851.

new direction. It no longer expresses itself "horizontally" but "vertically"; that is, it is in quest no longer of a new abode, but of a new status. Men seek to improve their position in life. Sons of farmers or craftsmen go into business or enter the professions. Democracy, itself a product of the frontier, insists on education for everybody. A "white-collar job" becomes the object of every man's ambition. The frontier is transferred to the city, and the youth who in a former generation would have assailed the forest now storms the urban strongholds of industry or finance.

While the eager pressure for economic and social progress is by no means confined to a country which is losing its wilderness frontier, it need scarcely be said that in all such countries there is very much more emphasis on economic progress and changes of status are much more common than in countries whose social structure has hardened. In old, static societies, since there is little scope for ambition, ambition itself tends to disappear, and consequently the social movement due to ambition. Of European countries, that one which, up to the present, has been most affected by the presence of a frontier in America and other parts of the world, Great Britain, has been the one in which opportunity has been greatest. The fact that change of economic status does occur in older countries does not affect the validity of the thesis that only in the newer countries has such change come to be the normal course of life. This "vertical" expansion naturally began early in colonial life, for to rise by utilizing the efforts of one's fellows is an obvious and fairly easy thing. For this reason, colonial history always exhibits a society in which government posts and the professions, those obvious prizes that skim the cream from the community's life, are quickly seized and jealously held. Men of this stamp are akin to the pioneer only in their economic desires; his true brethren, the captains of industry, do not put in an appearance until the call of the frontier is beginning to be less loudly heard.

Now, while the above remarks have reference to the continent generally, they are also appropriate for Canada in particular, since this country has shared the general frontier experience, and the story of its settlement is not very different from that of other regions of the New World. We have had the same primary attractions of vacant land, the same impulse to the land, and the same social stages in the transition from frontier conditions to modern urban life. The "vertical" frontier of economic status with us, as with our neighbours, progresses towards an aristocracy of accomplishment, and our pioneers gather in increasing numbers in the industrial world rather than on the fringe of settlement.

Whatever our peculiar population problems, therefore, they are phases of the great unity of the continent and must be treated as such.

The nineteenth century's tidal wave of settlement showed no sign of deflecting itself from British North America. The old pre-Revolutionary colonies are supposed to have doubled their population about every twenty-five years, thus increasing at the rate of four per cent. per year. Receiving only minor accessions from immigration and, apart from the slight barrier of the Appalachians, having a free field for extension, they may be considered as the type of the expansive possibilities of modern humanity under natural and favourable conditions. Our population, during the first half of the nineteenth century, substantially repeated the story of its neighbours. For the twenty-six years 1822 to 1848, the settlers on Prince Edward Island increased at the rate of 4.7 per cent. per year. The people of Nova Scotia added to their numbers at the average rate of 4.94 per cent. per annum during the thirty-four years from 1817 to 1851, and that without very much assistance from immigration. In New Brunswick about six and one half per cent. was maintained until 1840. In Lower Canada, a province which the immigrant passed by, the population increased to more than double its size in the years 1806-1831, and almost doubled from 1825 to 1851, thus rather convincingly verifying the earlier colonial tradition. In Upper Canada, where immigration became considerable after 1828, though not remarkable as measured by modern experience, the population doubled from 1806 to 1824, again from 1824 to 1835, and again from 1835 to 1848. An annual rate of increase of 8.4 per cent. continued for the thirty-seven years 1814 to 1851. During the last nine of these, the population was doubled again. This was an experience which was quite comparable with that of the new States then settling, and one which it is very unlikely our own western provinces will equal. No wonder that it was a time of energy and hope. At the half-century mark the colonies without exception, a long period of steady progress behind them, were fast finding their feet and, with the worst of their political problems solved, expectantly anticipating a development akin to that which in the United States had for so long aroused their envy, when—almost suddenly—something happened. The decade which saw them secure the benefits of reciprocity, and their equipment with railroads, canals and trans-Atlantic steamship lines, also saw a decided and ominous falling-off in the rate of increase of their population. Between 1850 and 1860 no province save Upper Canada had added more than

three per cent. per year, while one, Nova Scotia, had sunk below two. In the decade of Confederation the tendency was extended and emphasized. Quebec's average was but .72, Nova Scotia's, now the highest, but 1.7. Succeeding censuses intensified the trend. Between 1881 and 1891 New Brunswick was stationary. After 1891 Prince Edward Island began to shrink; while for those black ten years, 1891 to 1900, the great and rich province of Ontario added only sixty-nine thousand souls. A population which, in the nineteen years prior to 1861, had tripled, after that date actually required fifty to double itself. In the last decade of the century, the Dominion as a whole increased at the trifling rate of one per cent. per year. There was the extinction of our progress and of our hopes. That great event, looked forward to as the end of our difficulties and justly regarded as a triumph of our native statesmanship—Confederation—had synchronized with the arrest of our onward course. It is true that the country's trade was becoming larger, and that the wealth and well-being of the average citizen were probably improving; but what prospect was there of building an enduring structure of nationhood on a stationary population of five millions? Devotees of that innocent and popular form of reasoning, the argument *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, might well have pointed a scornful finger at the edifice begun in 1867. Confederation and something unpleasantly like stagnation had run parallel courses. What was wrong?

