

The Country Homemakers

CONDUCTED BY FRANCIS MARION BEYNON

THE RETURNED SOLDIERS' ASSOCIATION

At the Grain Growers' convention at Brandon, following hard upon two addresses full of patriotic utterances and praise of the Canadian boys who have enlisted in the service of the country, came an appeal from the mayor of Brandon for contributions to the funds of the Returned Soldiers' Association. It seemed to the writer a particularly crude exhibition of the invariable enthusiasm for the departing soldier and indifference to the man whose usefulness to the country has been exhausted. But not a voice was raised in protest. That great gathering seemed to take it for granted that it was perfectly normal and right that these men should be at the mercy of gratuitous charity.

Up to date this war has followed the usual course of all previous wars, the soldier's duty to his country is much more strongly emphasized than the country's duty to the soldier. While the pensions have been somewhat improved they are far from adequate, and there are cases where a man's future usefulness is greatly impaired and yet he is granted a pension for only a brief space of time, and all the care and attention he needs on his immediate return is left to gratuitous contributions and service.

If, then, things continue to work out in the usual way, society's debt to the returned soldier will be forgotten before the grass is green over the grave of the last soldier who dies at the front. That is the plain, shameful truth in regard to other wars. The care of these men, as in this war, was left to voluntary subscription, and when the stimulus of the war was removed these voluntary organizations collapsed, and the men who came back more or less handicapped for life were left to work out their problem alone as best they might.

The Returned Soldiers' Association is a splendid organization and it should not be subjected to the humiliation of having to go begging for funds to carry on its work. Those of us who are staying comfortably at home, eating our three meals a day, should be taxed to whatever extent is necessary to make the lives of these men not only bearable, but as enjoyable as possible.

The work those at home are doing may be useful and necessary, but it is not comparable in any way with giving up one's health and strength; therefore those who are exempt from service should be made to pay for this war to the last dollar. It is an intolerable injustice that the whole cost of it in suffering and financial inconvenience should be thrust onto the shoulders of a comparatively few young men who happen to be of military age. To demand the sacrifice that is being asked of the young men of this country and dole them out charity in return for it is enough to cramp the soul of the Canadian people for a generation.

DAMAGED GOODS

Except "The Battle of The Somme," no moving picture film has stirred up as much interest in Winnipeg as "Damaged Goods," which has been shown for two weeks to large, segregated audiences of men and women.

The object of the film is to set forth in story form, but with a strict adherence to scientific facts, the great danger to young girls of marrying men afflicted with venereal disease.

There is nothing hysterical or melodramatic about the treatment of the story. Nor does there need to be. The bare facts are hideous enough in themselves, without any emotional coloring.

It would not serve any purpose to re-tell the story here, but when the hero's wife had left him and taken with her her tiny baby dying with a loathsome disease for which his sins were responsible, and he was left alone to face the crime he had committed against his wife and child, a voice out of the darkness behind said, gently, "Poor man," and from the bottom of my heart I echoed that sentiment. The wife and child were his victims, but he, in turn, was the victim of a social order for which we are all responsible, in that we permit it to exist.

FRANCIS MARION BEYNON

MRS. McCLUNG'S REPLY

Dear Miss Beynon:—I have read your editorial of December 27, and I am sorry to see that you stated my conclusion without stating my reason, but I have your kind letter inviting me to make reply, which I am glad to do.

The going away of so many of our best and most public spirited men has changed the moral tone of our electorate. There are districts where almost all of the English speaking men have enlisted, leaving the Austrians and Germans in full numbers, and the indifferent ones of other nationalities. Now, I believe the German and Austrian women in these

districts are entitled to the full franchise because they are responsible human beings, but their claim on the franchise is no greater (and no less) than it was before the war, but the right of the English speaking women whose men-folk have gone to fight, has become indisputable and imperative.

What I suggested to the Prime Minister was that, as a war measure, and to offset this abnormal condition caused by the war, that Canadian and English women be given full voting privileges at once. I reminded him that Manitoba and British Columbia women had already achieved this, and that therefore my suggestion did not concern them.

I have not tried to influence public sentiment toward this measure. Neither is it my intention to try to make it the policy of any society. It is merely my own opinion, and when I spoke to the Prime Minister I stated this.

I have not in any way departed from my opinion that all women are entitled to a part in government, and I did not in any way regard this as a settlement of the franchise question, but merely as



The turnpike road to most people's hearts, I find, lies thru their mouths, or I mistake mankind.

—Wolcott.

a war measure. A partial franchise seems to me better than none, and opens the way for the full measure. But I am not advocating this as a policy. I quite realize that our forces must not divide, for the cause we stand for has in it the whole well-being of humanity and as such cannot be jeopardized by a difference of opinion over the method of procedure.

