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ANZAC DAY.

MEMORABLE SPEECHES IN THE HOUSE.

Mr Mitchell (Wellington South).—In moving the second reading of this Bill I wish, first of all to thank my fellow-soldiers for giving me the opportunity of bringing this measure forward. Members of the House may think that there are already too many holidays in the year at the present time, and probably the matter may have to be considered; but I am sure this House will agree that there is no day more worthy of recognition, other than Christmas Day and the Easter holidays, than the day we wish to have observed in honour of our fallen soldiers. We wish this day to be on the 25th April of each year, simply because it is an outstanding day in the history of our country and of the world. This is not the first time, Mr Speaker, that our troops have served with the British troops on the battlefields; but on the former occasion—the South African War—the fate of our nation and of the world was not at stake. It remained for this war to bring out the fine latent qualities of our people, and to unite all the British manhood from the whole world into one great fighting force such as had never been known in the world's history. One cannot look back on the struggle without a great sorrow when one realises the loss of so many of our finest men, and the ruin and devastation that has taken place on the battlefields; but with it all one must feel a pride and thankfulness that those sacrifices have not been in vain. Sir, I have heard it said in this House that this war was to be a war to end wars. I am sorry I cannot subscribe to that belief. There have been wars and rumours of wars from the beginning of time, and I believe we shall have wars and rumours of war till the end, or until we change the nature that is in the human race to-day. And, after all, who can say that it is not part of God's great purpose for our good, but which we cannot yet understand? As far as the war itself is concerned, I believe we are yet too near it. We cannot see and properly realise the history of the great times that we have passed through. As we get farther away from the war we shall see it in its truer perspective, and we shall realise what it meant to our country and to civilisation. It will be some time before we can settle down to the new thoughts and the new habits of life which the war has brought to us; and I believe that with all the sorrows and all the devastation it has been worth while that people throughout the world—oppressed people—have been freed, and that we have moved forward probably a hundred years in one step. One cannot look back on it and on the part that our Empire has played without feeling a great pride that we are of the British race, and partners in our Empire. We realise the huge burden that Britain undertook in the war; we realise the part she played and the burdens she is now bearing—burdens greater than any nation has ever borne in the world's history. Yet, with all these burdens—burdens of debt and burdens of trouble abroad and of unrest at home—she stands supreme amongst all the nations of the earth. Loved by every true Briton abroad and at home, she is to-day the wonder of the whole civilised world. In all countries, at all times and in all circumstances, we have people who are opposed to whatever decision the nation comes to, and we had people in different parts of the Empire totally opposed to Britain right through the war. Now that will always be, and we must expect it; but we won the war in spite of their opposition, and we can now maintain and govern our Empire without their aid. Sir, I do feel that we are honoured by being a part of that nation, and I am proud of the part which this country and all the British dominions played. Perhaps we have been a little selfish sometimes, like a spoiled child; but I do believe that we are now realising our responsibilities to the Empire, and realising that we must take a far bigger part in its maintenance, if we are going to do our share. We claim the full privileges of Empire, and we must undertake our full share of the responsibilities. Sir, I would like just for a moment to draw your attention briefly to the part that our nation has played during the war. Let us remember that within a few days the whole of the German and Austrian fleets were bottled up, and from that day the seas were practically free to the world's commerce and the British fleet. She transported millions of soldiers across the seas with practically no loss; she created a wonderful fighting army, both on land and sea; and after providing all those forces she was the manufacturing-centre that provided the