The immediate causes were two-fold, the ceasing of immigration and, what no Canadian needs to be told, emigration to the United States. The mere stoppage of immigration would not have been a problem, for it is probable that population will increase almost as quickly without immigration as with it. The immigrant, with his lower standard of living, merely displaces the native-born, whose birth rate drops as his standard of living, elevated on the cheap labour of the new-comers, rises. If the country could but have contained its citizens, all would have been well. It was far from doing so. Our annual rate of growth sank rapidly after 1861, whereas the number of Canadian-born in the United States correspondingly mounted. In 1850 there were 147,000 natives of British North America in that country; in 1860, 249,000; in 1870, 499,000; in 1880, 717,000; in 1890, 981,000; and in 1900, 1,180,000. If a simple calculation of the gross decennial increase be made by adding the annual replacement necessary to meet deaths to the net increase as here given, the annual emigration will appear as follows: 1850-60, 13,500; 1860-70, 29,000; 1870-80, 31,400; 1880-90, 39,000; 1890-1900, 35,000; 1900-10, 19,500; 1910-

20, 8,500. These figures represent a serious drain on a young country, especially when it is remembered that the quota bears much more heavily on some districts than on others, and that the percentage of skilled and educated men among Canadian emigrants is large.

The chief attraction for the generation previous to our own was the land. Sons of our pioneers, not being able to find homesteads in their own country, went out to the free lands of the western States. There their children remain, still predominantly a rural stock. Later on, the movement became directed almost wholly to the cities, so that to-day three out of four Canadians in the United States are urban dwellers, a characteristic which they share with every other immigrant people in that country except the Norwegians. The border had but little to do with this emigration, which was—and is—but another phase of the thronging from country to city inevitable with increasing industrialism. It was not the United States which was the attraction, but Boston, New York, Chicago, Detroit. Nor did our people go one step farther southward than necessity forced them. They are massed just beyond their own boundaries, in the border States and on either sea-board. Once the tier of northernmost States is passed, their numbers become small. Watertown, New York, for instance, is probably more Canadian than American in present population and descent, but there are few cities in the interior of Pennsylvania that contain more than a few hundred Canadians. There is not one Canadian in Philadelphia for fifteen in Boston, although conditions are apparently as good in one place as in the other. Within this northern area there are further concentrations. In 1920, Massachusetts and Michigan alone contained thirty-seven per cent. of the English-speaking Canadians, the two cities, Boston and Detroit, together having over one hundred thousand or thirteen per cent. Maritimers go to Massachusetts, French Canadians go to New England, the people of Ontario to Michigan, a State in the initial settlement of which they had one of the largest shares. Our people of the prairie provinces have hitherto stayed at home. The tide, in fact, of late years has been setting the other way, and the Canadian population of the western agricultural States has been decreasing. But, as a rule, wherever they are, they are irretrievable, as the statistics of naturalization show. The percentage of Canadians naturalized exceeds that for foreigners generally.

Here is an extraordinary picture. A young and virile nation, with half a continent of its own to disport itself in, pouring its

children beyond its boundaries and constituting itself one of the chief of the earth's motherlands! It is doubtful if there is another country (except Ireland) which during so many years has maintained and reinforced an army on foreign soil bearing so large a proportion to its total population as has Canada. Why is it? An answer given at once is that there is nothing for the exiles to do at home. The retort might be "Why did they not go on the land?" One counter-retort is, that after 1860 and until recent years there was no land for them to go on. The Maritime Provinces, Quebec and Ontario filled up in turn; the wave of population washed the cliffs of the Laurentian barrier without breaching them, and the land-hungry man had to go elsewhere. Our provinces felt the same draw from the West as did the eastern States, but, unlike them, had not the privilege of supplying its needs. Hence they suffered New England's ills without its recompense. The half-century's experience throws into contrast increase of population by settlement and that by extension of industrial activity. Man seems to distribute himself much as any other species, following the food supply, whether it be spring wheat or buffalo. Empty and fertile land is rapidly taken up, though not necessarily used. Industrial progress, on the other hand, must often wait for technical inventions or the evolution of certain complex situations. Our forests were just as available for paper-making in 1870 as they are now, yet at that time the population which to-day is forming itself into new towns around every considerable water-power was sending its surplus abroad by the thousand. We have had to wait for the perfecting of the pulpwood process, as well as the evolution of the cult of modern advertising and the creation of armies of purchasers of newspapers. But, were another new continent to be discovered, man would spread himself over its habitable portions quite independently of the cult of advertising or of any other cult. It is amazing, for example, how consistently the westward tide of humanity pushed across the continent in advance of the railroad builder. The railroad facilitated, but it did not induce, settlement.

