

Charge to Synod

Extracts from the Charge of the Right Rev. DAVID WILLIAMS to the Synod of Huron, June 19th, 1917

The War.

MOST of us had hoped that by this time we would be nearing the end of this terrific struggle, which, however, seems to grow, as time passes, both in intensity and in extension. Our first conviction that this was a struggle in which neutrality was impossible is being borne out by the subsequent and matured judgment of nations then neutral, but who are finding neutrality less and less tenable. Their action is an earnest of the judgment of history. The advent of the United States into the War, after two and a half years of most patient effort to remain neutral, is a decisive judgment of Germany. We rejoice over this even more than for the material help, because it tends to remove any doubts that might be entertained as to the justice of our cause, shows that our first impulsive indignation was not wrong, but the natural and instinctive revolt of free people against an enemy who sought not only the overthrow of the British Empire, but the enslavement of mankind. For that and nothing else is the goal of German ambition. "World power or downfall," is the game of Germany in the next war, was a phrase invented not by Germany's enemies, but by her own generals and statesmen, years before the war, when the rest of the nations were thinking only of peace. God grant that it be downfall! World-power in the hands of one nation—one man—is a fate unthinkable for mankind.

Efforts Needed.

But let no mistake be made as to the efforts still necessary to vindicate our freedom. The enemy is yet most powerful. It is not only the Kaiser and his clique that must be overcome, but a whole nation of seventy millions, contemptuous of other nations, delirious with the dream of world-power, and ready to make any sacrifices to achieve it. For the German people are bound up heart and soul with the ambitious Kaiser, and possessed by a strong delusion. Germany is profoundly convinced of these three things: German Kultur is a blessing; God has chosen Germany to bestow that blessing upon the world; the only means of bestowing it is by force of arms. Therefore, it is the destiny of Germany to go on conquering and to conquer till their Kultur is imposed upon the world. However monstrous that may appear to us, and however subversive it is to the independence of other nations, there is no doubt that the rulers and people of Germany are possessed by that strong delusion. That is a fact which we must not forget. The German people have become mono-maniacs for world-power at any cost, moral and material. The final goal of that delusion is the conquest of the world for Germany. What can you do with such a nation? What can you do with a maniac when he is bent upon murder? What can you do with a wild beast broken loose? Only one thing can be done: First break his power and then bind him. Not until the German armies are broken and crushed will the German people discover the criminality and futility of their ambitions. Not until then will the evil spirit that has possessed both ruler and people be cast out effectively. That is the task for which we, along with the rest of the free peoples of the world, must brace ourselves even to the bitter end; for until that is accomplished there can be no freedom, or safety or peace for the rest of the nations.

Conscription.

In this country we have arrived at a turning point in our efforts to prosecute the war. The voluntary system has failed. The results achieved, however, will remain for ever a glory to Canada, and especially to the Church of England, which, although its members count only one out of seven in the whole population of the Dominion, yet supplied two out of every five of the soldiers sent from our shores, or a total of about 165,000 men out of the 400,000 enlisted under the voluntary system.

We now see the defects of the voluntary system. It tends to deplete the country of its most patriotic and self-sacrificing citizens, and to leave slackers in possession. It allows men to enlist for the front whose services would be invaluable at home, while others who could easily be spared thrive and fatten by increased wages and profits. It fails to equalize the task of defending our freedom. It fails to bring out the full strength of the country's manhood. We can see all this as we look back. The magnitude of the effort still to be made now leaves us no option but to adopt conscription, which, after all, is the only just method in a democratic country. For, where the citizenship is equal, every citizen is equally responsible for its defence.

But conscription should apply not only to securing men for the firing line. It should apply to munitions, food and transportation. In short, the Government should be empowered to assume control of all the manhood and all the resources of the country and to mobilize them for winning the war. Partial conscription would be wholly unsatisfactory—an endless source of favouritism, injustice and discontent.

Canada and Quebec.

