

to win the election? Here is a fact which has not yet been explained, but which will require some explanation. It seems to me it will be exceedingly difficult to explain how it is possible that the number of soldiers should have increased in less than one month from 35,000 to 54,000. Now, what of the soldiers in Europe. I will refer to these soldiers in Europe, dealing with what has come to our notice in the press. I have in my hand a picture which was published in all the ministerial papers in the month of December, 1917. It is a photograph of a polling booth for soldiers in London. The copy which I have was taken from the Toronto Star of the 19th December, and under this cartoon I find the following:

The picture shows Canadians at a London polling station on December 2nd, and is from the first pictures to reach Toronto since the voting began on December 1st.

There is the recording officer. There is the voting soldier. There are the clerks; there are soldiers coming also to offer their votes, and on the wall is this placard "A vote against the Government is a vote for the Hun."

We have seen that in Canada, Sir but not in the polls. We have seen it placarded in the streets of the city of Ottawa, that a vote against the Government is a vote for the Hun. We have seen more in the city of Ottawa. We have seen the statement made that a vote for Union is a vote for Christ. If the law can be thus openly, and even boastfully, violated in the polls in England, then we can have an idea of the opportunity which was left to the soldier to cast his vote untrammelled. In the face of all these circumstances, is it not evident to all classes of the community, to all impartial men—whether they are on the side of the Government or on the side of the Opposition, or whether they form part of that larger body, which associates with no party, and which is, perhaps, in the last resort, the grandeur of the nation—that the verdict recorded on the 17th December for the Government is not a victory for democracy, but rather that it is a blow to the very foundation of the system of free institutions under which we live. If democracy is to produce all that we hope and expect for it and from it, it must be apparent to everybody, it must be in the breast of every man that every consultation with the people ought to be carried out in such an open manner that every man must be satisfied that the vote recorded is an ex-

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

pression of the majority of the people. Not, Sir, that the majority of the people is always right. Majorities are wrong sometimes, and so are minorities. But, after all, under our constitutional system, whether we sit on one side of the House or on the other, what we want is that the Government of the country should be carried on by representatives of the majority of the people, according to the opinion of the people as it exists in this country.

Here are some of my friends on the side of the minority. It matters not whether we are on the right side or on the left side of your chair, Sir, what we want is that the voice of the people should be heard, and, even though we are in a minority, at all events that the people should rule. But, Sir, in regard to the verdict which was recorded on the 17th December, and which I see represented before me to-day, however respectable the representation may be, no amount of sophistry, no loud clanking of sonorous numbers can give it the character of certainty and respectability, which ought to be the concomitant and the result of right done. It is the misfortune of the Government and the misfortune of the country, but it is still more the misfortune of the Government that, by their own conduct, they have failed to obtain moral support with their majority; they have failed to win an honest victory, and failed to obtain that support which is the one support a government should have, if the battle had been fought by fair and honest methods.

As to the members on this side of the House, we Liberals sitting here—what is left of us after these vicious practices—what is to be our attitude? Sir, so far as I am concerned, and so far as my friends about me are concerned, the answer is easy. Liberals, democrats, law-abiding citizens, we went into this fight. Liberals, democrats and law-abiding citizens we come back from the fight. We come back depleted in number. In number we are not as strong as we were, but we are stronger before the people, because we fought an honest fight according to our own views.

What shall be our attitude? Sir, I have only this to say, that the laches of the Government will in no way affect our conception of the duty which we owe to our country. We have our views upon the questions which are now before the Canadian people. We stood behind the Government in all of their war measures except one, and we will carry on the same policy; we will be behind them in all their war measures, with the same reservation.