

BRITISH COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

THE PASTORAL ADDRESS.

DEARLY BELOVED:—

Assembled again in Annual Conference it devolves upon us to bring you greetings in the name of our Lord and Master.

We do so with profound gratitude to Almighty God for His mercy and sustaining grace, vouchsafed to us throughout another year—a year of hardship, suffering, sacrifice and loss to most of our people; and yet, we trust, a year of spiritual enlargement. May it not be that these afflictions shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?

We are living in the days of war, and rumours of war; our country is giving of its noblest and best. From all our congregations the youth and flower of our manhood have gone forth, having heard the call of duty, to defend the very existence of our Empire and her honor, against the modern Hun. Twenty-three of the ministers and probationers have already enlisted, while many others have offered their services to their King and Country. Already some of our brave men have made the great sacrifice, while others have returned home wounded and maimed for life. Shall these suffer in vain? Surely not! After this Gethsemane shall come a resurrected world.

God who spake in times past through the flood and captivity is surely speaking to the world to-day through this great war, calling upon men to forsake their false standards, base materialism and greed for gold, and to seek first the kingdom of righteousness.

We rejoice to see the human response to the Divine call, manifested in the great world temperance movement, wherein nations are putting away the abominable traffic in strong drink. Our great ally, Russia, has led the way in abolishing vodka; France has abolished absinthe; the British Government has taken strong measures to strangle the traffic, and in our own fair Dominion Province after Province has prohibited the traffic. We are confidently expecting our own Province of British Columbia soon to rise up and drive out this iniquitous business.

This awakening of the social conscience is also evidenced in the public protest against party patronage and kindred social vices, which in the past were regarded as necessary evils to be tolerated or even defended. Let us not be unduly disturbed by the exposure of these sins, but rather thank God that the day has dawned when these evils must go.

If these things are to be accomplished Methodism will need to gird on her armor and, standing shoulder to shoulder with those of other churches, march forward, as one great host to slay these monsters of iniquity.