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Canadian Education and the War

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E. M. KNOX

Havergal Ladies' College

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AS the war closes in in iron grip upon us, we Canadian women realize the change in outlook and fortune which is coming upon us. So far we have been lucky in the natural wealth of our fields, fisheries, and gold mines, but as women luckier still in ourselves in so far that we are being a minority in the land. Our girls know that (given health, brains and character), marriage, or the profession which happens to appeal, is almost certainly open to them, for professions compete for workers, not workers for professions. But the outlook darkens as calamity and depression make further and further inroads upon us.

Our sadness lies in seeing battalion after battalion of our noblest and best passing down the St. Lawrence, with only a far away hope of return. That is for us the fact. Instead of gazing after them, it is wiser to turn our thoughts to the measures which must be taken if the effects of the war are not to fall too heavily upon the world of women left behind, and especially upon the rising generation.

The casualty list appearing day by day tells us, apart from the bereavement itself, that our younger girls can no longer look upon marriage with the certainty of former times. Regiments like the 48th Highlanders, for instance, are practically wiped out, and the end is not yet. These

are men who might have married girls now in their teens, and girls in their teens are or ought to be beginning to ask themselves if they do not marry what professions are open to them? Up till now, nineteen out of every twenty would have cheerfully answered "nursing," but now that their elder sisters are crowding the hospitals to take the place of those who are leaving for the Front, younger girls will find, as soon as the war is over and nurses on military duty return, that the profession is practically closed, for four or five years at any rate.

But if nursing is overcrowded, what others professions are open? Teachers this year, for the first time, are finding work difficult to obtain. Until now, Canadian schools have practically been preserves; that is to say, English teachers, no matter how brilliantly certificated, have been forced to stand outside the Government pale, unless they were willing to take a year's training in a Normal School. These restrictions continue and, but for depressed financial conditions, Canadian teachers could easily have obtained posts. Rural schools, especially in the West, are being rapidly closed, and married teachers, through lack of means, are crowding back into the profession. Out of three hundred and fifty candidates training this year in the Faculty of Education, only ten per cent. will probably obtain posts. Other professions tell the same tale. Stenographers, governesses, and housekeepers seek work on every side. Domes-

tic servants alone are at a premium, and will continue so until emigrants dare to cross the water again and fill the places thinned by war marriages and ordinary marriages.

The outlook as to women's work will darken still further when the war is over, for the financial depression will increase, and women hard-pressed in England turn their faces towards our shores. The English Government is said to be considering offering free passage to Canada for soldiers, who will not settle back into office and sedentary work. These men, seeking adventure, will probably go West and prefer opening out newer and less settled districts. They will not affect us Eastern Canadians, but English women, who have been tasting the excitement of filling men's posts, will be unwilling to return to the monotony and tedium of English middle class life. The English Government will find it even more necessary to provide free passages for women than for men. The misfortune is, that these women will settle in the East instead of going into the Northwest, for, owing to existing conditions, it is extremely difficult for them to follow their brothers and friends. The shack, on its wooden supports, which looks as if it had fallen by accident upon a desolate corner of a ranch, with just as desolate a cattle shed beside it, with a solitary neighbour three miles, and a village store thirty miles away, is well enough for a man to batch in, but it takes the very life out of his woman-

kind; partly from its loneliness, partly from the deadly monotony of work, every enjoyment being hopelessly cut off. The man rides out and meets his fellows, but the woman lives on tinned meats and finds her only recreation in working in the fields, and bitterly learns that a country opens itself at the cost of its women. If, therefore, girls settle in our Eastern cities, how are we to find openings for them? In the first place, they must be taught to realize that the salvation of the situation lies in themselves, in their own daring and ingenuity, and the outlets they create, rather than in leaning upon others. But you may say, why should so many women be forced to emigrate after this war, when there was no such violent change after the Napoleonic and Crimean wars?

As far as the Napoleonic war was concerned, we must remember that the brunt of the war fell on the regulars of the army, not on the men who were the coming hope of the business and professional world. The thinning of the ranks doubtless told upon the marriage question and more women had to struggle for existence, but the world in general knew little about it. In old days, women endured in silence, becoming ill-paid governesses and worse-paid dependents, living on a meagre pittance, reluctantly accorded by relatives and friends. A suffrage meeting was as far from their wildest dreams as a nursing hospital at the rear of the plains of Waterloo.

But the issue of the Crimean war was widely different from the issue of the Napoleonic war, partly owing to the result of economic and industrial conditions, partly to the growth of immigration following on the tragedy of the war.

