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Politicians or Men?

1917

OUR GUARANTEE

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THE reason why nothing bearing the taint of "party" has ever appeared in these pages when reference has been made to political subjects is because we believe there are few things more foolish in all our national folly than the party machine. Of all the bums peculiar to Western life there is no greater menace to the common weal than the common party hack. Not all the Huns are herded in Germany—our own political heeler has the Teuton beaten in self-complacent greed, in sordid methods, in polished rascality. Citizens of the finest country on earth, rejoicing in the possession of practically every element of material prosperity that men know of, we are no less to-day than at any former period rough-riden by a powerful minority of bums, parasites and pooltrons.

Canadian public life. Of politicians we possess a bigger army than we have yet sent overseas to take their place with the other sons of the Empire, but of disinterested statesmen (whether in the government or in opposition) we are as lamentably short as we are of roses at mid-winter. One courageous statesman—in the government or out of it—who could always bank on his own integrity, would have saved a lot of the humiliation that hangs over us to-day. There would have been none of those unseemly outbursts in Quebec Province when a few plain soldiers sought to make an appeal to its manhood. There would be no army scandals and recruiting dead-beat three years after half-a-million was distinctly promised, with 160,000 of that promise still unfulfilled.

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This is certainly not the moment for recriminations that get nowhere. Anything in the national progress that is not concentrated on the winning of the war should be strangled and flung aside till the last gun has been silenced and the fangs dug out of the jaws of the enemy. But while we are watching our grain crops and doing the chores, let our thoughts take a wide sweep around and see where we can accomplish something when the time is ripe, for there is certainly going to be an upheaval of some rotten stumps when the war is over and we can attend to his domestic affairs. One of the first things to be settled is, whether we are any longer to delegate the conduct of our national housekeeping and international concerns to politicians or to MEN.

"Count on us to the last man and the last dollar if need be!" is a great phrase to roll off from the platform. Any bull-voiced politician could have done justice to that sentence, and the weariest Willie amongst them might have coined it; but it takes an unsullied manhood to put it into effect. Men will follow men. Wild horses will not drag slaves into willing obedience. MEN refuse to be led by corrupt colonels who have no other right to the uniform they wear than what they have earned by their "services to the party."

When all is over, there is to be a trial in which the chief parties to the cross-examination will be some of the greatest single-minded heroes who ever entered the lists for human freedom. They will be men who have been tried in the hottest furnace to which sublimated spirits in human flesh have ever been subjected. And they will have some very awkward questions to ask the frock-coated politicians. They will want to know for example why their dependents of the home circle could be the victims of a wheat pit that, with a visible supply of a hundred million bushels in the country, boasted the price to the point it has reached at the date of writing.

This is only one of the hundred questions of domestic import on which they will demand satisfaction. They will have votes, every one of them, and with an appreciation of the vote that they never had before. They will tell the political place-hunter that if the battle field of Europe is not also to become the graveyard of the secret diplomatic service, of political party with all its rottenness of patronage, graft, and general rascality, then they will start all over again, and give as good an account of themselves in civil strife as they did in tackling the Huns at Ypres, at Langemark, and Vimy Ridge.

Principal L. P. Jacks, in the "Hibbert Journal," has contributed one of the most powerful articles on the problem of the regeneration of Europe, and in speaking of the men who are responsible for the great cataclysm, he develops what another journal describes as "a vision of punishment so solemn, deliberate, just, and so approved that it would shine as one of the most sacred deeds in history." Says Professor Jacks: "Until these men have been removed and all that they stand for finally discredited by the manner of their removal, the path to a regenerated Europe is blocked. Their removal would bring into the moral life of all nations that breath of exhilaration, that sense of freedom, that feeling of unity, which are precisely what is needed to start civilization on a new career, and without which it may be confidently said, the new start cannot be made."

As we contemplate those passages, our thoughts irresistibly read them into something of the personnel of our own