

Let us Now Praise Famous Men

ARTICLE NO. 28
(By Hugh Tompkins)

Canadian people don't know much about titles and titled persons. The Government of Canada does not allow Canadians to accept titles. There is some argument about whether this is right or wrong, but the theory is that this is a thoroughly democratic country, where class distinctions do not exist, but opportunities are equal.

Before leaving for a visit to Britain, it had seemed possible that I might meet one or two titled persons but I never gave it much thought. The invitation had come from Sir Malcolm Robertson, head of the British Council, and, as it afterwards discovered, he was the Rt. Hon., Sir Malcolm Robertson, a member of the cabinet. It seemed likely that I might meet him.

There were friends who asked me: "Suppose you should meet a Duke, would you know how to address him properly?" I had to admit that I would not. I know in a vague sort of way that there were ranks of knighthood, but whether a Lord was any higher than a Viscount, I really had no idea and I don't know much more about it yet. But I met many titled men, from Sirs to Viscounts, and never had any difficulty about forms of address. Moreover, I found them very human, as a rule, the exception being a Canadian with a recent title, which probably had not changed him much, at that.

I learned too that many of the most important men have no titles. For instance, there is the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and a number of members of the Inner War Cabinet, who are not even Sirs.

There were other persons with military rank. For instance, all the world knows the name of General Charles de Gaulle. I met him several times. I talked with the heads of the various services with Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, for instance, and Air Marshal R. H. Peck, and Rear-Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, one of the naval heroes of the last war.

Then again, I talked one afternoon with Viscount Bennett, former Prime Minister of Canada, now enjoying life as a member of the House of Lords in England, and one morning at an informal breakfast in a private dining room of the Savoy, a group of Canadian editors sat at a table with Viscount Greenwood, who was Sir Hamar Greenwood, and before that was a student at the University of Toronto at the same time as two of my travelling companions, Bishop R. J. Renison and B. K. Sandwell. It could truly be said that the four of us had one thing in common, we had all gone to the same University.

I have gone through my little black notebook which serves as a diary while I was away, and have picked out the names of the widely known people whom I met. It is a long list, and I won't burden you with it. I have forgotten for what some of these people were famous. But you may be interested to hear about some of them.

Rt. Hon. Brendan Bracken

I have already written about my meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. I heard him speak in the House of Commons, and then met him in his own office in the Parliament Buildings afterwards—an experience not likely to be forgotten. And he proved to be exactly as I had expected—forceful, dynamic, full of good humor that day, and smoking a big cigar.

On other days, I met several of the Cabinet Ministers, individually or collectively, and on October 1st, sat at a long table in Claridge's hotel in the West End of London, with about half the Cabinet.

The ministers with whom our party had the closest contact were the two whose business it was to deal with publicity, Hon. Brendan Bracken, Minister of Public Information, and Rt. Hon. Sir Malcolm Robertson, President of the British Council.

Frankly, I may make some mistakes in titles or otherwise. After a lapse of nine months, it is not easy to recall all the details, and I have no copy of the "British Who's Who." Besides that, several men then in the innermost circles are out now.

Rt. Hon. Brendan Bracken is a young man, younger than myself. I should guess. He is said to be a rich man, partly through his own efforts. He is striking in appearance, not at all handsome, but certainly different, his chief characteristic being a shock of red hair which defies combing. He was in the publishing business, and has been secretary to Churchill and is a personal friend of the Prime Minister.

The group of Canadian editors felt much indebted to Brendan Bracken. It wasn't just because he gave us dinner one day, at which we met many of the ministers, though that was a memorable day. But apart from that, his hospitality seemed unbounded. If we wanted anything, or wished to go anywhere, or which was not for it. Somehow, our hosts had not arranged a chance to meet Winston Churchill, probably never thinking how much we would appreciate the opportunity, but when

It was mentioned to Mr. Bracken, he arranged it at once, and went farther than we had asked, taking us into the House of Commons while the Prime Minister was speaking, as well as having us meet him in his office.

Our Titled Hosts

Brendan Bracken has not title but two of our other hosts from the Ministry of Information were Sirs. Sir Malcolm Robertson is also a Rt. Honorable and is head of the British Council, which deals with publicity. He was just about as striking in his looks as Brendan Bracken, though his coloring was dark, not red. It was a very tall man and one gained the impression that he had seen a lot of life.

I met him only formally, but Sir Harry Britain used to come around often to the Savoy and talk to the Canadians for hours. He was the founder of the Empire Press Union and evidently must have been a publisher. But he was interested in all sorts of other things as well. For instance, he was, or had been, a member of parliament, and he was a great flower grower, having originated a few new varieties. He always had a flower in his button hole.

Sir Harry had been to Canada several times and liked the country very much. He also liked to talk to Canadians, and he would drop in at the hotel about ten at night, and stay for several hours. In 1924, he was host to a party of Canadian editors who went to Europe for a trip, and my father was in the party. Sir Harry's home in Acton, England, and the late H. P. Moore of Acton, Ontario, was in that group. The two became friends, and there was some interchange of correspondence, between the two Actons. Later, Sir Harry visited Mr. Moore in Acton, Ontario, and he wanted to be remembered to friends there.

I will tell only one of Sir Harry's stories.

It seems he originated a new color in flowers, an orange carnation. If I remember correctly, and was granted permission to call it after Queen Elizabeth. It was shown first at one of the big flower shows, where the King and Queen were to make an appearance, and Sir Harry was there to present a bunch of the new flowers to Her Majesty. Afterwards, they stood around and talked and he told the Queen a few jokes, and there was much laughing. Later, one of the royal escorts came to Sir Harry and said: "I was so glad to see you laughing and joking with Her Majesty." "Yes," said Sir Harry, "she seemed to enjoy it." "And no wonder," replied the other. "Usually when people see Their Majesties coming, they get faces on them like coffin-lids."

