

"A National Debt"

ARTHUR H. D. HAIR.

WAR! WAR! WAR! Musket and powder and ball

Ah, what do we fight so far? Ah, why have we battles at all?

Tis "Justice" must be done they say, the Nation's honour to keep

Alas, that justice should be so dear, and human lives so cheap.—(From the "Song of the Sword.")

If wars must be, and humanity must pay the price in blood, money and misery the "Nation's honour to keep," then in justice to the memory of those who pay the price, let the nation see to it that the deeds of valour of their heroes are passed on to posterity, and that not one of them shall be abandoned in the hour of death, but shall at least be accorded "six feet of earth" in which to rest their weary bones, while their names shall be carved deep in marble or granite for generations yet unborn to profit thereby,—such is only consistent with the traditions we preach.

If National Sentiment means anything in the development of the nation, it means consistency of practice and precept.

It has been the ambition and privilege of the promoters of the "Last Post" I. N. & M. C. Fund, for the past ten years to point out a "National Debt" which by reason of its peculiar character has been (metaphorically speaking) relegated to the debit side of the national "profit and loss" account, and we might add in passing, that the financial loss in the end will be infinitesimally small compared with the moral loss to the nation, unless it is recovered.

Has this organization served a useful purpose to the community and the State? and if so, in what way?

In answer to the first question, we venture the assertion, that it has, and the second may be answered equally in the affirmative.

Let us enumerate several of the ways in which it has proved its utility—

First, it has proven by public, private, and press correspondence, that public sentiment and men of the highest thought and ideals, are sympathetically in accord with the basic principles and objects of the association.

In practical fulfilment of its primary object during the period of its existence, it has initiated the principle of the nations' debt to its defenders in this particular. It has gathered together under its protecting and perpetual care, just on 200 deceased soldiers of the Empire, representing nearly every regiment of its far flung dominions, on which the sun never sets. It has saved many a mother's son from abandonment and an unknown grave at death, and has softened the harsh tidings, in the knowledge that "comrades" paid the last respects, and perpetuated their names. It has fulfilled the "Last Will and Testament" of a British Veteran, who (to use his own words) said:—"I ask no charity, only that you will see that I go to my last bed, covered by the 'Union Jack,' the flag under which I have served for many years."

Secondly, while fulfilling its primary object to the utmost, it has met and co-operated with the military authorities through a period of war and epidemic, in providing for the burial of nearly 100 men, who would otherwise have been scattered far and wide. It has co-operated with the various Record Departments of the British, Canadian, and other overseas Dominions in making reports of deaths and return of military documents, for statistical purposes.

Thirdly, when time, and vandal desecration have obliterated, or desecrated the "sleeping grounds" of the military pioneers of Canada—which unfortunately has been the case—this association took an active interest in effecting restitution. It has, and is, striving to cultivate through the public, a deeper interest in, and care for, the resting places, and archives pertaining to the military pioneers of the Province of Quebec in particular, which should tend to arouse the interest and pride of the rising generation.

Finally, for the past ten years it has studied minutely, the sentimental, as applicable to the national, historical, and economical, aspects of the subject, and which it has applied itself to put into practical effect in the Province of Quebec. It has submitted a well thought out National Military Burial Scheme to the Dominion Government, comprehensive enough in its draft to eventually evolve Inter-Imperial co-operation, as well as to meet the needs of the Dominion.

The wars of the past, have been (numerically) so insignificant as compared to the present one, that a scheme such as now under consideration, would have appeared utopian in 1914. The "passing" of a few old war-scarred veterans, who would drop by the way-side, "unhonoured and unsung"—though none the less deserving than the soldier of today—did not disturb the public mind, but can we go on as a possible partner in a "League of Nations" echoing the valour of our heroes through press and preached, while we inconsistently abandon them in the hour of death? Or shall we emulate the spirit of our American Ally who sees to it, that through State and Civic Government cooperation, every soldier's death reflects the inspiring magnanimity of a grateful nation?

A MUNICIPAL ENGINEER'S COMPLAINT.

The Editor,—A few weeks ago a daily paper of Montreal published the following: "The alderman scoured the engineers who supervised the paving of the Boulevard Gouin, because of the bad state of the said street."

Too often are municipal engineers so criticized. Although I do not give too much attention or importance to such criticism, it has become common among those who manage civic affairs in Canada. Generally speaking these critics have no technical instruction, and what is worse, they want all things done according to their interest or their views, disregarding the advice of their engineers.

Let the aldermen or councillors support the engineers, let them follow their advice, let them not interfere in things they do not know, and then there will be less errors and less money spent uselessly.

There is much to say on this subject, but I will not take any more of your valuable space.

Yours truly,

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SWITZERLAND ADOPTS P. R.

The Proportional Representation Review states that according to press despatches from Berne, Switzerland adopted proportional representation for the election of her federal council or parliament at a special election held under the provisions for the constitution initiative on October 14. The vote in round numbers is reported to have been 297,000 to 147,000. The system of P. R. used in Switzerland is that of the party list. The Swiss had during the past eight years a great opportunity of observing the workings of P. R. in the cantonal elections of eleven cantons. Mr. John R. Humphreys, of the English P. R. Society recently forwarded to Canada a copy of the German "Kruezzzeitung," of August 15, in which it is stated that at the session of the Reichstag then just ended that body passed an act prescribing P. R. for the election of a considerable number of its members. Under the terms of the act thirty-six districts which formerly elected one member each are converted into twenty-six new districts electing eighty members by the Proportional system. The whole municipal areas of Berlin, Breslau, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Munich, Dresden, and the whole area of the state of Hamburg will each form one district. The Berlin district will elect ten members, the Hamburg district five, etc. Thirteen of the less populous of the new districts will elect only two members each. The method adopted for carrying out the P. R. principle is that of the party list. In commenting on this article Clarence G. Hoag, general secretary of the American P. R. League, says in the last Proportional Review, "Only English speaking peoples have adopted the freer Hare system, which not only assures each organized party the number of seats to which its votes entitle it, but also gives the individual voters of the party complete control of the party itself, and gives even unorganized voters the means of making their votes effective.—Exchange.