

power inevitably brings upon itself attacks from those who think that their own position might be enhanced by a disturbance of the system under which we secure so much? We know that our Empire means peace so long as its influence is unbroken. Does not this conviction increase our responsibility for its maintenance? That maintenance is impossible if we trust only to supine inactivity.

WE see then what the responsibility resting upon us as a nation means. And what responsibility does it throw upon each citizen of the Empire? National responsibility means neither more nor less than the sum of individual responsibility. We cannot escape, each of us, our separate share by throwing it upon our neighbours. In the long run and by the inevitable action of fate, that personal responsibility will bring itself home to each of us. But if we await its stealthy approach, and do not go out to meet it, that responsibility will have to be paid for not in the shape of active service, but in the more miserable and degrading guise of the loss of all that makes life dear to us. It will then be the responsibility, not of effort, but of suffering; the responsibility not of the free citizen, but of the slave.

We know that other nations possess military resources far greater than ours, and are constantly developing them. We know that our professional army may at any moment, by circumstances quite beyond our control, be called abroad upon the shortest notice. We know that we are exposed to sudden attacks upon our shores, which, as even the reluctant admission of the War Office allows, might be carried out by trained and disciplined forces of 70,000 men. Whether such raids come or not will depend upon circumstances in which we count for nothing, and which we cannot control. To meet them, a sufficient and efficient force for Home Defence is absolutely necessary. If this is impossible, then the maintenance of a Territorial Force for Home Defence is a useless expense and an encumbrance. If this is possible, then the maintenance of a Territorial Force in anything but a state of ample efficiency is nothing short of a crime. To maintain that force, and to trust its size and its efficiency to chance, combines both the crime and the futility.

At present we trust the chance patriotism of a few, who have to show their patriotism under every circumstance of injustice. We ask that patriotic few to sacrifice their own interests, to hazard their

progress, to incur heavy loss of time, labour, and money, in order that the selfishness of their less patriotic fellows may reap the advantage.

But, it is said, we must avoid the equal distribution of this responsibility, and the fair sharing of its burden, because to act otherwise would be to increase a spirit of militarism, would be to impose a strain of patriotic duty upon those who would prefer to see that duty discharged by others, and would interfere unduly with the independence of those who consider that their freedom is lessened when any sacrifice for their country is demanded. The argument is not a very lofty or dignified one: the pride of free citizenship is not likely to be valued highly by those who repudiate its responsibilities. But let us set aside its selfishness. If we look only to the interest of the class whose selfish ease is to be the chief object, is it even in their interest to abandon them to the certain penalty that their selfishness must entail? If calamity fell upon the country, military service under the strain of pressing and imminent danger would become a matter not of choice, but of necessity. Stern compulsion would force us to send into the field, to meet trained and disciplined troops, not those to whom we had given some knowledge of the art of war, but raw recruits, to be food for shrapnel, and to go, not to struggle for their independence, but to fall like so many sheep in the shambles. Short indeed would be the shrift then for those who had lulled the nation into a slumber out of regard for the ease and selfishness of those who shirked preparing themselves for a duty which they hoped would be discharged by others.

THIS brings us to our main contention. Is there anything in the plain statement with which we began, or in the simple propositions which we have just set forth, which ought to be perverted and twisted into material for one of our dreary contests of party politics? Is the lesson of history more plain for Unionist than for Radical? Can either party read into the annals of empire-building some new idea which is concealed from the other? Dangers may be real or imaginary; but can either division of our political leaders deny that dangers may arise? And can there be any difference in judgments as to the need of being prepared against them? Surely, for once, the nation may fairly demand that in the supreme matter of Imperial Insurance, her politicians may drop their contentions, and look at the matter in the clear light of day, and not through the distorted

and coloured spectacles of party wrangling?

We firmly believe that in this matter the mind of the nation is more clear, her judgment more sound, and her perception of the situation more accurately adjusted, than is the case with her political representatives. It is nothing less than a calamity if in regard to an issue so momentous the decision is to be absorbed into the dusty and arid arena of party politics. It will inevitably be distorted with all its faulty perspective, and tainted with the mean and ignoble motives which obtrude themselves there. By all the cunning tricks which the political intriguer knows so well, the advocacy by one political party of a reasonable measure of security for Home Defence, and of a just and equitable division of its burden amongst all, will be made an excuse for identifying that party with a policy of militarism, with a restriction of personal freedom, with a desire to introduce all the galling conditions of continental conscription. The art of political lying is a highly developed one, and the political lie which has got a short start is not easily overtaken. Once the struggle has been tainted with this ignoble poison, it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, to recover for it the fair chance of an impartial tribunal in the Court of National Common Sense. One party will be identified with some policy that would interfere with the selfish ease of what may well be a numerical majority and will have to bear a new and distasteful burden. The other party will court support by preaching the doctrine of a false security and so buttressing the apathy that drowns all sense of responsible citizenship. It may find in such an ignoble course, perhaps, an easy path to new political triumphs and to prolonged tenure of political power. But these triumphs and that power will be dearly bought if the nation has to reap the penalty. And it will be too late then to exact the punishment due to such political gambling.

