

THE FACTOR IN THE FIGHT

[By Rev. Ira Dwight Lytle in the Christian Herald]

There may be many factors entering into the scheme of things, as we see it; but generally there is one big thing that takes the place, and the others are, in many cases, simple by-products. Often, if we succeed, we can look back and determine the factor; but if we fail to succeed, either the failure disheartens us, or we are so busy seeking success along other lines that we hardly take into consideration that there was an "element, circumstance, or influence" somewhere that brought about the failure, which had it been determined, and dealt with, would have spelled success.

And so there is a big factor in the fight. Do you ask, "What fight?" Why there is only one fight. All the world's battles of the past were but mere skirmishes compared with the fight that is now on. It is not our intention to enter into the prophetic significance of the world war; but I think we can very properly say it is not an accident. When the word was flashed around the world, that August morning, that Great Britain had declared war on the Central Powers, there were many people to whom this announcement seemed like a voice speaking out of the Infinite. To some it meant the end; to others the beginning. But, like all other occurrences, there was and is a factor. And this factor has as much to do with the ending of this conflict as with its beginning. It was the failure of the nations to determine this factor that brought about the war, and it is the failure of the participants to recognize this same factor that prolongs the war.

To go back to the beginning. There have been the usual charges and counter-charges by the militant parties. We say, and probably shall continue to say, the Kaiser was responsible. That is as far back, perhaps, as we can see; but might it not be that the Kaiser himself is a result rather than a cause? Would it not be well for us to remember that back of the Kaiser and his Kultur, back of the unrest in many parts of the world, back of the terrible chaos in Russia, back of the blood that has drenched the sod of Europe these four years; yes, back of all the trouble and distress, the warfare and famine, the sadness and suffering which this old world has ever known, there is one big factor, which if determined and reckoned with, means success; if not reckoned with, means disaster. And this one big factor is the spiritual; in other words, it is God.

Lets us go back and see what the history of the past has to say in the matter. What gave the Hebrew people the prominence they enjoyed among the nations of the earth? We say they were the chosen nation; but that does not take us very far when it comes to determining the factor. And their being the chosen people does not mean that God placed his hand upon them in an arbitrary manner, while disregarding the other nations of the earth; but it does indicate that they had a capacity or fitness for the special work for the One Living and True God. You may say that God gave this capacity or fitness, and so in the last analysis it was an arbitrary choice on the part of God; but we must not lose sight of the fact that capacity or fitness does not preclude an exercise of the will. Those people could have done then just what they did hundreds of years later; they could have said "no" to God. Instead of this, the big, all important factor in every phase of their national life was the spiritual. Everything was brought into subordination to this. We find the whole web of Hebrew life woven about one central thought, the tabernacle, which represented the spiritual worship of Jehovah. What was the result? Any Bible student can answer this question. In fact, we may get the answer from secular history, if we wish. As long as these people recognized God as the Alpha and Omega of their life—while their life, instead of being "shaped after" the spiritual, was spiritual—they had success. It was the working out of the old covenant promise, "I will be unto you a God, and you shall be unto me a people." Their spirituality was not the result of their being chosen of God; God chose them because they were spiritual. Then, when they transgressed his laws, allowing the spiritual factor to sink out of sight, their troubles were many, and God reminded them again and again of the definite relationship between these things. The big factor in the life of the Hebrew was the spiritual.

If the Hebrews were the spiritual people among the nations of the earth, the prophets were the spiritual class among the Hebrews. They were the wheel within the wheel. There are no old Testament writings that rise so high as the writings of the prophets. To them God was life, and life was God. How quick they were to trace the troubles of the nation back to the disregard of God's claims! Isaiah tells them that they were insulting God by offering sacrifices, and keeping holy days, and attending the solemn assembly. Why? The same answer:

God was being left out. They went on and made their plans for the future; but the prophet told them they would be cut short, and they were. Write down through the writings of these men of God it was ever the same. Malachi in a word tells them the secret of all their individual and national troubles. Flocks and herds roamed on the hillside; but the increase was nil. Through years of carelessness, they had even forgotten that there might be a connection between these losses and their failure to pay their homage to Jehovah; and so we hear the prophet charge them with having robbed God. The prophets saw that the whole trouble with the people was simply that they failed to count God into the scheme of living.