Allies with their munitions of war. When the war broke out I think that we can fairly claim that our navy alone was superior—that we were inferior in every other necessity for war, except the traditions and courage of our people. We were outnumbered, outgassed, outgunned, outflowed, outbombed; and I think it is a just claim that the German armies were superior to us in every department of war. But, Sir, our nation never knew defeat; and by 1918 we were superior in guns, in gas, in bombs, and in every craft, and our flying men controlled the situation in the air—in a word, the Germans were outclassed in every department of war. I would like just here to pay a tribute to our various departments—to our transport department, to our commissariat, and to our medical service. These services reached a state of efficiency that was never dreamed of in the world before. Especially do I commend the commissariat department, as my comrades here will tell you that under all conditions—and conditions were sometimes very bad—food was always available. I must also commend the medical department, which probably showed a greater advance in science and organisation than any other service in the war. And, last of all, let me pay a tribute to the average British fighting-man—the good old "Digger," the private soldier. When it came to the last bit, it does not matter where these men came from—whether from Canada, Australia, South Africa, or from any other British possession, or from Great Britain herself—they were as brave as God ever made man, and they were superior fighting men to any of our enemies. It was not a case of internal troubles at home that caused the collapse of the Germans; on the contrary, it was the good old "Digger," who fought them to a finish. This is the first time in the history of our country, Sir, that our soldiers have taken their full and equal share with the British troops. It was always thought in South Africa that we were not equal to the trained British Regular; but in this war our men, the Australians, Canadians, and troops from all the British dominions, fought side by side; and I can justly claim, I think, that it does not matter where they came from, they were equal under equal circumstances. Sir, one has heard on many occasions before this war that our race was deteriorating, that our men were not so good and not so brave, not so hard and not so strong as our forefathers. Sir, I think this war has proved that statement to be quite untrue. I do claim, Sir, that history has never recorded any finer deeds of heroism or of courage than were manifested throughout this last Great War. It does not matter whether on the seas, in Palestine, in Gallipoli, in Flanders, or in France, the men of the British race were always worthy of that race and I can pay them no greater tribute. Sir, before I pass on I would like to pay one small tribute to our cousins the Australians, or, as we call them, the "Aussies." Perhaps, Sir, these men were unconventional—they certainly were, and perhaps in the eyes of the conventional people they were a little strange in their conduct—but I do say they were good comrades and great fighters, and our people and every British battalion were always pleased to know that they had the Australian beside them. I would like here, Sir, also to pay a small tribute to the nurses. I do think that perhaps we are very apt to forget that there were some thousands of very noble women who went as near the firing-line as it were possible for them to get, and tended the wounded day in and day out, worked like slaves, asked for no overtime, asked for nothing more than to be allowed to do their duty and tend the soldiers; but, Sir, I sometimes think that when we are back here to forget all their tenderness and their sacrifices to these men. We are apt to let them drift back into civil life, and say, "Thank you, go and get to work." I do hope, Sir, the country will never forget the services of those women; the soldier never will. While I am speaking of the services of women, I think I can honestly say that there was not a soldier on the battlefield but who was always mindful of and thankful to those noble women at home. There were many times—in whatever part of the field you were on—when there was no danger at all, and we were having quite a good time, perhaps right away back from the line or at the base; but we did realise that the women at home—those who sent us par in France, that there was a war on in France, and that their anxiety was long and continuous; and we appreciate all that they did for us, and feel with them now

in their sorrows. Now, Sir, I come to our own troops—our own Dominion troops, our sons, our brothers, and our comrades—the plain average "Digger." It did not matter whether he was in Palestine, or Gallipoli, or France, or Flanders, or in the homes of England, or in Egypt—he was always worthy of you and his conduct was such that this country could well be proud of. Sir, I would like to state here that I have found a feeling in this country that because a man has perhaps had some little punishment recorded in his book he has therefore committed a grievous offence. Sir, that is entirely wrong. A military offence—the average military offence—is no offence at all in the eyes of the common law. These small offences are offences against discipline, and it will be readily understood that discipline must be maintained. I do want honourable members to realise that the slight punishments that have been given to men are really no punishments at all. I do not wish that any man in this country should feel that a black mark in his book will go against him in civil life. Sir, it was my privilege to start early in the war with these men, to see them land on Gallipoli, and to march with them in victory to the Rhine; and it does not matter where they were—whether it was dying before the wire and in the mud of Passchendaele, or around Armentieres, or at any of the various places which you have recorded on the walls of this chamber in memory of your men, or on the march of victory to the Rhine—I say that your men were always worthy of you, and were always excellently behaved. Now, Sir, we ask this House to dedicate to them one day in the year. We ask that this day shall be kept in memory of them in the same manner as you keep a Sunday—that it shall not be a day for an extra race meeting or a day for jollification. We ask you to dedicate this day to the memory of those who dedicated their lives to you. I would ask this House to remember that on the sacrifices of those men alone who lie on the battlefields of the world rests the security of our Empire and the freedom of the world. Their sacrifices allowed you to remain in this country, to remain at home in comfort and security; their sacrifices protected your wealth, your trade, and your commerce. And remember, Sir, that because of their sacrifices alone you are permitted to sit in this House in government over this fair country; and in all earnestness I say that these men fought not to make a few men rich, but to make all men free. Sir, they realised that they had this great united Empire in their keeping, and that it was their duty to hand it on to the next generation; and it is our duty to hand it on to the next generation just as great and just as noble, and even stronger than it is to-day. I do not think there is any danger to our Empire so long as that noble spirit prevails. They fought to make our country nobler and better, and to make our people, if anything, a little less selfish than they are to-day. We ask you to pass this measure in memory of those seventeen thousand of our own dead whose graves lie scattered over the battlefields of the world, and whose little wooden crosses stand as noble monuments to their sacrifice and your liberty. We ask you to do this also for the sake of those who mourn in this country; there are great numbers of them, and I think it must be a painful thing for them to feel that there is no one day of national memorial for those who have sacrificed all. I hope the memory of our honoured dead will be a memory which will last for all time, and that it will lead to make us a little more tender, a little more thoughtful, and a little more considerate in our actions and conduct towards the living.

