

Col. Bruce Told the Truth About Canadian Hospitals

His Appointment by Sir Sam to Hold an Investigation Created Surprise at the Time---Wanted to Head off Possible Disclosure Which the Auditor General Might Make--Sir Geo. Perley Not Likely to Better Conditions.

(By H. F. Gadsby.)

Ottawa, Jan. 13.—The controversy over Colonel Herbert Bruce's report is more than a case of doctors disagreeing. It is the symptom of a very grave disorder at overseas headquarters in London. It indicates that the Overseas Minister of Militia, Sir George Perley, is not going to make changes for the better and for a very simple reason—because he can't. Having been started wrong, things must continue wrong to the end of the chapter.

Sending Colonel Herbert Bruce over to report on the Canadian medical situation in England was perhaps the best thing Sir Sam Hughes did. At the time he did it surprise was expressed that he should have taken any such course. Why did he do it? To head off possible disclosures of the Auditor General, who made a trip to England just about that time? Or to embarrass the Borden government, whose midst, as he could feel in his bones, he was very soon to leave? To dispassionate observers Col. Bruce's mission to tell the truth and shame the devil looked like the dawn of hope. The real condition of Canadian military affairs in England had not been allowed to leak out. Consequently Col. Bruce's errand to lift the lid from part of it took shape as a nine day's wonder. The only explanation seemed to be that Sir Sam moved in a mysterious way and that, having made up his mind that he was going to quit, he calculated on leaving his colleagues something to think about.

Keep Them Guessing.

In other words, Sir Sam reckoned that the Bruce report would keep them guessing. He knew pretty well, of course, what the Bruce report would be, because he knew that Colonel Bruce as a truthful man and a great surgeon, would take no chances with his reputation by handing out a pail of whitewash. Doubtless Sir Sam knew also just how rotten things were and how rotten Colonel Bruce would find them.

Colonel Bruce brought in the report that was expected. It may be said of Colonel Bruce's report that the half of

it didn't get into the newspapers. It was submitted to the editors in confidence and only certain parts of it were released for publication. The worst of it has never been told. The charges that were made public were sufficiently grave. They were to the effect that the hospital organization was bad, that it needed renovating from top to bottom, and that the medical service was cumbered with alcoholics and dope fiends. The report also favored the segregation of Canadian wounded in Canadian hospitals. This last, perhaps, was the sorest point of all.

The answer to Col. Bruce's charges and recommendations is the Bapiste report, which was brought in by a hand-picked commission selected by Sir Geo. Perley. The Bapiste report does not deny Col. Bruce's statement that there were alcoholics and dope fiends in charge of the lives of wounded Canadian soldiers, but it objects that Col. Bruce should have added that the Army Medical Corps was no worse in this respect than certain other branches of the service and also that credit should have been given to the efficient members of the staff. Which is to say that Colonel Bruce's job should have been to pick out the good spots and pass over the bad ones, and bandy compliments instead of stating the facts.

This is the typical Sir George Perley attitude—that all is right as right can be and that no disturbing changes shall be made.

A Whitewashing Job.

This fine job of whitewashing is the first specimen of the new overseas Minister of Militia's traditional Borden policy of letting well enough alone, with the prospect that it will speedily get worse.

The talk is too that Sir George Perley, who hasn't much color of his own, has taken color from his environment and is at this moment a good deal more British than he is Canadian. This, however, is only reasonable in a naturalized Canadian who was born in the United States.

The Bapiste report also intimates that Colonel Herbert Bruce knows little or nothing about hospital organization. In

view of the fact that Colonel Bruce has been connected with the Toronto General Hospital for twenty-five years and is now the manager and president of the largest private hospital in Canada, the Bapiste statement is laughable. The head of the Bapiste commission, by the way, has not attended a patient in 25 years. On the other hand, Col. Bruce has probably not missed a day in the same period when he did not perform a major operation on some patient or other. Col. Bruce's qualifications in regard to knowledge and experience are unexceptional. His standing as a surgeon with one of the most lucrative practices in Canada and nothing to consider but his reputation for correct diagnoses, makes it morally certain that Colonel Bruce had no object but the truth in view when he made his report.

The Bapiste report does not attempt to contravene Colonel Bruce's statement that the Canadian hospitals in England are better hospitals than the English ones. Its only answer to this is that the service in Canadian hospitals costs twice as much per day per patient as it does in the English hospitals. Friends of the wounded soldiers will ask what kind of answer is this? Why shouldn't the cost be twice as much when the service is probably four times as good? Besides, nothing is too good for our wounded heroes. Our gratitude doesn't stick at a matter of three shillings a day.

Colonel Bruce reported that Canadian soldiers should be segregated in Canadian hospitals for three good reasons: because they were among their own friends, because they had doctors there who understood them, and because they did better and convalesced more rapidly in the homelike Canadian atmosphere. This segregation idea was no doubt the cause of Colonel Bruce's getting himself disliked by the Tory politicians in England, who are opposed to segregation because it deprives them of the chance to make converts of the Canadian soldiers when they are in a weak state of mind and

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body and send us back Round Table Imperialists instead of the good Canadians we sent over. This is not a square deal. We love the British Empire enough to fight and die for it, but we love Canada too, and would like to have a few Canadians left after this cruel war is over.

The Truth Not Wanted.

The fate of Colonel Bruce's report, together with the fact that his office of Inspector General has been abolished, shows how Sir George Perley, the Overseas Minister of Militia, is prepared to handle any good Canadian who comes over there with the idea of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The whole truth Great heavens, not even half truths are allowed. It isn't done, you know. If it were, there would be some startling revelations as to the number of supernumerary colonels and other officers now loafing around England or making occasional excursions to the front, where they have nothing to do. Rumor had it that these colonels were to be given the option of becoming

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