



The Ones Who Have to Pay: The Soldiers-Poets of Victoria Bc in the Great War 1914-1918

Robert Ratcliffe Taylor

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When war in Europe broke out in 1914, why did so many men from Victoria, BC, Canada, enlist enthusiastically? What did they feel about the war they were fighting? What were their personal values? Were they ever disillusioned in the trenches of the Western Front? To what extent did they enjoy combat? How did they regard the German enemy? And faced with artillery bombardment, execrable living conditions, and the fear of death or maiming, what helped them to carry on? In researching these questions, the author found that Victoria was a unique city in several ways and that some assumptions about Canadian soldiers' trench experience may not apply to volunteers from that city. Moreover, the culture of the time was different from that of Canada today so that the enthusiasm for military life and for "the empire" may seem bizarre to young people. Ideals of masculinity may seem outdated, and the concepts of personal honor and duty, which these men supported, may be obsolete. This essay tries to understand the culture of Canada and especially that of Victoria, BC, a century ago, a pertinent exercise considering the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War.

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