

THREE MEN OF GOD

THERE are three of these who from time to time hover around my various Regimental Dressing Stations.

I imagine the powers that be give them a roving commission, as it must be difficult to frame orders for the clearance of souls. Our wounded all go down towards the base, so all our thoughts are turned in one direction. Not so the Padre's, as long as there is a biblical or ecclesiastical doubt cast on the ultimate destination of the departed, he has to make his arrangements for either direction. Generally I expect it follows the line of least resistance. The result is the golden opportunity of uncertainty.

There are, I say, three. Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Faith is calm and steadfast. His soul is young, although his hair is grey. He is pedantic to the last. I am, mark you, a Presbyterian—in his dispensation of the word—but his ministrations to the wounded are as unmixed balm in Gilead.

Faith is quite unconvinced by shell fire, and when the high explosive commences to drop around the dressing station he strolls forth to enjoy it as a maid going forth to bathe her face in the dew of a May-day morning. Parenthetically I may say that at these moments the medical officer is usually to be found in the cellar.

On the night at Gevenchy, when we brought in the dead, yes, and the wounded too, who had been lying out in No Man's Land for three sun-dried, waterless days, Faith was there. Faith was everywhere, and they say he was almost up to the German wire in his endeavour to get a really good burial party. Fifty-two he buried at one time. Did ever Padre have a more fulsome opportunity? Poor — was shot beside him as he concluded, yet Faith never turned a hair.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." That is Faith's motto. I gave him it, it seemed so appropriate. Being a Padre, he doesn't damn when things go wrong, yet there is at times a light in his eye by which I recognise that he also is human.

Hope is a Scotsman, or at least ought to be, but I never asked him if he preferred George Wishart to Cardinal Beaton. When he retires