



Knook

AID TO THE SICK AND WOUNDED IN WAR.

PUBLIC MEETING IN WARMINSTER

On Saturday afternoon last a public meeting was held at the Town-hall, Warminster, for the purpose of considering what steps should be taken by the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, in order to raise a fund for the relief of the wounded in the war between France and Prussia. There was a very influential gathering, including Lord Heytesbury. The Rev. J. E. Philipps, Mr. C. Bleeck, Mr. Thomas Davis, Rev. E. Strickland, Rev J. R. Madan, Rev. W. Burbidge, Rev. A. T. Corfe, Mr. W. E. Davis (Heytesbury), Colonel Horridge, Mr. F. W. Bayly, Mr. A. Bayly, Rev. H. M. Gunn, Mr Parham (Deverill), Mr. Parham (Sutton), Mr Snelgrove (Heytesbury), Mr P. Grubb, Mr. H. J. Wakeman, Mr John Seagram, Mr. Geo. M. White, Mr. John Warren, Mr. George Bush, Rev. H. Todd, Mr. Stent, Rev. H. Durell, Rev. G. H. Penrith, Mr. T. Cruse, Mr. John Doel, Mr. White (Norridge), Mr. C. Sly, Mr. F. W. Morgan, Mr. W. Chapman, Mr Mills (Knook), Mr. T. Wilce (Heytesbury), Mr. Pope (Corsley), Mr. J. Flower, Mr. Stapleton, Rev. W. Humphreys, Rev. H. C. de St. Croix, Mr. Forward (Crockerton), &c. A number of ladies were also present.

It was announced that Mr. Ravenhill, High Sheriff of the county would preside, but the Vicar read a letter from that gentleman stating that he was prevented by severe indisposition from attending. Mr. Ravenhill expressed his warm sympathy with the objects of the meeting, and stated that his earnest co-operation might be relied upon in endeavouring to carry out any resolutions at which the meeting might arrive. At the conclusion of the reading of the letter, the Vicar stated that, as the High Sheriff was unable to attend, he had asked his kind and good neighbour, Lord Heytesbury, to preside. This announcement was received with loud cheering.

Lord Heytesbury, on taking the chair, was most enthusiastically received. He said that they all regretted, as he did the absence of the High Sheriff, and more especially on account of the cause of his absence. (Hear, hear.) He felt that he was not qualified to perform the duties which had been so suddenly thrust upon him. He came to that meeting in answer to the circular by which it had been convened, and he was bound to confess that the response to that appeal was far in excess of what he could have hoped or anticipated. He understood from the Vicar that it was the desire of the promoters of that meeting not to restrict its operations to Warminster, but to extend them to the neighbouring towns. That quite coincided with his own wishes on the subject. It was most desirable that the effort should be an united one, and that it should embrace all classes of society, in politics, and in religion; for they had all one and the same great and praiseworthy object in view; namely, to afford succour to the wounded and the dying. (Applause.) He felt that it was not necessary to make many observations on the subject; for they were all

agreed that the duty of assisting suffering humanity was incumbent upon them, although they had the good fortune from their insular position to be free from invasion—and be trusted from the fear of invasion, and could not feel the extent or realise the horrors of war—he was sure they could not read the details of the war without feeling deeply for the sufferings of their fellow-men. They could not read the details published in the *Times* and other papers of what was going on—of those masses of men far exceeding in numbers any previously brought together, armed with the most deadly weapons animated with the most bitter feelings—fighting continually, not only in one battle, but in repeated battles, not only fighting by day, but fighting by night, and producing unprecedented slaughter—without having their hearts touched to the quick with sorrow and sympathy for the wounded. (Applause.) He was sorry to say that the means of healing, and the appliances for the relief of the wounded, had not increased in the same ratio as had the weapons of destruction; and it was found that the whole system of ambulances had broken down, under the terrific strain which had been put upon it. They had all read, and read repeatedly during the past few weeks, of hundreds of men lying on the ground for days together without receiving any attention. There were not sufficient surgeons to attend them, nor sufficient bandages for their wounds, and there was a lamentable deficiency of general hospital requisites. That was the state of things which they, as Christian men and women, were called upon to alleviate; and he thought that he knew enough of the spirit of the people of Warminster and the neighbourhood to be able to say that that appeal would not be made in vain. (Applause.) There had been a most liberal response throughout England. There were no fewer than three main societies in London, whose efforts were directed to the same great end. There was the “National Society for Sending Aid to the Wounded,” which distributed its funds equally between French and Prussians, and that was the society he thought they ought to support. (Applause.) There were other societies which collected funds especially for one army or the other, and they were all doing a good and noble work. He saw in that day’s *Times* that a sum of over £60,000 was acknowledged as the result of one great contribution to the society which he had first named. The noble lord observed, in conclusion, that he felt quite sure that that neighbourhood would come forward and help to relieve that distress which was now pressing so heavily to relieve that distress which was now pressing so heavily upon their fellow-men. (Applause.)

