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GREAT BRITAIN'S BURDEN.

The immense financial burden which Great Britain is shouldering in the fight for the freedom of civilisation, would stagger any nation less richly endowed with accumulated wealth and liquid resources. Consider the significance of the figures which Mr. Asquith gave in a recent speech in the House of Commons. He asked for a credit of \$1,855,000,000, bringing the total sum required for war expenditure up to March 31st to no less than \$1,810,000,000. This is in addition to the ordinary supply which had been voted before the war. The details, as summarised by the London Economist, show that there will have been expended during the financial year which ends on March 31, \$1,375,000,000 on the army and navy, besides the \$400,000,000 granted before the war. Of the remaining \$435,000,000, a sum of \$190,000,000 represents advances for war expenditure made to the self-governing Dominions, Crown Colonies, and Protectorates. There have also been advances to Belgium of \$50,000,000, and to Serbia \$4,000,000, and further advances are to be made to these two countries. The balance of \$190,000,000 is required for "miscellaneous services."

The average expenditure on the war up to March 31st is seven millions and a half a day, and a new vote of credit of \$1,250,000,000 will, it is estimated, finance the war and all other expenditure to the end of the second week in July, a little over three months. The war, therefore, is growing increasingly costly. From April 1st the war will cost Great Britain \$8,500,000 a day, and the aggregate of army and navy services will have reached the figure of \$9,500,000 a day. It is, in fact, said Mr. Asquith, necessary to calculate an establishment charge of ten million dollars a day. This compares with a daily expenditure on the navy and army in peace time of only eleven hundred thousand dollars.

These figures, of course, are far in excess of anything previously known in British history. The French wars from 1793 to 1815 cost only \$4,155,000,000; the Crimean war, \$350,000,000; the South African war, \$1,055,000,000. But during the last century the increase of wealth has been so immense that probably the present burden can be more easily borne than that of the French wars of a century ago. Still the burden, translated into terms of taxation, is no light one. Wealthy

men in England are now paying up of 25 per cent. of their incomes in income tax alone; the poor man is paying another cent for every drink of beer and three cents for every half pound of tea his wife buys. And the end of this taxation is not yet. Mr. Lloyd George intimated some time ago that he was considering ways and means of further taxation, and by the time that the end of the war is well in sight it is probable enough that a scale of British taxation will have been quietly put in force and as quietly acquiesced in, the proportions of which had they been mooted a year ago, would have been regarded as sheer madness.

And the burden will continue long after the war is finished. What heights the British national debt will have reached by the end of the war, it is impossible at present to say; and there will be the long continuing expenses of pensions to widows, orphans, and others. Moreover the war will mean the death or maiming so as to render them only partially productive, of several hundred thousand men who, had the war not taken place, would have been wealth producers. So that the new burden of taxation will fall upon a relatively impoverished community—impoverished by the lack of its human means to produce wealth as much as by its actual losses of wealth in incomes diminished and businesses ruined through the outbreak of war.

The burden will be borne, not cheerfully or gladly—that is not the Englishman's way—but with fortitude and with the same grim determination as is now being shown in the conduct of the war to see the thing through, cost what it may. In many ways, probably, the after-financial effects of the war will be more difficult to live through than the present. After the first burst of renewed activity, it is probable enough that there will be a lapse into a period of poor trade, and while this continues, patience with the heavy taxation that must continue whether trade be good or bad will be tried to the utmost. To a certain extent, also, there will be the phenomenon of increased taxation in Canada. It is clear that the obligations which have been entered into by the Dominion Government will involve continuing taxation on a higher scale than that which has hitherto been in force. The financial outlook after the war is at present obscure, but one thing is certain. There will have to be steady and persistent economy, and a willingness to do without superfluities such as the world has never seen in modern days.