

December 14, 1916.

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, December 14th, 1916

The Christian Year

The Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 24th.
Christmas Day.

"What if He had not come?" Endeavour to estimate something of the triumphant significance of Christmas, by considering what life would mean to you and to the world if the Christ-Child had never been born at Bethlehem. "What if He had not come?"

"If He had never come," all the vast network of organizations for the relief of suffering, the care of needy, the protection of weakness, which now we see around us, would have been conspicuous only by its absence. We should have scanned our streets, but never have set eyes upon a Hospital. War, with all its unspeakable misery, would have had no mitigating Red Cross. Medical Science itself, without the stimulating impulse of Christianity, would probably still have been more truly called Medical Ignorance. Witness the present state of medicine in non-Christian lands.

"If He had never come," tyranny and oppression of the weak would have ruled, rampant throughout the world. Social injustice would have been more unretrievably oppressive, slavery would still have made life intolerable for millions, the horrors of war would have been more unrestrained in sheer frightfulness than even at present. The world would have been, in very deed, lying in the Evil One.

"If He had never come," the Riddle of the Universe would have been never read—the mysterious and awful silence of God would not have been broken. Nature, red in tooth and claw, would have scourged existence along its path of suffering; man's inhumanity to man would have left its ghastly trail of bleaching bones; millions of sentient beings would have passed in to the dim unknown without God and without hope; the world would have been the stage of a tragedy—and of a tragedy unrelieved by any certain ray of light—acted out at best beneath a bewildering starlight of myth and unsatisfied aspiration and philosophy.

But He has come! Christ is born at Bethlehem. God hath spoken to us in His Son. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory." In Him we have seen the Father, and it sufficeth us. For, though the world is indeed surcharged with suffering, and War still stalks along his deadly way, yet the Riddle of the Universe is solved. Behind the mysterious screen of things, within the curtain of enigma which shrouds the heart of this baffling scheme of being, beyond the dim unknown, beats a Heart of Love—a Heart which yearns and suffers with the souls that He has made, a Heart which has plumbed the depths of sacrifice to achieve the unfolding plan of His eternal purpose.

Christ has come! The Holy Child was born at Bethlehem. But He has passed again, victorious over death, back into the Unseen, home to the bosom of the Father, whom He has revealed. And His purpose for the world is still far from fulfilled. There is not yet peace on earth and good-will among men. But He has sent His Spirit to dwell within His Church. In her He is still incarnate. By her He may still work out His purpose. And we are members of His Church. He relies on us. As we thank Him for all that Christmas means, let us remember that it is ours to help to fulfil

(Continued on page 792.)

Editorial Notes

The Political Crisis in England.

It is easy to find fault and it is easy to say what ought, or ought not, to have been done when one is on the outside looking on. Still, we cannot help regretting that the Mother Parliament of the Empire should at such a time as this be faced with a political crisis. Our only consolation is that it is not due to any difference of opinion regarding the justice of our cause or to any desire to slacken the efforts being made to win the war as speedily as possible. It is impossible for Canadians at this distance to grasp fully the significance of the events that have taken place, but there was evidently a very serious difference of opinion as to the best course to pursue in accomplishing this end. The success of the enemy in Roumania combined with the situation in Greece, are enough to cause any government great anxiety. The moral effect of the taking of Roumania must be very great and will tend to lengthen the war considerably. If Great Britain has an abundance of supplies and of men it would seem the part of wisdom to take more aggressive action in the Balkans, and it is easy to see how a cleavage could arise between ex-Premier Asquith and Premier Lloyd George on a question of this kind, especially after the Gallipoli experience. The cautious Englishman and impetuous Welshman have heretofore worked well together. Each seemed in many respects the counterpart of the other and there can be no doubt regarding the whole-hearted desire of each to serve the best interests of the Empire. This desire will not be diminished through their decision to part company and we can only hope that the new government will be able to grapple more effectively than the old with the problems that lie before it.

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Our French-Canadian Citizens.

To class all French-speaking people in Canada as disloyal is manifestly unfair. Large numbers of them are thoroughly loyal to the Empire and many of them have laid down their lives in its defence in South Africa and in Europe. That there is an element, and we fear a growing element, among the French-Canadians that is disloyal is undoubtedly true and the sooner this fact and its seriousness is recognized the better for Canada. That a band of young men from a leading educational centre should have the boldness to apparently deliberately attempt to break up a meeting called in the interests of the defence of the Empire is not a matter to be treated lightly. It is far more serious than many may realize, and should be clear proof that there is an influence at work that is poisoning the minds of hundreds of young French-Canadians. It is not a difficult matter to tell where this influence comes from and if it is persisted in it can mean only one thing, namely, trouble of the most serious character. Those who are behind it know well what they are doing in working through the student class, young men who will before many years pass, be the political leaders in the province of Quebec. Why they are doing it is hard to understand. One can only hope that better counsels will prevail and that other and saner leaders will display a higher sense of honour and a greater desire to draw together in a spirit of harmony and good-will the two great nationalities in Canada.

The United States and the War.

We have hesitated to say anything on this subject heretofore, but after the article that appeared in the Churchman of New York a couple of weeks ago we need scarcely hesitate any longer. We do not think that it would have helped the cause of the Allies very materially had the United States declared war on Germany, but we do think that to place the sinking of inoffensive ships with hundreds of innocent women and children on board, on practically the same level as the interference with commercial shipping is unworthy of any Christian nation. The United States is in very real danger of losing the respect of every other civilized nation, whether of the Allies or of the enemy. The article referred to above states that the total war profits of the United States "are conservatively reckoned to be \$2,400,000,000," and their war charities \$34,000,000. They have given \$12,000,000 for the relief of Belgium as compared with \$238,000,000 sent to the United States by England and France to buy food and clothes for that unfortunate nation. Out of this latter sum the United States made a profit of over \$47,000,000, or nearly four times as much as its total contribution. In other words, it in reality gave nothing and made a profit out of Belgium's need, of \$35,000,000. We are reminded of the words of the late Jacob Riis about one "man's greed that fattens on his neighbour's need," and we are reminded also of those other words, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." The danger that faces the United States as a nation, as it faces individuals here and there even in our own land, is that she may lose not only the respect of other nations but her own self-respect. She may be "too proud to fight," but she is evidently not too proud to reap profit from those who are the innocent victims of war. We are convinced though that thousands of people in the United States are heartily ashamed of the situation and would gladly have it otherwise.

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The Church and the Y.M.C.A.

The Y.M.C.A. will be a greater force after the war than it was before. This is inevitable as one result of its active share in the war and the experience through which so many of its members and leaders are passing to-day. It will, moreover, receive greater recognition from men of very divergent views on religious matters. The attitude of the Church of England towards it in the past has not always been entirely sympathetic, although large numbers of its supporters, both among clergy and laymen, are and have been Anglicans. Its influence in shaping the lives of large numbers of boys and young men must be recognized and it seems the part of wisdom for Churchmen to make their influence felt, not by holding aloof and looking for flaws, but by taking an active share in its activities. Nor is it merely a question of joining in the work in order to safeguard the interests of our own boys and young men. The Y.M.C.A. has within its reach tremendous possibilities for good and should not be allowed to become an end in itself, one more in the long list of denominations. By surrounding young men with a Christian atmosphere and at the same time providing them with opportunities for recreation and social intercourse, it is doing a most valuable piece of work, a work that cannot be done as well, and need not be done, by any one denomination by itself.

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