

THE GENIUS OF THE EMPIRE

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A Sermon preached in the Church of the Ascension, Hamilton, to the 91st Regiment of Canadian Highlanders, October 4th, 1914.

"Whence comest thou? What is thy country, and of what people art thou?"—JONAH, i. 8.

THIS question was asked on the deck of a ship half swamped by a Mediterranean gale nearly 3,000 years ago. It sometimes requires a storm to bring a man or a nation to proper Orientation. There is an irresistible human fascination in the character of these honest sailor men of whom we read in the first act of the drama of Jonah. Their simplicity, chivalry and reverence reminds us that similar characteristics have endeared the men of the British navy to their countrymen. There is a very long human story between Tarshish and Heligoland, but there remains a bond of universal brotherhood between those who go down to the sea in ships.

The man of Israel had tried to lose his God and to shake the dust of his native land from his guilty feet. With what feelings must he have watched the blue coast line of Syria fade away. But when the crew face to face with death, asked him the question of his nationality, he realized for the first time the glory of his ancestry and what his country stood for. There is a certain grandeur in the very simplicity of his reply: "I fear the Lord God of Heaven which hath made the sea and the dry land."

One of the greatest storms of history is blowing over this planet to-day, the last two months have shown which is the oak and which the steel in the construction of the ship of Empire. We are beginning to understand the great spiritual ideals for which our Empire stands. It is a time for clear thinking. Let us this morning take these words of my text and apply them to the situation of the hour because religion and patriotism are twin sisters. To quote the words of Scotland's national poet:—

"Oh thou who poured the patriotic tide,
That streamed thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride
Or nobly die the second glorious part,
The patriot's God peculiarly thou art."

WHENCE COMEST THOU?

First of all, there is the obvious geographical answer. As I look into the faces of the hundreds of men before me to-day I know that nearly all have come from a certain little island beyond the Atlantic Ocean, some were born there, some call England, Ireland or Scotland, home, though their ancestors may have embarked more than half a century ago. What a wonderful epic in the history of the world is the story of the British Isles; the history of Athens and of Belgium shows us that there are other things besides square miles to make a nation great. The little country has often impressed itself on the imagination of the world. The story of Liege shows us that the old words of Julius Caesar had a prophetic note "Fortissimi Sunt Belgae." But after all, the world that a man lives in does not depend upon what is outside of him, but upon what he carries in his heart. Who shall say how much their environment has done to develop the peculiarities of the people who live in the British Isles? They are a home loving people. Canon Hensley Henson says that the climate of North Britain may have done much to give to English-speaking folk their characteristic love of home. God grant that that same love of hearth and home may characterize our Canadian people.

Again, thou camest from a land of freedom. From the days of Boadicea, the British people have passionately loved freedom. Throughout all the long evolution of constitutional government, one thing is clear, that those who speak the English tongue will have nothing but freedom. "Who stands if England falls? Who dies if freedom lives?" "Love thou thy land with love far brought from out the storied past."

Whence comest thou? From a land where the simple gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached for many years. Our people have always stood as a nation for the simple, elemental truths of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that religion and philosophy have nothing to do with the active side of life. Who shall say how much the destructive criticism of the Bible by certain extreme pedants in Germany has had to do with the practical development of a philosophy which boldly proclaims that the Sermon on the Mount is out of date? Many of us never believed that the real Germany wanted war with England. It seemed incredible that the serene good sense of the land of Kant and Goethe would be overcome by the colossal vanity and insensate megalomania of the

school of Treitschke and Bernhardi. Culture alone will never save any man or any nation. "Turkey is our natural ally," said Bernhardi, on which a British weekly paper replies very shrewdly:—

"Hoch! die Kultur! High Heaven speed the work!
Thus cries the aspiring Teuton to the Turk,
Creation echoes with the glad refrain,
Deep calls to deep,—Armenia to Louvain."

WHAT IS THY COUNTRY?

We all acknowledge Canada as our country. It never seemed possible until a few weeks ago that the dream of the Imperialist could be so easily realized. Let us answer this question from the point of view of Canada's attitude to the Empire and the present war. We did not desire war. Nothing that could have been honourably done was left undone to save humanity from the ghastly horror of this world war, insofar as Canada and the British Empire were responsible. The Empire went to war and Canada solemnly acquiesced that solemn international obligation might be fulfilled. Britain would not veil the proud crest of her honour for a shameful peace. This is a war for the right of the little countries to exist. Of all the poison mingled in the cup of national death the ambition for universal dominion is the most deadly, and that cup has been drunk by the Imperial Government of the Kaiser.

