

“Before They Call”

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I sat down to write something about the Home Missions of The United Church, I was at a loss to know how to begin. I had beside me last year's book, "Shining Towers," by Marian Keith, an excellent piece of work, done by an accomplished and gifted writer, . . . I could never hope to do as good a story as this, dramatic, fascinating, and informative. Indeed, I had tried to talk the Secretaries out of having any story written this year. Why do they need a book? They have a book! They have many books. Let the people read what has already been written.

In this turmoil of mind I wandered around the house, disconsolate and restless. Absent-mindedly I turned on the radio, from the same impulse which drives people to chew their pencils or poke the fire, or draw pigs on the left-hand side of their scribbler when ideas will not come. The radio came on with a blare of sound, and then a voice, a hard voice, proclaimed: "The church is dead. Dead from the neck up, and from the neck down." I exercised my power of veto then and went back to my desk. I had a lead: There are people who think the church is dead, and it is, from where they sit. Color-blind people think it is a drab world.

There are many excellent people who utterly ignore the church. People who love books, music and flowers, support the Red Cross, would not short-change the Chinaman or cheat the customs, or slander their neighbours; intelligent, friendly, neighbourly people. But for some reason the church has never appealed to them. They think it is narrow, intolerant and feeble, and that it has made strife instead of peace. They once knew a man who led in prayer on Sunday and worked his horses with sore shoulders through the week, and cheated his hired man. It put them off the church for life. If that's religion! they say in scorn.

I will write about Missions from their angle. I want them to know what is being done. So I will begin with my own story:

I am the First Witness for the Defence!