Conscription threatens to bring to a head a problem which has been growing more and more serious in this country, *viz.*, the want of harmony between Quebec and the rest of Canada. One dislikes to say anything which might add to the tension already existing, and yet the time has arrived when we can no longer keep silence without disloyalty to Canada. Quebec has practically stood aloof from the war. The French-Canadians will not fight for France, their mother country; they will not fight for the British Empire, which guarantees to them their freedom. At last they are fighting hard with their tongues and in the press against conscription, so as to prevent Canada from exercising her full power in this war. It is not freedom but anarchy when one province is allowed to balk the policy of the country as a whole—either anarchy, or slavery to the balking province. Is the rest of Canada to have its policy in this war dominated by the slacker-province of Quebec? If conscription is turned down in Quebec and carried by a majority of the Dominion Parliament or of the Canadian voters, who must always include the soldiers at the front, then the will of the majority must rule. If the operation of conscription is suspended tacitly or otherwise in Quebec, then the franchise for the Dominion should be suspended there also, for equal franchise pre-supposes equal burden-bearing, and if the French will not serve on the battlefield to preserve the life of the Dominion, they should not have the vote in Dominion elections. If they have shared in all the benefits of confederation for fifty years, they must now share in its responsibilities. To say that they would serve if the soil of Canada were attacked is a mere subterfuge, for all know full well that our freedom and independence are just as much in jeopardy as if the war were carried on in the province of Quebec. That, however, is an aspect of this conflict not yet apparently apprehended in the province of Quebec. To what influence this failure, this ignorance is to be

ascribed, it is difficult to say. We are given various answers. That it exists is only too evident. Whether the French-Canadians will accept instruction at this late date is doubtful. The condition is one much to be deplored. But it cannot be remedied by giving way to ignorance and selfish prejudices. Nor should the failure or even the opposition of Quebec be allowed to paralyze the effort of this whole Dominion. If the influence of Quebec is so great that our public men will not dare to enforce conscription there, then all I can say is that we are unworthy of our British heritage and unworthy of being entrusted with the powers of self-government; and the best thing for us to do is to hand back to Britain our autonomy and ask her to govern us from Downing Street. For if while we are self-governing, Quebec is to rule and the rest has to follow its dictation, then I would rather be ruled from Downing Street, or even from Washington, than from Quebec.

Soldiers' Pay and Pensions.

When conscription is established, as we hope it soon will be, there is one anomaly or rather injustice which ought to be removed. The present poor pay of the soldier has been inherited from the time when soldiering was a life-long profession. It is wholly inapplicable to a citizen-army recruited for special emergency. There ought, therefore, to be an equalization of pay between the men sent to the firing line and the workers at home. Is it not a grave injustice that the men who stay at home should be able to make \$5.00 to \$10.00 a day, as I am told they do, while the soldier at the front, whose skill is equal, whose hardships are infinitely greater, and who in addition risks his life every moment of the day, should receive the princely sum of one dollar a day? On general principles one would think that the men on the firing line, whose risks are greatest, should receive the highest pay.

Again, when to the risk is added the profound unsettling and dislocation of the mental and nervous system of the soldiers at the front, the complete uprooting of the ordinary life, a dislocation so great that to settle down again to ordinary life is all but impossible, even though they may not have been wounded or incapacitated, one feels, not only that they should receive high pay while at the front, but that, whether maimed or not, they should receive a pension for life, so as to compensate them to some extent for the more or less permanent unfitting of them for ordinary work. Unfortunately, at least at first, we proceeded upon the opposite plan. The Board having charge of the returned soldiers seemed to have as its chief aim the removal of the returned soldier from the pay list as soon as he landed or as soon as the doctor pronounced him recovered from his particular wound, ignoring the profound disturbance of the man's mental and nervous system. These mental and nervous effects are things which cannot be measured by doctors, sometimes not even diagnosed, but which, as stated, unfit the men for settling down again into the ordinary routine of life. Remembering these things, a pension for life would not seem to me to be a charity, but a debt from us to the men who have risked their lives to save us from the fetters which otherwise would be ours.

Some Effects of the War.

Some people delight in speculating on After-the-War Problems and projecting solutions of them. Old things, we are told, will have passed away, behold all things are to become new—a new heaven and a new earth. Nothing is to be as it was, either in the world of thought or in the Social order. As to all of this I desire to utter one warning: No ready-made