

The Charlottetown Guardian

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THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 27th 1917

WAR VETERANS' ASSOCIATION

This forenoon at eleven o'clock there will be a meeting of returned soldiers in the City Hall for the purpose of organizing a branch of the War Veterans' Association of Canada. It is expected that every returned soldier in the province will be present and also that all the citizens who can possibly do so will attend to give what assistance and encouragement they can to the men who above all others have earned the best that can be done for them by their fellow countrymen.

There are now over 120 returned soldiers in this province; there are some thousands yet to return; there are many thousands already in Canada and some hundreds of thousands yet to return. Each of these men will be a member of the War Veterans' Association and it is not necessary to point out that when organized it will be the largest association of any kind in Canada.

In view of these facts it is not necessary to expatiate at any length on the importance of this morning's meeting. To belong to an aggregation of such potential weight in the political, commercial, industrial and social life of Canada will be at once a privilege and a responsibility. A few years hence this organization will have much to say in shaping the destiny of the Canada which they so valiantly helped to redeem from the curse that threatened it; they will be in a position to guide the national life which they rescued from its would-be murderers, and no one, now or in the future, can have a better right to do so.

It is necessary then that the foundation of such an institution as the War Veterans' Association should be well and truly laid. This foundation, as far as this province is concerned, will be laid at this morning's meeting when the active officers and executive are elected. On the selection that will be made will depend the future strength or weakness of the Association; will depend whether it shall be a power for good or an incubus upon the country. Among the returned soldiers there are many men of good executive ability, ability tested and proved where men's souls are tested and proved as nowhere else—on the battlefield. There may be many to choose from, possibly that will constitute the greatest difficulty but we would respectfully urge upon our returned heroes the absolute necessity of making the best choice for their leading officers that their ranks can afford. To err in this will be to cripple the organization at the outset. With the right men at their head they will prove as valuable an asset in the national life of Canada as they did on the fields of France and Flanders. Without this the organization will be no more effective than an army without a leader.

The returned soldiers have earned from their fellow countrymen all the assistance that can be given them and even when that is given in full the debt we owe them will not have been paid in full. We trust that even in this exceedingly busy season our leading citizens will find time to attend the meeting this morning.

THE WAR-TIME FRANCHISE

Against their will the people of Canada are to be plunged into a war-time election. That is a strange state of affairs in a democratic country. Nor is it by any great force of nature or superhuman power that the people of Canada are constrained to hold an election they do not want. It is simply by a touch of autocracy from the hand of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Sir Wilfrid is not in office, but his fiat for a general election has prevailed against the strong desire of the Cabinet, of the great majority in Parliament, and, as we have already said, against the will of the people. It just happened that he found himself entrenched strong enough at one point to do this, and he did not hesitate to do it. That is the kind of democrat Sir Wilfrid is. He took advantage of the fact that resolutions which bring about amendments of the British North America Act are always practically unanimous. Sir Robert Borden reminded the House of this, and let it be understood that unless the

vote was practically unanimous no petition for the amending of the Act in a way to prolong the life of the existing Parliament would be forwarded to the Crown. Sir Robert had no thought of bringing any Parliamentary controversy of Canada's into the politics of the United Kingdom.

So Sir Wilfrid had his way, and the people of Canada are to have the war-time election they deprecated. They are the more indignant at this flouting of their will, this trampling upon their feeling, because two years ago Sir Wilfrid was himself extremely vehement against the idea of a war-time election. He might not have cast the die for a war-time election now had he been able to stay conscription or to make the adoption of it conditional upon the outcome of the war-time referendum he demanded in that behalf. But he was not in a position to force a war-time referendum on the country. He now finds that his war-time election is not likely to serve his purpose. The voters will not include all who would have been entitled to mark their ballots in a referendum, and will include half a million loyal women who would have had no voice in the referendum. This difference is made by the War-Time Elections Act. To that Act Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his followers in the House were strongly opposed. But they have only themselves to blame for it. If Sir Wilfrid Laurier had not forced on a war-time election there would have been no war-time election legislation either eliminating ex-subjects of the Kaiser from the franchise or admitting to it the near kinswomen of our fighting men.

The country having been brought into a war-time election it sought to avert, the Government was bound to mitigate as far as possible the evils and dangers the people dreaded from such an election. In its War-Time Elections Act it provides for the exclusion from the war-time voters' list of recently-naturalized citizens of enemy birth and citizens to whom non-participation in war is an article of religion. It provides also for the inclusion of the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of our fighting men. Will anybody contend that the vote in war-time is not a special trust that should be limited as far as possible to citizens who have affiliations with the enemy country?

Will anybody deny that the women our soldiers have left behind them to carry on the struggle of life without the companionship, sympathy and full help of their bread-winners are entitled to a voice at the polls when the single issue is the reinforcing of those dear ones in the fight against the enemy? No Canadian who is not beside himself with partyism or who is not of doubtful loyalty will say that these women should not vote in war-time.

BENEFITS BY EXPERIENCE

J. C. Watters has been re-elected President of the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress for another year. It is to be hoped that he has gained wisdom from his past mistakes and lapses, and that he will prove a worthier spokesman for organized labor during the coming than he did during the past year. Some evidence that he has profited by experience is afforded by his sudden abandonment of his anti-conscription strike project, his abstention from rash speech-making in the Congress, and the sane resolution on compulsory service which was adopted by that body and which, as chairman of the executive council he must have approved before its submission to the delegates. If Mr. Watters turns all his blunders to so good account, he should eventually evolve a lot of wisdom, for he has a lot of the raw material to work with.