Because I place woman suffrage above all personal considerations, and because I know that any one person's judgment is quite liable to be faulty, I will withdraw the suggestion of a partial franchise.

Sincerely yours,

NELLIE L. McCLUNG.

I have great pleasure in giving space to this letter from Mrs. McClung. While Mrs. McClung's stand would not have altered my high regard for her as a woman, I am glad that we shall still be able to work together as we have done in the past with so much pleasure and profit.

I must confess that the fear that the foreign born citizens of this country would ever combine on any issue seems to me fantastic, since they differ from each other at least as widely as they do from us.

I am sure, also, that Mrs. McClung had not given sufficient thought to the difficulty these foreign born women would experience in getting this privilege if once they were left behind, or she would have said, "We'll wait a little longer, if necessary, and all go in together," for Mrs. McClung is a generous woman.

F. M. B.

FOREIGN WOMEN SHOULD BE EXCLUDED

Dear Miss Beynon:—I note your criticism of Mrs. McClung's action in asking Sir Robert Borden for the British born and Canadian women to have the federal franchise, to the exclusion of foreign born women.

You say that, in doing this, she was speaking for

herself alone. Well, I don't know anything about the opinion of the "leading suffrage workers," but I admire Mrs. McClung for seizing her opportunity and doing what she did. Her instincts as a patriot told her the right thing, and here is where one Alberta woman endorses her action. The only sort of people who will condemn that action are ante bellum pacifists, and we know what harm such people did—prevented us from being in such a position of preparedness that no one would disturb our peace.

I do not know what reasons Mrs. McClung gave for wanting the federal franchise for British and Canadian born women alone, but I am going to tell you mine. Thousands of our Canadian men are going across the sea and, from the shambles of battle, they will not return to vote again. "No more! Alas. Farewell!"

They have left their country and their families in charge of those on this side of the water. We must be faithful to that solemn trust. By giving the franchise to the women of their own blood we are taking it as a sacred trust from their dying fingers, and giving it to those raised to the same traditions as themselves who will carry it on as they would have wished.

By giving the vote to the foreign women too, we are but cancelling the British and Canadian women's vote and leaving the Canadian men remaining to cope with the undiminished foreign vote.

You say that you believe in democracy as much as before you secured the franchise. Democracy means a government by the people. What people? In this crisis, I say the British people. Shall our Canadian men go to fight the Hun across the seas while his country is being turned over, practically, to a foreign power? A thousand times, No! We are suffering by this war, our husbands and sons being killed, and the foreign women of Canada, their men safe by their side, can stand it to be deprived of the vote—for a time, anyway, until matters are straightened up. They would not, many of them, have the vote in their own countries; we have survived without one for a long time, and British fair play and British law will protect them. But the federal franchise at this stage, no, it must not be. I, for one, will fight it to a finish.

Furthermore, instead of extending the federal vote to the foreign women, I would like to see a lot of the foreign men disfranchised. If they will not act as proper citizens of their adopted country and do their "bit" along with the rest—disfranchise them, I say. These foreigners, who are not loyal to this country are loyal to some other country, so they are aliens and traitors and must be used as such.

I speak from experience. Here in Alberta, where I live, these aliens are clogs on the wheels of progress. If we few Canadians of this locality want anything advanced and advocate it, we are blocked by, "Naow, daown in the States, where I come from, we done it this a-way," or by some Hungarian, "Vell, in my countree," or a Swede, "It bain not so in my countree." It's a pity the Canadians couldn't all be killed off, give these people, their wives and numberless progeny the vote, and then, by the Great Gun of Atholone, there'd be a confusion of tongues at Ottawa. They may as well go ahead and build the new parliament buildings at Ottawa after the plans and specifications of the Tower of Babel. It makes my Irish rise to the boiling point when I hear of such things. More power to Mrs. McClung's elbow!

Yours truly,

WOLF WILLOW.

Dear lady, have I labored with you these many days without making it clear to you that no nation can be so prepared for war as to insure peace? A nation might be so "prepared" that the backs of her people were broken with carrying the burden of taxation and yet a number of countries might combine against her and defeat her, and that very preparedness would be one of the strongest inducements for them to do so.

F. M. B.

WOULD YOU EXCHANGE

Dear Miss Beynon:—I wonder if any of the sisters have a light summer coat or a spring suit, size 36 or 38, length about 38 or 39, that they would exchange for a brand new sweater coat and a black skirt. I also have several other things for children that I would give if these were not thought enough in exchange, or a light chambray dress almost new. These are about size 36 length, 39 bust. Hoping someone may be able to make this change. Let each one pay the charges on the parcel we send.

SHORTY.

Anyone desiring to communicate with "Shorty" must send the letter in a plain stamped envelope to the editor of this page, with a note asking her to forward it. Parcels must be sent direct, not thru this office.

F. M. B.