

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, June 22nd, 1916

The Christian Year

The Second Sunday After Trinity, July 2nd.

The conception of the Christian as a soldier of Jesus Christ has, at least from the time when S. Paul first gave it currency, captivated the imagination of the Church. The virile manhood of the West has especially delighted to think of itself as a body of the knights of God. Each one of us was, at his Baptism, signed with the sign of the Cross, "in token," as our beautiful Anglican formula runs, "that hereafter he shall . . . continue Christ's faithful soldier."

We like to speak of Christ as our great Captain, and yet there is one important element of the military relationship which we continually overlook. *The Army and the Navy are the two services in which excuses are never taken.*

Now it is profoundly instructive to notice that this aspect of the soldier's life, which we prefer conveniently to ignore, is emphasized again and again by Our Lord with insistent urgency. Our Gospel for the Sunday contains one of His most striking parables on this theme. A certain man had made a great supper, and proceeded to send his last and most pressing call to the invited guests. But each and all were ready with an excuse. And admirable the excuses were. The first guest had just made an important investment in real estate. The claims of business were urgent. He begged to be permitted to absent himself from the dinner. The second guest was an energetic farmer, the very back-bone of the community. He was not the sort of man to be a-bed on a summer morning. The most energetic supervision, the latest methods, were seen on his farm. A vital addition had just been made to the traction power of his estate. The five yoke of oxen demanded his inspection. He pleaded to be pardoned for non-attendance at the social function.

The third guest surpassed the others in the excellence of his plea. An engaging and most human sentiment was invoked. To spoil a honeymoon, to leave a newly wedded bride in the lurch—the mere idea was preposterous, impossible. He could not go.

Now mark the result. The excuses were admirable. The host did not argue—much less send to say that he considered himself insulted. But the invited guests missed the feast. That was all. But that, considered rightly, was an appalling and an unutterable loss.

For the meaning of the parable is obvious. God has invited us all to the great feast of life, of that life more abundant and eternal which is to be found in Christ. And the invited guests are failing to enjoy the infinite satisfactions to which they are called, because they are entirely absorbed in what is legitimate, but lower and ephemeral. The excuses are unexceptionable. "Business must be attended to!" "The country must be developed!" "Human relationships must be cultivated!" But God does not take these excuses, and so, silently, but certainly and inevitably, eternal life is lost. We plead the imperative call of the material. We shut our ears to the more imperative call of the spiritual. And so we lose our souls.

God's call of invitation, now more urgently than ever, is being mediated to us, as a nation and as individuals, by this war. Let us no longer make excuses, but rise up and go, ere it be too late.

Editorial Notes

The Church's Challenge.

Have our readers thought of what the premature death of such a large number of the brightest and best of our young men is going to mean to our Church and to our country? During the past few days the names of the sons of several of our most prominent active Church workers in different parts of the country have appeared in the casualty lists. Some were University graduates and some were preparing for a business career. They possessed the courage and the keen sense of duty that would have made them a tower of strength in whatever occupation they chose. In the prime of young manhood they are cut off and in too many cases the gap cannot be filled. The loss is great, but the gain is greater. Their heroic deaths have set new standards for the youth of our land and strengthened the moral fibre of the whole nation. Their conduct will stand out in sharp contrast with that of hundreds of others, just as well able physically to go as they, who listen to appeals with a cynical sneer on their faces. The Church is suffering with the nation, and it is right that it should. It also, however, stands to gain more than it loses if it is loyal to its Founder and awakens to a clearer conception of its true mission in the world. The lives that are being sacrificed on the field of battle constitute a ringing challenge to the Church to shake itself clear from all that hinders its progress and to proclaim with no uncertain voice the simple truths of Eternal Salvation.

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Church Union.

The subject of Church Union is receiving a great deal of attention at the present time. The difficulties met with in the various mission fields, and the need of more united action to meet the situation created by the war, are compelling all Christians to give the subject more thought than usual. So far as the particular phase of the subject that is now under consideration, the union of Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists, is concerned, it is a difficult matter to understand why there should be any great opposition to it. The points of difference in doctrine are much less clearly defined than formerly and their forms of worship are almost identical. There is, of course, a tendency among some to lay stress upon the saving that union would effect in dollars and cents, and this must be guarded against if it means that money is to be saved for secular purposes. It is not, or should not be, a question of saving, but a question of using to the best possible advantage every dollar, as well as every man, that is available. There is also, of course, the danger of creating a great unwieldy organization. We remember a statement of the President of Toronto University to the effect that weakness is not to be regretted so much as failure to develop the power that one possesses. And so one of the greatest dangers that will face the new Church, or the combination of Churches, is that of dependence on numbers instead of on the only true test, that of spiritual power.

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A Simple Creed.

There are other dangers to be faced by the union of the three denominations referred to above. We saw some time ago the statement

of belief drawn up for the new united Church and we must confess that it struck one that too great an effort had been made to define the indefinable, or, as an American layman has put it "to unscrew the inscrutable." The average person either cannot grasp, or will not make the effort to grasp, the significance of many of these definitions, and the essentials are lost sight of under a mass of non-essentials. Much of the division in Christendom to-day is, we believe, the result of this, and thousands of Christians, if asked by a Mohammedan or Hindu what they mean by Christianity, would be unable to give an intelligent answer. Union usually means compromise, and very often rightly so, but occasionally this leads to a sacrifice of forms of words that are essential to a simple statement of the main facts of our faith. However, we realize, as Bishop Brent has so well put it, that everything worth while "lies on the yonder side of a risk," and we can assure the members of these Churches that thousands of Anglicans are following their efforts with sympathetic interest and with the prayer that God's Holy Spirit will guide them in all their deliberations.

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"Short on Publicity."

The Rev. John Antle, Superintendent of the Columbia Coast Mission, among the scattered settlers and lumbermen on the Pacific Coast, visited Eastern Canada in November last in search of funds for his work. In his report, after returning home, he expressed the opinion that they were losing day by day, not only financially, but in interest, through not keeping the people better informed regarding the work of the Mission. We believe he is absolutely right. And this applies not only to this particular Mission, but to every other department of missionary work being carried on by the Church in Canada. And it is not a condition that can be remedied by missionary secretaries alone. They can do much, but the men who can do this most effectively are those who are actually engaged in the work. The proof of this is seen in the interest that has been aroused by missionaries home on furlough from overseas or even by such men as Archdeacon Whittaker or Mr. Antle himself. The people in the older provinces can be interested in the work in the Canadian mission fields but this will never be done as it ought and can be done until the need of regular deputations is realized and carried into effect. Moreover, the unity of the Church in Canada demands a close bond of sympathy between East and West, a bond that is cemented by knowledge of the special problems faced by each and by greater confidence in each other's efforts.

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"THY BURDEN."

To every one on earth
God gives a burden to be carried down
The road that lies between the cross and
crown.

No lot is wholly free;
He giveth one to thee.

Thy burden is God's gift,
And it will make the bearer calm and strong;
Yet, lest it press too heavily and long,
He says, "Cast it on me,
And it shall easy be."

—Marianne Farningham.

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