Mr Jennings (Waiatomo).—Mr Speaker, I am sure there is no honourable member of this House who has listened to the honourable gentleman who introduced this Bill but will not feel fully convinced that the memory of those who passed away at Gallipoli—"Anzacs," as we call them—should be commemorated by this country for all time. I have had the privilege and the honour of being invited by the Soldiers' Association at Taumarunui, Te Kaiti, Waitara, and Ururangi, to speak on each Anzac Day, and on those occasions I pointed out it was strange to me that there should have been some objection raised by one or two local bodies in my electorate to the addition of another day, to be called "Anzac Day," to the commemoration days now on our statute book. I have said, "I am a New Zealander. We celebrate in this country St. George's Day, St. Andrew's Day, and St. Patrick's Day, when, so far only as legend is concerned, many people in this country and who cared for us—knew that their sons, their husbands, their brothers were country know little about St. George, St. Andrew, or St. Patrick." But I do say, Sir, that throughout New Zealand there are many sorrowing homes in this Dominion where there is a vivid knowledge of what Anzac Day means. I am not going

to labour this question, after what has been so well said by the honourable member who introduced the Bill, because I feel quite sure that this House as representing the people of New Zealand will agree that New Zealand shall have a memorial day to be known as "Anzac Day," not for horse-racing—though I am a "sport"—but for the due recognition of the sacrifices of those dear ones we hold in memory. In conclusion, Sir, I wish to give to the House one verse of "The Farewell to Anzac," and my honourable friend who moved the Bill will appreciate it—

Leaving them, oh, leaving them,
The bravest and the best;
Forsaking them, God bless them!
Leaving them to rest.
We did our best with yesterday,
To-morrow's still our own,
But we are leaving them,
Sleeping all alone!

Mr Speaker, I hope that the proposal in this Bill—which, I am sure, is going on the statute book—will serve to remind those who come after us what our boys did for our flag, our country, and our Empire.

The Right Hon. Mr Massey (Prime Minister).—Mr Speaker, it gives me very great pleasure to support the second reading of the Bill which has been moved by the honourable member for Wellington South. I do not think I need to remind honourable members that for a number of years past, even before the armistice, I have been strongly of the opinion—and I have expressed that opinion in the House—that when the war came to an end a day should be set apart to celebrate the doing of our troops, of our sailors, and of our airmen in the Great War. I know of no more suitable day than Anzac Day, and I am pleased that this day has been selected by our returned soldiers, a day when we shall be able, in time to come, to celebrate not only the landing at Gallipoli—where deeds were done which have never been excelled and seldom equalled in the history of all the great wars of the world—when we shall be able to recite not only the stories of the Great War itself, wherever fighting took place on the different battlefronts. I hope that Anzac Day will be, as has been suggested, a holy day rather than a holiday, and I hope the law of the country will make it impossible for any one to indulge in sport such as we are in the habit of holding on ordinary holidays, and to which at the proper time I have no objection. I hope it will be a day of rejoicing—rejoicing for the mercies vouchsafed to us, rejoicing for the spirit with which our fighting men and the citizens of the Empire all over the world were inspired through the dark days of the Great War, rejoicing for the fact that the war has left us a free people and a great Empire, greater and more united than at any other time in its history. Let it be a day of thanksgiving as well as rejoicing. Let us not forget also a day of mourning for our gallant dead—for the hundreds and thousands of British citizens, for the hundreds and thousands of our Allies, and for the many thousands who went from this country, and who never came back. Their bodies rest in peace, but their names will live for ever, and the deeds for which they were responsible will never be forgotten so long as this world lasts. The honourable member for Waiatomo quoted a verse of a poem with which I am acquainted. I want to quote from Shakespeare words which he has put into the mouth of Henry V. prior to the Battle of Agincourt, and which apply particularly to the deeds done on Gallipoli, and to many of the battles that took place in the different countries where fighting went on. Shakespeare makes Henry V. say, when addressing his troops:—

He that outlives this day, and comes
safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is
named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old
age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his
neighbours,
And say, "To-morrow is Saint Crispian!"
Then will he strip his sleeve and show
his scars,
And say, "These wounds I had on
Crispian's Day."

Old men forget; yet all shall be fought
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day.

Substitute "Anzac Day" for "Crispian's Day," and it applies almost exactly. I trust the Bill will pass into law without opposition. Sir, it will be a day, I hope, when the story of Anzac will be told to the rising generations for all time to come, when they will be reminded for their privileges as British citizens—and not only of their privileges, but of their duties, and of their duty, speaking from the point of view of the Empire, is to maintain the glory of this great Empire of ours in the years to come; and in doing that, as the mover said in his speech on the second reading of this Bill, to make it greater, brighter, and nobler than it has ever been up to the present.