NOTES

Australia is going to tax bachelors and widowers, by a super-tax of 5 per cent. on their incomes. Australia has votes for women.

They call the fakirs "separators" now because they separate the unwary from their money.

In view of the fact that Sir Wilfrid Laurier has always been opposed to the Franchise for women, his present solicitude on their behalf is rather strange, to say the least. Can it be that he wants votes for all women now because he realizes that if he obtained his wish, the votes of the women of Quebec and of the mothers of slackers would offset the votes of the brave women who have given of their own flesh and blood that the Empire may live? It looks that way. When peace comes all the women will probably be given votes, but in war-time only those who have sacrificed during that war should have this great privilege extended to them.

THE MOTHERS OF OUR HEROES

By Maurice Maeterlinck
 Great Belgian Dramatist and Poet.

It is they who bear the main burden of suffering in this war.

In our streets and open spaces and all along the roads, in our churches, in our towns and villages, in every house, we come into contact with mothers who have lost their sons or are living in an anguish more cruel than the certainty of death.

Let us try to understand their loss. They know what it means, but they do not tell the men.

Their son is taken from them at the fairest moment of his life, when their own is in its decline. When a child dies in infancy it is as though his soul had hardly gone, as though it were lingering near the mother who brought it into the world awaiting the time when it may return in a new form. The death which visits the cradle is not the same as that which now spreads terror over the earth; but a son who dies at the age of twenty does not come back again and leaves not a gleam of hope behind him.

He carries away with him all the future that his mother had remaining to her, all that she gave to him and all his promises; the pangs, anguish, and smiles of birth and childhood, the joys of youth, the reward and the harvest of maturity, the comfort and the peace of her old age.

He carries away with him something much more than himself; it is not his life only that comes to an end; it is numberless days that finish suddenly, a whole generation that becomes extinct, a long series of faces, of little fondling hands of play and laughter, all of which fall at one blow on the battlefield, bidding farewell to the sunshine and re-entering the earth which they have never known.

What Gives Them Courage?

And yet they do not weep as the mothers wept in former wars. All their sons disappear one by one, and we do not hear them complain or moan as in days gone by, when great sufferings, great massacres, and great catastrophes were enveloped by the clamours and lamentations of the mothers. They do not utter recriminations; they rail at no one; they do not rebel. They swallow their sobs and stifle their fears, as though obeying a command which they have passed from one to the other, unknown to the men.

We do not know what it is that sustains them and gives them the strength to bear the remnant of their lives. Some of them have other children, and we can understand that they transfer to them the love and the future which death has shattered.

Many of them have never lost or are striving to recover their faith in the eternal promises; and here, again, we can understand that they do not despair either. But thousands of others, whose homes are forever deserted and whose sky is peopled by none but pale phantoms, retain the same hope as those who keep on hoping.

What gives them this courage which astonishes our eyes? When the best, the most compassionate, the wisest among us meet one of these mothers who has just stealthily wiped her eyes so that the sight of her unhappiness may not offend others who are happier, when they seek for words which, uttered amid the glaring directness of the most awful sorrow that can strike a human heart, shall not sound like odious or ridiculous lies, they can find hardly anything to say to her.

They speak to her of the justice and beauty of the cause for which her hero fell, of the immense and necessary sacrifice, of the remembrance and gratitude of mankind, of the unreality of life, which is measured not by the length of days but by the lofty height of duty and glory.

They add that the dead do not die, that there are no dead, that those who are no more live nearer to our souls than when they were in the flesh, and that all that we loved in them lingers on in our hearts so long as it is visited by our memory and revived by our love.

But even while they speak they feel the emptiness of their speech. They are conscious that all this is true only for those whom death has not hurled into the abyss where words are nothing more than childish babble; that the most ardent memory cannot take the place of a dead reality which we touch with our hands or lips; and that the most exalted thought is as nothing compared with the daily going out and coming in, the familiar presence at meals, the morning and evening kiss, the fond embrace at the departure and the intoxicating delight at the return.

The mothers know and feel this better than we do; and that is why they do not answer our attempts at consolation and why they listen to them in silence, finding within themselves other reasons for living and hoping than those which we, vainly searching the whole horizon try to bring them from the outside.

They resume the burden of their



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WORTH REMEMBERING.

An unseen hand, Guides;
 An omnipotent power controls;
 An infinite love directs.—
 The Destiny of your life and mine.

How is it with your ship? Is it much tossed about? That is an inferior question as compared with the inquiry:—
 "Is Christ aboard?"
 —Joseph Parker.

Give a man such a heart as the Son of God describes in the Beatitudes, and a whole universe of sorrow cannot rob him of his blessedness.
 —Spurgeon.

Quick is the succession of human events; the cares of Today are seldom the cares of Tomorrow; and when we lie down at night, we may safely say to most of our troubles, "Ye have done your worst and we shall meet no more."
 —Cowper.

There is an eye that never sleeps,
 Beneath the wing of night;
 There is an ear that never shuts,
 When sink the beams of light;
 There is an arm that never tires,
 When human strength gives way;
 There is a love that never fails
 When earthly loves decay.

Lord! for Tomorrow and its Needs,
 I do not pray;
 Keep me from stain of sin;
 Just for today;
 Let me no wrong nor idle word,
 Unthinking say;
 Set thou a seal upon my lips
 Just for today.