After the Crimean war colonies of officers settled in various parts of Canada, such as Barrie and Peterborough, and these officers were followed by the most adventurous of the rising generation, these latter trekking their way across the States, into Northern or Western Canada, or sailing to Australia and New Zealand. In consequence, the world of women left behind grew steadily more and more congested, until the war, which added to their calamity, gave the impetus to a movement of light and hope. Florence Nightingale defied the epithet of "husband hunter" which had been hurled at her, and paced the wards of her hospital night by night, knowing that her presence and lamp were bringing hope to the long lines of wounded soldiers. The war over, her labour of organization continued from her sick-room, and the nursing institution which she founded brought life and hope to sick beds from one end of the world to the other. Surely such achievements were joy enough for any one woman's last days; enough to know "I was sick and ye visited me." But her work went even further. She broke open a path of independence to the world of women, as surely as a path of succour to the world of sick and

wounded. Where one woman, instead of settling down upon herself, had dared to be self-sacrificing and serviceable, other women would follow, thankful beyond measure that she could be a self-supporting, useful member of society, instead of dragging upon relatives and friends.

It was well for girls that the thinkers and pioneers of that day were women like Miss Beale, Miss Davies and Miss Buss, women capable of grasping the essential features of a difficult situation. Such women saw that the pose of femininity upon which, up to this time, their sisters had traded, the fainting and the tears must be cast aside forever. So, too, must schools, like the celebrated Mrs. Lemon's, of which Rosamond Vincy was so shining an example "for mental acquisition and propriety of speech," "quite exceptional musical execution," although the teaching included "all that was demanded in the accomplished female—even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage." But if women were to hold their own in the professional and business world, they must give up being governed by their feelings, give up thinking that by jumping at conclusions they could attain as logical and reasonable a conclusion as by the thought-out decisions of men. They provided, therefore, time-tables and carefully regulated studies, with examination tests, until gradually a new race of capable and scholarly women was raised up in the land. But capable and logical as such woman might be, it

fell to the next generation to discover that for the workaday business world strong bodies were as essential as strong minds, and that gymnasiums and playing fields must be added to the already existing class rooms and examination halls. The open air games and regulated exercises thus introduced saved the situation. Women became physically as well as mentally capable, and, instead of existing on pittances, worked out their own salvation as doctors, stenographers, librarians, so that even before the war broke out, they were filling invaluable places as paid workers in England.

Last year, for example, in England there were 16,000 women poor law guardians, 14,000 district councillors, 6,000 parish councillors, until the war came and women formed a long line of service behind the line of khaki. Girls at last breathed freely, feeling that they were wanted, and that whether marriage opened to them or not, they could beat out and choose a path in life in which they could support themselves and be respected, and in which, according to their ability, a living wage at any rate would be theirs, and theirs by right.

The change approved itself to the genius of the stronger Teutonic race, that is to say, to England, America and Canada, with the sole exception of Germany. Nietzsche held that "the beautiful cat, 'woman'" finds "nothing more foreign, more repugnant, nor more hostile to her

than truth." She deteriorates "when she strives for economic and logical independence," and the culmination of her stupidity lies in the "terrible thoughtlessness with which the feeding of the family and the master of the house is managed." That she should dream of equal training, equal claims and obligations with man is a "typical sign of shallow-mindedness." A man who has "depth of spirit" can only "think of women as Orientals do." We understand now why the hero of the "Caravaner," by the author of "Elizabeth and her German Garden," apparently a caricature, in the light of to-day is a portrait, and in keeping with the reply of the German prospectors in the Cobalt district, who when asked how they enjoyed their trip, replied, "Well enough, but our wives found the upper berths uncomfortable."

We women have to remember that the men who are fighting for us are giving their lives, not only for our freedom and honour, but also for our right to stand upon our own feet instead of existing upon relatives and friends.

To sum up therefore: If emigration and the Crimean war little more than half a century ago gave the impetus which resulted in a revolution in women's work and power, what will the present World war, followed by a still greater wave of emigration, effect upon women's work in England and in Canada?

The results of the war bid fair to affect

heavily the moral, physical, religious, and practical training of our girls:

(1) **As to the Moral training:** The keynote changes. The mother whose husband is fighting in the trenches looks for the same soldierly qualities in her children as in their father: for swift obedience, endurance, and power of self-sacrifice. In the school, instead of excusing and sheltering her children, she insists upon a conscientious fulfilment of their duty. Teacher and parent draw together, instead of unwittingly striving the one against the other, and seek the sturdy betterment of the child.

