

The "Wet" Canteen

At the Military Conference at Ottawa a few days ago the Hon. Col. Sam Hughes gave expression to some significant words:—

"So long as I am Minister of Militia there will never be allowed in the militia camps any wet messes, 'mild' or 'light' beer canteens. You will kindly not waste any time discussing this question further. It is settled."

This is a refreshing statement, and should leave no doubt in the minds of those who have been endeavouring to get the order rescinded which did away with canteens. There was a proposal to permit the introduction of "mild" beer, whatever that may mean, and Colonel Hughes' assertion came just when several speakers were endeavouring to introduce this question into the discussion. Of course, it settled the matter at once. Colonel Hughes said that the only way to get back the canteens in camp will be by changing the Minister of Militia, and he expressed the opinion that a "wet" canteen is the greatest blot on a camp. On one occasion when a canteen was allowed fourteen men were drunk. Last summer Colonel Hughes saw a regiment of British Regulars doing finer work than any other troops, and yet ninety per cent. of these men did not drink. At the same Conference a lady said that she would not allow her son to go to any camp if she knew that liquor was sold there. Temperance workers will be greatly encouraged by these definite pronouncements in favour of "dry" canteens.

"That the Ministry be not Blamed"

Of the terrible events which have recently been associated with two clergy, one in America and the other in England, who until the time of their fall seemed to be devoted workers, there is no need to speak. Yet, inasmuch as the matters have given rise to widespread comment, and have naturally caused a shock to that sense of trust which is so essential in religious life, it seems necessary to make a brief comment. We entirely endorse these words of the "Guardian" in regard to the English episode:—

When a steward of the mysteries of God suffers moral failure the opportunity must be taken to show that our faith is a reality, and that the sin of one man will not be allowed to affect those great things which transcend and outlast man.

The occasional unworthiness of a clergyman cannot possibly be allowed to set aside the fundamental verities of Christianity. Indeed, the very fact that spurious coin is in circulation is one of the best testimonies to the existence of the genuine article. It is a matter of profound thankfulness that in view of the number of clergy failures of this kind are very rare. Nevertheless, the Apostle's word is imperative, and calls for constant and prayerful consideration, "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."

Sunday Schools' Decline

The loss of over thirty thousand scholars from certain British Sunday Schools is causing very earnest consideration and frank discussion in England. The main question is as to what is to be done. We are thankful that this decrease does not apparently affect the Church of England, which seems to have had an increase of over forty thousand. But there is no question as to the decline now mentioned, and we are not surprised to find various suggestions made for improvement. Some think that improved organization would make a great difference. Others hold that the decline is simply an indication of the decadence of religious interest in adults. Others, again, con-

sider that the influence of rationalistic thought tends to destroy the foundations of belief in the authority of Scripture. Whatever may be the cause, or causes, there is no doubt that the final responsibility rests both upon the Church and the home. When these two divinely-appointed organizations work thoroughly together the outcome will never be other than effective and blessed.

ARRESTED PROGRESS

There does not seem much doubt of the fact that the Church of God is not making the progress it might and ought. This is the conviction of thoughtful men in almost every part of the Christian world. The unconverted are not being won, the young people are not being kept, and even the children are not being gathered in. The Churches of all denominations are bewailing losses, in the decrease of membership and the decline of conversions. The other day, the able and far-sighted editor of one of England's best papers, the "Westminster Gazette," said: "No one who attempts to look into the future can regard the present state of religion and religious bodies as either final or satisfactory." And now comes the announcement of a fall of more than two million dollars in the voluntary offerings of the Church of England in the Old Country, and, making allowance for everything purely adventitious and temporary, the fact remains that during the past year contributions both to home and to foreign work have diminished.