And when, centuries later, these people had sunk so far into formalism that their very sense of the spiritual had become atrophied, John the Baptist and Jesus came upon the scene with the message that has ever been the hope of the world; seek first the things of the Spirit. When they looked to the Jordan to be baptized, he told them they were not getting started right, indicating that even though they could trace their lineage back to Abraham, this would not be sufficient, as they still might be destitute of the moral sense. Jesus takes up the message of John, and almost the first thing he says to them is: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This call to repentance was the call to turn about and get a spiritual view of life. By this time the people were materialists of the rank sort. They interpreted life in perishable terms; Jesus interpreted it in terms of the spirit. To these people, God was an absentee, who had set the universe in motion and relegated himself to a throne "somewhere in heaven;" to Jesus he was the Ever-present Father. They felt that God, if he had any interest in them at all, was not interested in the small things; but Jesus taught that He was so intimately interested in them that even the very hairs of their heads were numbered. He sought to bring them to the mount of transfiguration, where they might see God and understand life in its true meaning; but they refused to walk this way with Him, even when he pointed out to them that their refusal meant national ruin. One of the saddest hours in the life of Jesus was, when he wept over Jerusalem, the city of his hopes and his love. "How oft would I have gathered thee together!" The pathos of these words cannot perhaps be understood by us; but enough is expressed to show that the great longing of his life was to lift them up to that higher ground, where they could dominate in the true sense, because they were dominated by the spiritual. They had left out the big factor, the spiritual.

The great Reformation is another of the outstanding illustrations that the spiritual is the dominating factor. If the early Catholic Church had any spirituality, it had become a dead letter. The church had become the instrument of man to further his aims and ends. Corruption was rampant. Many of the men who bore the vessels of the Lord were men whose corrupt lives were lived in such open and flagrant violation of the principles of righteousness that God existed only in their ritual. The Reformation may mean many things, but one thing is written all over the movement: It is the spiritual in the ascendancy. The great movement left many things to be desired; but life has certainly been sweeter and religion has meant more for the world, since the priest on the steps of the Roman church shouted: "The just shall live by faith!" Here was the champion of the spiritual insisting his ultimatum.

And now for the factor in the fight. Where do we stand today, after four years of the bitterest warfare the world has ever known? Millions of men are in arms, and millions have been slain. Widows and orphans by countless thousands think day and night of lonely mounds "somewhere in France," where the ones who meant more to them than life itself, have been laid away to rest. And now the war lords tell us that there may be years more of this slaughter that has almost threatened civilization itself. Why is it? Have you never asked yourself in the quiet of the night why all this has taken place?

Four years of world war! Think of it! Thousands of men falling daily! Churches being destroyed, art treasures stolen and reckoned as the legitimate spoils of war!

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God shall perish." is just as true today as it ever has been. The five great empires' antiquity were great in all things but the one thing needful—their lack of God. Today their history is all that remains, for they are but names traced in the dust of their dead. And the same God who thus dealt with these nations of the past is the God who deals with nations today. It is not an arbitrary setting up of one nation and the casting down of another. Far from it. A nation, just as truly as an individual, decides its own destiny. What the nations become as the result of this war depends entirely upon how they treat the spiritual factor in the fight.

IT SHOULD MAKE A MILLION FOR HIM

Cincinnati Man Discovers Drug That Loosens Corns So They Lift Out

Good news spreads rapidly and drugists here are kept busy dispensing freezone, the recent discovery of a Cincinnati man, which is said to loosen any corn so it lifts out with the fingers.

A quarter of an ounce costs very little at any store which handles drugs, but this is said to be sufficient to rid one's feet of every hard or soft corn or callus.

You apply just a few drops on the tender, aching corn or toughened callus and instantly the soreness is relieved, and soon the corn or callus is so shriveled that it lifts out without pain. Its a sticky substance, which dries when applied and never inflames or even irritates the surrounding skin. This discovery will prevent thousands of deaths annually from lockjaw and infection heretofore resulting from the suicidal habit of cutting corns.

Scraps About the Scrap

A victory a day keeps the Germans away.

We thought of calling him the Half-crown Prince, but half a crown is worth more than thirty cents.

A correspondent suggests that the German drives may be merely a trick of the Kaiser to make the population of Germany fit the food supply.

History repeats itself, and the particular bit of history we hope to see repeated soon is that recorded by Julius Caesar, to wit: "The Germans turned and ran, nor did they stop until they had crossed the Rhine."

Judging from the following notice in the Scotsman, Great Britain must be in terrible straits for recruits for her army: "Cralk—On the 23rd inst., the wife of Corpl. A. Cralk, a son (on active service)."

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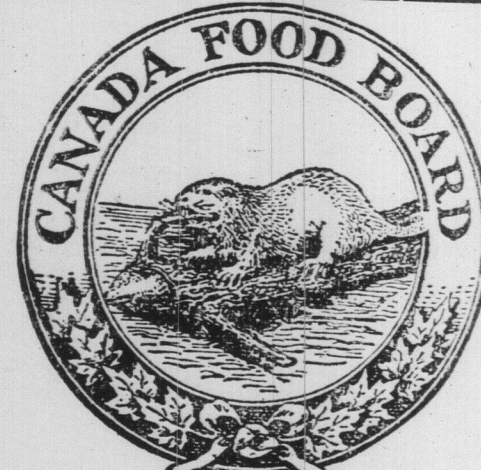
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