Veteran as Job Hunter

Back from the Great War, a Canadian Soldier
Tells of His Experiences and Prospects

I’M what you might call a “hero.” I’ve been to the front and over the top. There’s scarcely anything just like it that I couldn’t have for the asking. But I’m willing to bet my glass eye that five years from now most people will be telling me a nonsense. You’re probably not going to hear this war’s over.

And I’m willing to give my most precious possession, which is the glass eye aforesaid, against the least of you, to any one of you who tells me this war’s over, utterly and entirely fed up, as the English say, on heroes, but if there aren’t more than a few of you, I’ll have to say so out loud as well as think it.

Don’t mistake me. I’m not preaching. I’ve been too late to deal in that sort of thing, and I’m not sore at finding my old job gone. I don’t cherish any particular quarrel with the man who finds himself responsible, anyhow. I’m quite aware to the fact that there are other ways of earning a living than fighting, and that to these ways there attach different degrees of honor. But I’m the kind of man that believes even the man who begins to come home in force you’ll find one day, that you can’t mix it in different ways, but chiefly that you’ll find them seeing things deeper and more clearly, and not as back ward about speaking the blunt truth instead of camouflageing.

That’s all I wanted to say. I was thinking: I went over with the first Canadian bunch, joined up at Calgary in August, ’14. Had good times, that’s what the months with the months we wasted at Valcartier and then that rotten Winter in the mud on Salisbury Plain. However, we got there in the end. The 10th, our crowd, got pretty well shot up right from the start, but I was one of the lucky ones. Always seemed to move my head when, if I’d kept it still, like the rest of ’em, I’d have been killed. Even now, I can’t believe it—nothing going over from time to time, as companies and then whole battalions were consolodated, and I think I nearly gave mine eventually. Yes, Sir. It was coming to me, I guess, and finally I got it out and said it.

Well, they’re all dug the shrapnel out of my face now, and fitted me with a glass left eye. I had a swell time in hospital at Ramsage, and here I am back in Canada again. The Maple Leaf will be back! But like the rest of ’em, I’ve had to stay on in England a while longer, but there’s nothing with the High Command. Last week I was formally discharged from his Majesty’s forces, and my only little pension begun. The board only gave me a 35 per cent. disability. Think of it, seventeen and a half months of a month until death do us part, whether we work or not, get married, or stay single!

Can’t find a job? Sure I can, easy one, too, because you’re a great war veteran. Some veteran, hey? aged 26? Ever look up what veteran means in the dictionary? But I don’t want some kid’s job like peddling pins, or bobbing up and down in a store elevator all day long. I want a man’s job, that wants a man’s brains and not more than one eye.

Parents in the old country have got perfectly good intentions, but why do you persist in trying to make us chaps go along? If it’s all it’s said to be, and so important to keep up production and all that kind of thing, why not try to pass the buck. Greater production! We had our share. Don’t believe the bill will want to tell stories all the time about how he and Haig finished the war.

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