The Rev. J. E. Philipps said that he rose for the purpose of proposing the first resolution, but before he did so he would announce that he had received letters from Lord Henry Thynne, MP., Colonel Everett, Rev. G. F. Powell, Rev. John Knight, Rev. J. Walsh, and the Rev. Prebendary Morrice, expressing regret that they could not attend on that occasion. He had also received letters from the Marchioness of Bath, Lady Heytesbury, and Mrs. John Everett, expressing their readiness to co-operate in every way possible in furthering the object they had in view. (Applause.) The resolution which he had to propose was :—“That this meeting, viewing with deep regret the frightful war now raging between France and Prussia, and the vast amount of suffering ensuing therefrom, is of opinion that it is the duty and privilege of all classes in this country to assist as far as possible in the relief of the sufferers.” They were not met that day to discuss the causes of the war, or who was the real originator of it; or to state their own individual opinions as to the side on which right and justice lay—who was right and who was wrong—who was to blame or who was free from blame. England had, and he thought very rightly, assumed a position of neutrality, and it seemed to him that it would not become them to express their own private opinions on the subject; for what was public opinion but an aggregate of private opinion ? Therefore, he thought it quite as well, as the country had wisely taken up a position of neutrality, that they should not say much as to which side their sympathies tended, for they all had held strong opinions on the subject, and all had their sides, and indeed he thought that for some time past

they had sympathised with both sides. What had brought them together was the vast amount of suffering now on the continent of Europe. Thank God England had never yet been indifferent to suffering where suffering was there she was with sympathy and succour. The suffering now, as they knew, was frightful. Never had there been so much brought within such narrow limits of time and space. In consequence of the fearful destructiveness of the weapons, and the almost continual fighting, the ordinary hospital arrangements were not sufficient to meet the requirements of the war. Such, in future, he feared, would always be the case. The suffering now was truly terrible, thousands and thousands of wounded men, as the noble lord had said, were lying without medical assistance, suffering all the agonies of death. Some people had said to him, with regard to that meeting, that they had two objections to it. One was that help given in that way to either or both parties would serve to encourage the war. His answer to that objection was that any exhibition of truly Christian feeling never could encourage anything that was evil. (Applause.) He thought that it would have the effect of making the French and Germans stop out of mere shame. Another objection was that if the war went on England would be brought into it and have sick and wounded of her own. God forbid that such should be the case. (Applause.) At any rate, the way to obtain divine protection and guidance for their own Queen and country was to assist the wounded and distressed of other nations. (Loud cheers.) These were his answers to these two objections, which were most groundless and reckless. Telegraphic news had that day been received stating that the Emperor of the French had given himself up to the King of Prussia, and that the large army under Marshal MacMahon had capitulated. If that were the case they might hope that they were nearly at the end of the war. Therefore, it was proposed in the committee-room, just before the meeting to learn whether the telegrams were true, and whether the War was likely to come to a speedy end. It was considered, however, that it was better to hold the meeting. They sincerely trusted that the war would be concluded speedily, but even if it should be, there would be thousands upon thousands of wounded men who would require all the help and assistance they could give them for the next three or six months to come. That meeting ought, perhaps, to have been held some five or six weeks ago, but there was an old saying "Better late than never," and he thought it particularly applied to them that day. He was sure they would rather give now than not at all. He trusted they would all bear in mind the old proverb, *Bis dat qui cito dat*, and that they would not only give at once, but give liberally. That was a most terrible war, but he himself thought that God in His mercy would bring good out of evil; he thought that brotherly love would exceed the hate which was shown. He had great hope, after all—looking to his own country, and looking to Holland and other countries which had assisted the wounded and distressed in that terrible war—that the deeds and acts of mercy would exceed in number the acts of cruelty which had been done. The rev. gentleman concluded by observing that he had great pleasure in proposing the resolution which had been entrusted to him. (Applause.)