(2) **On the physical side** hardihood is equally needed: Canadian girls are the companions of their parents and excel in a power of quick, decisive judgment. Trusted and admitted to the family councils, the child develops a savoir faire and sympathetic readiness, which makes her a charming companion. But this self-reliance is gained at the cost of her nerves. If a girl wants sturdy physical strength, her nerves must be sheltered during her growing years, and nervous strain and excitement, whether in the form of excessive music, or "not out" parties, must be avoided and more emphasis laid upon an out-of-door life and games.

(3) **As to the Religious influence:** The war writes large over every desolated home and district, the fatal outcome of distorted University and school ideals.

To-day could never have been if the Germans in their Goethe and Kultur worship had not removed the ancient land marks, and practically criticized Christ and His teachings out of the land. It is ours, if we would save the moral and religious tone of our country, to bring out, as by Rontgen Rays, in their true distinctness, the facts of sin and of Christ's death for sins; to show the danger of playing with fire physically, mentally and spiritually, and to accustom children to study the figure of Christ as He passed up and down on errands of Mercy from one end of Galilee to the other. To this end the early memorizing of hymns and passages of Scripture ("nails given from one shepherd") will form a Court of Appeal in the hours of trial and darkness which may be before them.

(4) The trend of education must be intensely practical. Women must never see "NOT WANTED" written across their future life, for nothing paralyzes aspiration more fatally. It is not true, for this is the day when women leaders are intensely wanted to strike out new lines for the benefit of themselves and of their country. Large residential schools, if well run, afford a practising ground for leadership, because they give opportunity for dealing with other girls, managing committees, rubbing off angles, so that from the start girls may gain the right kind of self-confidence and know how to manage other women.

If strong leaders were at hand, what new lines of occupation could be created?

(1) Girls could learn, in addition to ordinary domestic service, first aid in carpentering, plumbing, gardening, so that they might not only be capable managers in their own home upon small means, but might also form a new society amongst themselves. A First Aid Union, under a capable House Mother, would consist of girls in uniform, who as telephoned for, would be ready to help in sudden emergencies, take care of children during the mother's sudden illness, nurse a convalescent child, read aloud, cook or wait at a dinner-party, do the small repairs of the house, the week's mending, be at hand for the hundred and one emergencies, more shrewdly felt in flats, where people are managing without, or at most with one, servant.

(2) Women leaders could open many new institutions which are needed in Canada. A Norland Institution for infant nurses, a training centre for governesses, social workers, factory inspectors, market gardeners, chicken farmers and the like. From centres of this kind, girls could be drifted to the Northwest, leaving city posts for those who come after them.

(3) There still remains the suffrage question. Whatever our opinions may be, we know that the day is drawing near when Canadian and English women may be called upon to take their part in poli-

tics and become in a more direct sense one of the determining factors of the Kingdom. If that day comes, another class of leaders will be needed, women of balanced judgment and wide statesmanship, who may help in guiding the opinion of other women who, so far, have given comparatively little thought to outside subjects.

The question therefore resolves itself into higher ideals in education, more virile Christianity, stronger altruistic and practical leadership. But you may say ideals and openings are well enough in their way, but come tamely as a sequel to a titanic struggle like the present. If the Crimean war could develop a new type of woman, what type of woman will the present war develop? Who can tell? The war clouds hang too heavily over the world of labour and of women for any present answer to be given. All we know is that there are more tendencies at work for the better than for the worse. A serious reality is settling down over the whole country, over educational and spiritual as well as military life, and seriousness means the death of faddism and formalism. The clash of international war will die away, but other conflicts must follow, for men and women who have faced death daily will never stop until the inner as well as the outer national life has been put upon a firm foundation. God grant that that new foundation may be a new-born world of lasting spirituality and reality.

In the meantime, whilst the strife continues, instead of speculating, we must turn to the immediate duty. What is that duty? Older and younger women alike are day by day playing a noble part and showing intense power of self-sacrifice. Husbands, lovers, and sons go from them, and instead of weakening their hands or giving way to grief, they work feverishly at Red Cross supplies from early dawn till night. There was a time when women seemed to be drifting into pleasure and amusement, but before the war came they were already righting themselves and giving their strength to Missionary, Settlement, Social, and Religious work. Then when the war clouds gathered, they drew shudderingly together and worked as one hand, one heart, one soul. The war over, this truest of sisterhoods will continue, and the new-found energy be turned to the incoming responsibilities, to helping strangers newly landed on the shore, and guiding younger women on the discovery of paths of self-supporting usefulness. Thus linking themselves together they will:

“Steel their souls against the lust of ease,
And find their welfare in the general good;
Will hold together, merging all degrees
In one wide sisterhood;

and keep unharmed for God and for their country “the house their fathers built so fair,” finding:

“The secret of the word that saith,
Service is sweet, for all true life is death.”

