

Editorial Comment

Unity

After years of waiting and weighing the Presbyterian Assembly has declared in favor of Church union. It is not becoming that The Western Home Monthly should express an opinion as to the wisdom or unwisdom of this procedure, but it furnishes a good opportunity to refer to the fact, now so apparent on every hand, that men in this new land with its wide sweep of prairies and its free pure air, are not willing any longer to confine themselves within the narrow bounds of class, party or denomination, but are the rather anxious to keep in touch with all their fellows, and think in terms of the whole community, the nation or humanity.

Forces Making for Community

One of the forces operating to produce this result has been the public school children who mingle in work and play, forgetting for the time all distinctions of class, race, creed and color, are not always ready to accept the artificial distinctions which religious and social bodies impose. So long as denominational schools prevail denominationalism is bound to flourish. When state schools are in existence denominationalism must in the long run decline.

A second force operating to produce unity is this war. Just as the Crusades brought together commoner and noble, so this great struggle has put all classes on the same level. Bravery and devotion recognize no distinctions. And this applies also in a national sense. Russia, France, Britain, Belgium, Italy, Serbia and all the Overseas Dominions, with our own Canada, just now pre-eminent, have joined hands in courage and fidelity. Race, language, creed, are all forgotten. Only the man is recognized. And great men there are in every district. The courage of the sturdy Canadian is rivalled by that of the turbaned Hindoo, so that both can say with Kipling:

"Oh East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet
Till earth and sky stand presently
Before the judgment seat.
For there is neither East nor West—
Border, nor breed nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face
Tho' they come from the ends of the
Earth."

The Growth of Feeling Cannot be Checked

The feeling for unity is taking possession of men the world over, and is bound to affect them in all their relationships. Class distinctions must vanish. The mothers who mingle their tears as they sorrow over the common graves that hold their sons, must feel that there is a bond which social decrees and customs can never loosen. Racial and religious distinctions must be forgotten. Catholic Belgium, Protestant England, Greek Catholic Russia, find their highest religious expression satisfied in the battle for freedom and justice. The practice of protection must cease. Nations that have mingled their blood on a common field of battle must permit free interchange of products while the world lasts. To put the matter briefly; the idea of national unity must give way to the idea of world unity. Tennyson was ahead of his own time but not ahead of our time when he wrote:

"For I dipt into the future far as human
eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the
wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce,
argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping
down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and
there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling
on the central blue;

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and
the battle flags were furled,
On the Parliament of man, the Federa-
tion of the world,
There the common sense of most shall
hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber lapt
in universal law.

For I doubt not through the ages one in-
creasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened
with the process of the Suns."
The blessing of unity, bringing peace and
kindliness in its train is the greatest and most
enduring product that the Great War can
confer.

Those Outside the Circle

In working towards this conception of world-freedom and world-unity, there are some nations and some individuals that are bound to lag behind. It is the misfortune of Germany that it never got beyond the ideal of nationalism; it is quite evident that in the United States there are many who have not yet advanced beyond this conception. It is to the everlasting credit of Great Britain that it has been able to take a wider view, that it considers the freedom of Belgium, Serbia and all smaller groups quite as precious as its own freedom. The fact that Great Britain was capable of entertaining such a view does not mean that all men in Britain in the smaller duties of life have risen to that conception. Selfishness and cupidity are still common, and will exist until the end of time. It is clear that in this matter the nation may easily lead the individual. Indeed, it is the force of public opinion which compels many an individual to fall into line. This is evidenced every day in political, social, and business affairs. Even in the great world-conflict that is now being waged, there is not a nation but is influenced by world-opinion. For this reason many of the practices of the early months have been discontinued, except in those districts where world opinion has not had an opportunity of being felt.

Those Who Will Benefit

For nations and for individuals only those who are prepared to make sacrifices such as that displayed by our Empire can possibly endure. In the reconstructed world, selfishness cannot hold out against brotherly kindness.

There is a seeming prosperity to those who apparently do not think of the welfare of others. Men who are looking out for Number One are growing rich in this world's goods, the philanthropic in heart remain poor. Some of the neutral nations are growing wealthy at the expense of nations which have made the supreme sacrifice. Let no one be deceived. Even on the material side the returns will come to those who are allied in this Holy Cause. And as for spiritual wealth and moral health, which after all are the only enduring verities, there is no doubt as to where the gain will be.

It is a fortunate thing that in this world's war, there are lined up on the side of justice and freedom representatives of all the great world's powers. When these are bound together in political and commercial union, not only is their own peace assured but the peace of the world. This is the consummation devoutly to be wished. Our regret for some of the neutrals is that they will not share in the glory of that great day.

A Western Problem

There is a problem in Western Canada of a peculiar difficulty. In one group of townships in Saskatchewan there are settled side by side some hundred farmers. These represent a dozen different nationalities. Very few are English speaking. The problem is to unite these people and to Canadianize them. The only solution is the public school, taught by a Canadian teacher. A large consolidated school used as a social centre will be more helpful than the little one-roomed building used only for teaching purposes. But the school large or small, the essential thing is that teachers with Canadian sympathies and outlook be employed, and that they mingle with the people, acting for the time as leaders in matters that are Canadian. No province can spend too much in order to get teachers so qualified.

Pessimist or Optimist

These are the two classes of people one meets with every day. It is a glad chance that brings the optimist along, with his bright face and hopeful word. It is an evil hour that brings the pessimist, with his word of woe and his dismal countenance. During war times the two types are much in evidence. Have you heard the optimist? "We are going to win sure! Old England can't be beaten! Don't you see how Germany was beaten after the first two weeks! If they can't take Verdun, what hope is there of reaching Paris? With Russia on the East, and the solid allied front on the West, with Italy holding back Austria in the South, what chance have they?" And so it goes.

On the other hand the pessimist complains of our lack of ammunition. Every hundred yards of front trench lost for a day is a disaster. "German cunning and preparedness is too much for us! Our navy bungles things?" And thus for an hour at a time.

Now every one should be optimistic, even if only for his own sake. If he regards the comfort and happiness of others he should be doubly optimistic. Optimism is based in faith and in reason. Because we have a just cause we can exercise our faith, because we can estimate men, forces, and resources we can use judgment. In both cases the result is the same. It is no vain enthusiasm which makes Christians in all parts of the Empire join in hymns of confidence; it is no vain boasting which tells of the power of the navy and of the development of the great army.

Let it not be forgotten that the hand-maid of true faith is reverence, and the hand-maid of reason is thoroughness. And so, to the music of the churches, is added the music of the forge. There is something fitting in reminding Englishmen everywhere to-day of the words attributed to the great Cromwell—"Have faith in God, but keep your powder dry!"

Manitoba and Her Prohibition

The people of Manitoba have every reason to be satisfied with the first month's workings of the Manitoba Temperance Act. Reports from all quarters are of the most encouraging kind. Police authorities say that there has been a great decrease of offences, so much so, that on a recent week-end in Winnipeg there was not a single arrest for disorderly conduct.

Merchants and bankers state that there is a marked improvement in the way in which people are meeting their obligations. Every sphere of life and every line of commerce are reaping their rich reward, and what has been so splendidly commenced in Manitoba is fast finding favor throughout the Dominion.

The Government is to be congratulated on the splendid provisions made for the enforcement of the act and the people on the readiness on which they have harmonized with the new conditions.