Mr. H. J. Wakeman, in seconding the resolution, said that he felt quite sure that they all felt most deeply for the sick and wounded in this unhappy war; and while they evinced no sort of sympathy with the belligerents, their sympathy with the sufferers was undoubted. He was glad to see the attitude which England had taken, and was proud to feel that this country was ever foremost in works of humanity. He might also add that he was glad to be able to state that the town of Warminster always came forward to assist in deeds of charity and to promote any good work and he himself felt proud in being able to render any assistance in behalf of this charity. (Applause.)

The Rev. H. M. Gunn proposed the next resolution, as:—"That this meeting recommends that measures be immediately taken to carry out this object by simultaneous collections in all the churches and chapels in

Warminster, on Sunday, the 11th of September next; and that lists be opened for subscriptions at the banks and libraries in Warminster." The rev, gentleman observed that he trusted the sympathy with the sick and wounded would not be limited to Warminster, but that the neighbourhood would respond to the appeal which was now being made. He then in the course of an able speech, alluded to the manner in which the Crown Princess of Prussia and the Princess Alice had devoted themselves to the relief of the wounded Germans; and concluded by expressing his belief that by evincing their sympathy at the present time they would not only assuage the actual suffering, but assist in allaying the bitter feelings of the French and Prussian nations after the war was over.

Mr. John Seagram briefly seconded the resolution.

Mr. Bleeck said that in the hope of assisting in the alleviation of suffering that had been occasioned by the war he had to propose that a ladies' association be formed in Warminster, to which the Marchioness of Bath and Lady Heytesbury had kindly consented to attach themselves. He observed that they could scarcely realise the enormous slaughter that had taken place during the war. A number equal to the population of Bath and Bristol had probably up to that time been either killed or wounded—a number exceeding the whole population of Wiltshire. He then commented upon the want of proper hospital arrangements, and forcibly urged the claims of the sick and wounded upon his hearers.

Mr. Grubb, in a brief but forcible address, seconded there solution, which was carried by acclamation.

The Rev. E. Strickland moved the next resolution, as follows :—" In order to ensure that they be impartially distributed to the sufferers in both armies, it is recommended that the funds and materials so collected be forwarded to the National Aid Society, under the presidency of Colonel Loyd Lindsay." (Applause)

The Rev. A. T. Corfe seconded the resolution, which was at once adopted.

Mr. Bleeck proposed that a committee be formed to receive donations and subscriptions, and to apply the same: the committee to consist of the vicar, Rev. W. Hickman, Rev. H. M. Gunn, Mr. H. P. Jones, Mr. W. Chapman, Captain Scott, Mr. Carson, Mr. Grubb, Mr. Lanning, Mr. Vicary, &c.

Mr. Stent seconded the proposition, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. Warren proposed, and Mr. Bush seconded a proposition that Mr. Bleeck be elected treasurer of the fund. This was carried by acclamation.

The Rev. W. Burbage moved and Mr. T. Cruse seconded a resolution that Mr. F. Morgan and Mr. Wakeman be requested to act as the honorary secretaries to the fund. This resolution was also unanimously adopted. A vote of thanks to the noble chairman closed the proceedings.

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