

"THE REAL CANADIANS"

The Journal has received from a person who signs himself "A True Canadian" a clipping from its issue of the 13th inst. containing the report of the recent speech of Armand Lavergne, chief lieutenant of Henri Bourassa. This note accompanies the clipping:

"At last! Here is a man of courage to tell plainly the truth to the real Canadians.

"The policy which Canada has been following is wrong, very wrong, and very likely before the war is over we shall be suffering for it. Keep Canada to the Canadians."

Messrs. Bourassa and Lavergne will be delighted to learn that there is at least one person in the Canadian West who believes with them that the Dominion should stand aloof from Great Britain and her Allies, even though he is not sufficiently courageous in his opinions to let them and the public know who he is.

In the speech in question Mr. Lavergne laid stress on the anomalous constitutional relations between Canada and Britain. These have often been discussed on this page. But what have they to do with Canada's duty in the present emergency?

We are not aiding the cause of the Empire and of civilization because Great Britain forced us to do so, though Mr. Lavergne's argument seems to assume this. The action which we have taken has been entirely a voluntary one.

We feel that we are under a deep moral obligation to the Motherland for the protection that she has given us. But our action is dictated by something more than this. We realize that the complete triumph of Germany would mean the extinction of our own political liberties.

Mr. Bourassa declares that this is not correct, that we needn't be alarmed about coming under German rule. In his latest and most extreme utterance, that at the Monument National in Montreal on Friday night, he held up England's treatment of the French-Canadian race as on a par with Germany's treatment of Belgium.

"It must not be pretended," he declared, "that the German yoke is heavier than the British."

That, after such a statement, French Canadians will show what they think of Mr. Bourassa by relegating him to political oblivion. The Journal has every confidence. The history of Canada at every stage since 1759, and particularly during the past three-quarters of a century, gives the absolute lie to the Nationalist leader.

It is unnecessary to dwell here on the completeness with which the rights of self-government of those descended from the Frenchmen conquered by British arms on the banks of the St. Lawrence have been recognized, or on the special constitutional privileges that have been granted them. Their leaders on both sides of politics have not been slow to acknowledge the fair dealing which they have had or to show their appreciation.

But Mr. Bourassa is only an egotistical mischief-maker and is in no way representative of those in whose name he claims to speak.

If we want to find what the difference between British and German government is, all we need to do is to study for a moment the cases of Canada and of the provinces wrested from France in 1870. Of the freedom which French-Canadians have enjoyed, Mr. Bourassa himself furnishes the best example. Does he think that if he lived today in Alsace or Lorraine, or any other country under German control, he would be allowed to go about making speeches in French urging those of his ancestry and language not to support the German cause?

A proclamation issued at Griegnee, Belgium, by the German commandant is recommended to his attention. One of its clauses was this: "Whoever spreads false news liable to lower the morale of the German troops runs the risk of being shot on the spot." If "false news" involves this penalty from the German authorities in time of war, what chance would a man who made such a speech as that at the Monument National have?

The wrongs done the people of Alsace and Lorraine have been such as to stir the indignation and sympathies of thousands who had no French blood in their veins. But apparently they mean nothing to Mr. Bourassa.

He regards with equanimity the oppression of forty years, the denial of all self-governing rights and the desperate efforts to

Germanize the provinces. The latter have been carried on systematically through the schools, compulsory service in the army, the stimulation of German immigration, the prohibition of French as an official language, expulsions from the country and the persecution of the newspapers. (What a flourishing career *Le Devoir* would have had if it had been published in Strasburg!)

With the record of all this before us, such a speech as that of Friday night should make the man who delivered it the object of every right-minded Canadian's contempt. It should be especially resented by those who speak the same native tongue as his own.