It is not then to the politicians that we should appeal. They may see the threatening danger. They may be conscious of the injustice of a burden unfairly distributed. They may feel sympathetic towards the cause which pleads for the raising of the standard of citizenship by enforcing its primary duty. But the party platform must be jealously guarded, and the intrusion of possibly unpopular topics must be cautiously watched. Political leaders do not, in these days, inspire ideas or rouse the nation to a sense of duty. The nation must brace itself to a task which is too high for those who guide its party contests.

The Widow Harris

A Domestic Romance of the Prairie Country

By EDITH G. BAYNE

THE corner grocery store at Squashville, upon a warm October evening, was the hub around which the spokes of society in the village revolved. Autumn on the prairie is one long, golden dream, and until the first snow flurry reminds one that winter is skulking about in the vicinity the grocer continues his flourishing ice-cream trade and nightly dispenses the cooling dainty in a curtained-off portion of his establishment. Here each evening through the youth and beauty of Squashville. Here as they refresh themselves they may contemplate the rows of hams overhead or speculate upon the price fluctuations in prunes, pickles, potatoes, cheese, mixed biscuits and other commodities which flank the counters. Every Monday the Squashville Band gathers itself together on the market square and discourses valiant martial strains, calculated to arouse the fighting spirit in every citizen.

In the rear of the grocery store were gathered a few congenial spirits—Joe Pierce, the postmaster; Hank Butler, the village news-vendor; Martin, the grocer's clerk, and Ezra Willett, retired merchant and rejected suitor for the hand of the leading local beauty, the young and charming Widow Harris.

"I say, the widder's puttin' through some deal in real estate," Hank was avowing, "an' that's what takes her into Calgary every week."

"More like it's dressmakin'," said Pierce, "or millin'ry. A woman's always blowin' herself to hats."

"No. Ye're all off," drawled Ezra, "she's got too good a head on her to be buyin' up land now the slump's on. Besides, though she is comfortably fixed, I doubt she could touch any Calgary prices now. An' it ain't clothes. She's been goin' in reg'lar each week an' has no great showin' of new duds yet—if I'm any judge."

"P'raps it's mat-er-i-mony."

Hank, lingering on the word, leered at Ezra

knowingly. Poor Ezra, once "on the inside," was now decidedly on the outposts of the lady's regard.

The next moment the subject of their talk, a plump, well-favoured woman, obviously not yet fifty, entered in the escort of a gentleman who was evidently a stranger. They seated themselves behind the chintz-curtains, and the grocer's clerk hastened to receive their order.

"Now, who can he be!" whispered Joe.

"Didn't notice anyone git off the night train," said Ezra, peering out from a space between a box of finnan haddie and the fixture containing "eighteen-karat collar buttons."

But the widow was out of his line of vision.

"Mebbe he rode in on that broncho," ventured Hank. "Saw a strange critter tied up at supper-time over at Lawson's."

"Him ride a broncho!" scoffed Ezra. "I should worry! That there grey suit of his'd scare a beast into climbin' a telegraph pole."

GOING upon the assumption that green is the most restful colour to the eye, Ezra, being short-sighted, began the eye- tonic seven months ago by loafing daily for hours on his south verandah, which overlooked the widow's trim emerald lawn. Then he called on the fair newcomer. Each pitied the other's lonely state. Many a succulent pie or loaf of home-made bread found its way into the Willett kitchen from the widow's oven. And Ezra shovelled the snow from Mrs. Harris's front steps, declaring that it was "only a pleasure," although he had a man hired to perform that service at his own residence. Moreover, he carried home the widow's mail at noon and loaned her a small carload of magazines and papers each week. This happy condition of affairs might have continued indefinitely but that Ezra inadvertently mentioned

his "political leanings" one evening. Far better for him had he hung Miller Watson's millstone about his neck and thrown himself into Squashville Creek. The platonic friendship went up in smoke. Ezra was a well-starched Conservative, while the lady had exceedingly strong Liberal notions and—what was vastly more to the point—a municipal vote. Since the disagreement Mrs. Harris had developed a penchant for regular weekly trips to town, and it was with difficulty that Ezra could conceal his curiosity as to the object of these Tuesday excursions. As surely as that day came around the widow would hurry through her simple morning tasks, snatch a light lunch, take her pet Maltese over to a neighbour's for safe keeping, and concealing her front door key under the mat, would hasten to the little red station and depart on the one o'clock train.

"Oh, I kin make up with her agin if I like," Ezra said, loftily, to Hank, "but I don't hold with wimmen interferin' in politics. Wimmen are supposed to lay low an' let the men-folk run the country. Consequence is, as long as she talks so all-fired Grit I leave her alone."

"He ain't got over the way the widder worked for the new school-board an' got it, too," explained Pierce to Hank.

"The old cock's jealous now—ain't 'ye, Ezra?" said Hank. "Ain't 'ye bitin' yerself to know who that gink in there eatin' ice-cream with the widder is?"

"Tell ye what, Ezzy," said the grocer's clerk, returning to his box-seat, "I bet anything ye want to put up that ye'll be taken in yet an' marry a suffragette."

"If I do, great snakes, I give you fellers leave to—to fling all the antique eggs in Squashville at me!"

"But to go back to the old question," said Hank, "what d'ye s'pose does take the widder to town

(Continued on page 23.)