"In case you are wondering, I did not see the King and Queen. While I was in London, they were up at their Scotch home. But I saw Buckingham Palace several times."

The first member of the House of Lords whom we met after arrival in London was not at all the type I had pictured, and for reasons which appeared later. He was Lord Snell, who had been chosen, or had volunteered, to guide the Canadians through the Houses of Parliament. He was assisted by Sir Patrick Haman, M.P., for Burlington, representing the House of Commons. That was a most interesting trip, as might be supposed, and they took us to all the little odd corners such as the cellars where Guy Fawkes hid when he tried to blow up the Parliament of his day, and the cloisters where Cromwell stabled his horses to show his contempt. Parts of the Houses of Parliament are quite old, while other parts were built during the reign of Queen Victoria. Now the House of Commons Chamber will have to be re-built once again, for it turned into rubble when several big bombs hit it at once.

Lord Snell and Sir Patrick Haman proved to be the most entertaining guides, with a steady flow of humor and much good-natured bantering of each other and of the House of Lords. Later we learned that Lord Snell was a "Labor peer" getting his title during the time of Ramsay MacDonald and the Labor Government. He had been a manufacturer and at one time a workman.

Viscount Cranborne

The first Cabinet Minister I met was the Viscount Cranborne, Secretary of the Dominions. Our group of editors visited him in his offices in Whitehall, not far away from the Houses of Parliament, and just across the road from No. 10 Downing Street. Our cars drove in through an arch guarded by several soldiers, and we stepped out amid piles of sandbags, guarding entrances to doorways. I suppose the buildings are old. At least, as we climbed stairways, and walked along halls, I had the idea that everything was ancient, as I had expected it would be.

Arriving at our destination, there were introductions, and we passed into the Minister's own room, which was quite large. He sat at his desk at one end of the room, and we formed a sort of audience, facing him. He gave us an official welcome to Britain and went on to

WAR 25 Years Ago

Violent German Counter-Attacks Failed to Oust Canadians from Newly-Won Positions on Hill 70

By H. H. GORDON
Canadian Press Staff Writer

Canadian soldiers proved time and again 25 years ago in the First Great War that they could match their remarkable attacking power with great courage and resolution when forced on the defensive. It was so at Hill 70.

Following the Canadians' successful attack on the northern key to Lens on Aug. 15, 1917 they were subjected for a week to German counter-attacks unprecedented in determination and ferocity. Hill 70 was vital to the enemy's hold on Lens, but German attempts to oust the Dominion troops from their newly-won positions were shattered.

Immediately north of Hill 70 was Hugo Wood and St. Laurent lay south of the heights. On August 18 the Germans launched simultaneous drives at these points, using fresh troops in place of the 4th Prussian Guards, badly cut up in the attack on Hill 70.

The 220th Division stormed Hugo Wood, advancing behind a barrage of liquid fire and gas. The Canadians were not caught napping and the attackers were forced to fall back under withering artillery fire. At St. Laurent the enemy managed to enter a portion of the Canadian line, but was quickly driven out by a counter-attack.

Two days later storm troops advanced on Hill 70 following a heavy bombardment of Canadian trenches with high explosives and gas shells. Most of the shelling was directed at the defending gunners, who, fighting in gas masks, gave more than they received. This attack was also beaten off.

Sacrificed Men

Other unsuccessful attacks on various sections of the line held by the Canadians were made. In official reports the fighting was described as a desperate character and unsurpassed in fury. The Germans flung masses of men into the attacks, but their sacrifice was in vain.

Under original plans the drive on Hill 70 was to be followed by an attack on Sallaumines Hill, south of Lens. This operation was abandoned however when Sir Douglas Haig called upon the Canadians to move into the Ypres sector where at Passchendaele they achieved one of the notable successes of the war.

"Yes," said Sir Harry, "she seemed to enjoy it." "And no wonder," replied the other. "Usually when people see Their Majesties coming, they get faces on them like coffin-lids."

"I desire to congratulate you personally, on the complete and important success with which your command of the Canadian Corps has been inaugurated," wrote Sir Douglas Haig to Sir Arthur Currie, the Canadian commander. "The two divisions you employed on the 15th instant defeated the four German divisions, whose losses are reliably estimated at more than double those suffered by the Canadian troops. The skill, bravery and determination shown in this attack in maintaining the positions won against repeated counter-attacks were, in all respects, admirable."

Ex-Stage Star Making Shells

U.S. Woman, War Worker in Britain, Was Wounded Escaping from France

LONDON, (CP)—When a big bus, heavy with workmen grinds to a stop each dawn in a London suburb, a petite auburn-haired woman in dungarees carrying a lunch pail climbs aboard and squeezes among the joking laborers. She is Nora White, former American stage star, now a munition worker in a London factory earning about 25 cents an hour. Wife of a British army doctor she was one of the last women to leave France after the Germans came. She was wounded as she fled along the congested roads to Brittany. "I didn't know about it until I took off my clothes and found a huge hole in my leg," she recalled. "I sat on the beach and took the bullet out with a pair of steel knitting needles."

tell us something of what Canada's soldiers and other armed forces were doing. The Army, he said, was being kept in England because that was still where it was most needed. After Dunkirk, the Canadians were the only forces in all England who had equipment. The Air Training Plan he termed "wonderful."

Lord Cranborne offered to answer questions, and did, but there was one he father evaded. Asked about Rudolf Hess, he was rather non-committal, not telling anything which hasn't already been published. It is said that Viscount Cranborne is one of the ablest of British Statesmen and might be a possible candidate for Prime Minister but for the fact that his health is not good.

Girls Wanted!



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