These aspects of the problem must have been imaginatively conceived by those great men who dared to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and thus retained for Canada the heritage of the West. Here was the greatest moment of our history. Had this connection not been formed, there is nothing surer than that the flood from the South would shortly have broken the feeble dyke of the forty-ninth parallel and the West have been no longer ours. Without it, what future would there have been for the

original provinces? Stagnation and decadence would have been their lot in a few generations. But with this new vent open, the country forgot its old economic ills. The population of Manitoba had been soaring at a rate recalling that of Upper Canada before 1850, and by the turn of the century, the gates were open wide, the fifty years of quiescence were over, optimism was everywhere and, the Laurentian barrier now triumphantly passed, a new Canada was rising with the century. There is no need to trace the movement in detail, for it is fresh in the minds of all. Population rushed out upon the prairies like flood water pouring across a plain. It was the old story over again of free and fertile land.

Despite the huge immigration of the first fourteen years of the twentieth century, it was Canada itself which contributed the largest share to the new provinces. In 1911, there were nearly three hundred thousand natives of the province of Ontario in the four western provinces. Yet there had also been a fair expansion in the mother-province. Compared with Ontario, an honourable exception being made for Prince Edward Island, the remainder of the East played a minor part. The people of Quebec remained at home, the people of the Maritime Provinces preferred New England.

Had it not been for this outlet through the East, it is reasonably certain that the American census of 1920 would have shown a considerable shrinkage in the number of Canadian residents. As it was, 1,180,000 Canadians in 1900 had increased to only 1,210,000 in 1910 and had actually decreased to 1,138,000 in 1920. The decrease was confined to French Canadians, many thousands of whom must have returned home between 1910 and 1920. English-Canadians, handing over smaller instalments of principle, as it were, while keeping up the interest payments, greatly reduced their rate of emigration, but up to 1910 maintained and slightly increased their numbers, decreasing them a little during the war decade. During the first ten years, to do this they must have provided an emigration of about sixteen thousand per year, of eleven thousand during the second. The decided falling off from earlier years is good proof that all that Canadians need to induce them to stay in their own country is opportunity. In this respect they may be held to differ from the Scots, who are said to love everything about Scotland except the road that leads back to it.

Not all the people who would normally have left the country went west, for opportunities in the new provinces created further opportunities in the old. We acquired in some measure that which has been responsible for much of the prosperity of the United

States, a system of inter-regional trade. Moreover, aside from the natural and healthy prosperity induced by the supply of the wants of the settlers, British capital was pouring in and the whole country felt its influence. We were, in fact, rather unpleasantly reminiscent of sailors home from a long voyage, their pockets full of gold, disporting in a public-house. However, we sobered up in 1914.

Let us hope that we are not now in the act of putting to sea again for another fifty years. There are, unfortunately, signs that we may be. Emigration since the war has been very heavy. The first rush of growth over, the West has settled down to an ordinary plodding rate of increase. We are drawing within sight of a geographical frontier that must in the nature of things be fairly fixed. But these are breakers no more fearful than those which assault the shores of many another country; and if we are only content to make haste slowly, there is no reason why we should not do so. Just at present we are recovering from the after-effects of that bad dream, war prosperity. It is not an overstatement to say that in 1919 Canada was an overpopulated country. At least it had more people than it could profitably use, and it was a very salutary thing to have a vast reservoir next door to take off the thousands who, in a less fortunately situated land, would have had to be supported by the public. Now in 1926, development is once more proceeding (the employment index is just climbing above its former zenith of 1920). In the nature of things it can never again be as spectacular as in the past, for there are no more Wests, and nearly all our natural industries are such as are economical of man-power. Still we have what we had not when Confederation was undertaken, a certain amount of diversification of industry, and a measure of entrance into the continental market based not on favour but on the necessities of our neighbours. It is likely that these necessities will increase rather than diminish; and when the continent is open to all her products, Canada's day will have come. We have, in fact, innumerable reasons for assuring ourselves of a satisfactory future. But as this article is concerned chiefly with pointing out the lions in the path, the painting of rosy pictures of the years to come may be safely left to other hands, there being every assurance that that task will be adequately performed. In passing, however, one may be allowed to call attention to the fact that if there is not another West, there is a North. The charge against Canada that she is all length and no width is gradually being removed; and though she need never worry about becoming as broad as she is long, she can even now boast

for there will always be fortunate regions holding out their material attractions, others, poorer in possessions, yet rich in their output of human beings.

Of the two great nations of this continent, our own country will probably continue to stand in this latter position, wealthy as compared with the Old World, only reasonably well-to-do as compared with the United States, rearing more children than it can provide for.

Is there, then, no consolation? There is at least this measure of it: our population will always be sufficient to deal with our resources as they develope. We all like to see our country growing, but to expect to see it stride ahead as quickly as the United States is impossible comparison. It would be well for us if we could resolve to forget about the United States for a time. We must simply face the fact that we have not got the natural riches, the climate, or, above all, the huge extent of fertile land which that country has, and content ourselves with a less spectacular but none the less healthy expansion—an expansion that probably exceeds that of any of the other young nations. Were we, in our periods of adjustment, unable to find a vent for our people, they would "come on the rates"; the standard of living of the rest of us would be thereby lowered, less capital would be available for development, and our last estate would be worse than our first. Providing the stamina of the race keeps up—and there is no reason why it should not—and not too many of our best leave us, the new period just opening, whose commencement coincides with our budding nationhood, may be faced with equanimity.