When we seek to discover the cause of this trouble we are met on several hands with suggestions of importance. But beneath everything else we cannot help feeling that the vital question concerns the spiritual life of those "who profess and call themselves Christians." In Professor Forsyth's new and powerful work, "The Principle of Authority," he rightly says that "the arrest of the Church's extensive effect is due to the decay of its intensive faith, while a mere piety muffles the loss." This decay of "intensive faith" is very largely seen in the way in which the evangelistic spirit is absent from many of our Churches. The theory of evangelism is, of course, held in a certain way, but as a practical policy the work of evangelism is very far to seek in many Christian communities. And yet if the evangelistic spirit were what it ought to be in our Churches, and each member won only a single soul for Christ during the year the membership of each individual Church would be practically doubled. But, unfortunately, the average Church member feels practically no responsibility, and leaves the work of evangelism to the clergy. It does not seem to occur to the ordinary Christian man and woman that the supreme business of life is to win men for God. The result is that there is no consciousness of present urgency and no spirit of earnest desire and entreaty. Sermons are preached to the converted, which are full of helpful Christian teaching, but no message is delivered to "them that are without." Our Churches are fully organized for social effort, but as to the work of conversion, little or nothing is being done. And yet this was the primary idea of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, following the great prototype of that name. The supreme purpose was that of personal work for Christ, in winning men to Himself and to His Church. It is only when this is being done that the Brotherhood is fulfilling its proper object. But according to the New Testament every Christian is to regard it his bounden duty to do the work St. Andrew did. To quote from Dr. Forsyth once again: "The prime object of the Church with its Gospel is neither to sweeten, spiritualize, nor rationalize the civilizations and religions; but it is to conquer them." And if

this is not being done all other forms of effort will count for little or nothing. Is it not time, therefore, to face this problem and to endeavour to arrest the backward movement and turn it into a spiritual progress? We are convinced that if all our clergy and people would unite in definite prayer and effort the result would soon be seen in the surrounding communities. It is unutterably sad to realize how little influence Churches have on the neighbourhoods in which they are situated, and to see the large numbers of people who never darken the door of a place of worship and are apparently, if not really, indifferent to the call and claim of Christ. All our elaborate services and social attractions will be fruitless to win many of these; we must, instead, follow the New Testament plan and "go out into the highways and hedges." If people will not come to the Church, the Church must go to them, and at all costs Christ must be brought to bear upon their hearts and lives.

In urging the importance and necessity of evangelistic work we are not suggesting any precise methods, but only pleading that our Churches should adopt the New Testament attitude towards the unconverted, which will express itself in a definite and constant effort to win souls for Christ. When once we have this spirit we may be sure that God will guide to the adoption of the right methods. In the forefront of every Church activity we ought to place the supreme duty of evangelization. Once in a Salvation Army paper there was a picture of a lifeboat full of soldiers on a rough sea, in which were many drowning persons. In the boat sat General Booth reaching out and taking the hand of one to pull him into the boat. Mrs. Ballington Booth's little son picked up the paper, studied the picture for a moment, and then exclaimed: "Is Grandpa trying to get that feller into the boat, or is he just shaking hands with him?" The work of evangelization is infinitely more than "shaking hands." It is rescuing and helping men, pulling them out of danger and holding their hands in the endeavour to give them assurance of salvation and cheer. "Of some, have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." It is to be feared that many of our Church organizations amount to little more than "shaking hands" with people. But the Master commands us to "rescue the perishing." We may plan organizations for the improvement of social conditions, but without result. We may alter methods and adopt proposal after proposal, and all to no effect. We may think we need different clergymen, different Church services, different hours, but even so, it is more than probable that the work would remain at a standstill, because we do not proceed on the New Testament lines of evangelization in the power of the Spirit of God.

It is admitted by all that we are living in difficult and solemn days. The outlook depresses the earnest soul, for wherever he turns he sees elements of evil and trouble, and is conscious of strange conditions in the Church and in the world. Godlessness becomes more defiant; indifference becomes more widespread; the love of many waxes cold; an universal charity tends to condone almost every form of false doctrine; and as a result the clear, definite witness of the Church to the living Christ is clouded and hindered. There is only one way of changing all this and of ushering in a new era of Church life in harmony with New Testament days and principles. This is by the declaration of "the Old, Old Story" out of full hearts, earnest spirits, and consistent lives. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Actuated by such principles the Church is certain to go forward.