Our own life has to be fought for to the bitter end. The Canadian people love the liberty which is their immemorial heritage. The whole beauty and value of life is not that it keeps a man above ground and his pulse beating, but that it contains treasures for which a free man would even dare to die. This is a war for the common people. Nothing is more surely established by history than that military ambition is fatal to democratic institutions. In the words of Rudyard Kipling, "If we should fail, the lights of freedom will one by one go out all around the world." We are fighting for our children. Are they to be born in tributary provinces of a Teutonic Empire, humiliated and stung by the history of their country being put to shame? Our fathers fought for us in their day against impossible odds, but they did not die in vain. The Empire is the fruit of their work and Canada is the hope for the unborn millions who will yet speak the English tongue.

OF WHAT PEOPLE ART THOU?

The British people belong to a world-wide Empire, east and west, north and south, in the fairest parts of the earth their communities are flourishing, bound together by ties of language, religion and free institutions. The response of the Empire in this day of danger has been magnificent. We expected nothing less than the closing of the ranks in Ireland. We expected that our brothers in Australia would rise as one man, but that in South Africa those who were enemies a dozen years ago are now ready to defend the Empire, is a cause not for exultation but for gratitude to Almighty God. Still more wonderful has been the transformation of India, where princes, professional agitators and men of many warring religions and ideals for the first time in history have splendidly come to the defence of the British Raj. With splendid generosity Sir Pertab Singh sends his royal message, "What commands has my king for me?"

Of what people art thou? An Empire where there is no whip of conscription, a nation of citizen soldiers from the offices, from the banks, from the factories and from countless farms the ordinary every day British man has been found willing to give all that a man loves. It has been wonderful to read how the tragedy of the war has glorified the clay of common men, many of them uneducated, who never pretended to be anything else than simple citizens. They have been in the last two weeks at Mons, at the Marne, and on the banks of the Aisne showing that the Englishman still knows how to die.

God is love, and greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

One hundred and ten years ago when Britain was in the throes of the Napoleonic struggle, a sermon on the present crisis was preached to the London volunteers by the celebrated Robert Hall. The words seem wonderfully modern and just as true to-day as when they were spoken.

"If liberty after being extinguished in Europe is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it. It is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive or be covered with a funeral pall. Advance with alacrity into the field

where God Himself musters the hosts to war and should you fall in this struggle you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part, your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity to the end of time as often as they revolve the events of this period, will turn to you a reverential eye while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre.

"And thou, sole ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, gird on thy sword thou most mighty, go forth with us in the day of battle. Pour into our hearts the spirit of our forefathers. Inspire us with thine own and while led by thy hand, open thou our eyes to behold in every valley and in every plain what the prophet once saw: 'Chariots of fire and horses of fire round about Elisha.' . . ."

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL COMMISSION

Several changes were made in the Anglican Sunday School lessons by the Sunday School Commission of the Church of England in Canada, at its semi-annual meeting held in St. George's Parish Hall, Thursday, October 8. There were present 11 Bishops, 22 clergy and 10 laymen, with Canon Rexford in the chair. The Commission at the morning session approved and authorized a set of 10 different plans for conducting the Sunday School service. The lesson scheme committee, having consulted with some 150 leading Sunday School workers, made a report based thereon. The primary department lessons have met with much approval and will be continued with some additions for expression work. For the primary department, a new list of six reference works for teachers was issued. The constitution of the main school (9-14) will be left open until further information is obtained. It was agreed that there should be only one set of lesson schemes for the whole Church of England in Canada.

The examinations on teacher training will be held on the last Saturday in April, instead of Whitsuntide. The Canadian circulation of "Our Empire," is now 27,000 weekly. The Summer Schools at Port Hope, Lennoxville and Rothesay had a total attendance of 227.

The annual examinations on the Regular Course of Bible and Prayer Book Lessons and Memory Work for 1913-14, authorized by the Sunday School Commission of the General Synod, will be conducted under the direction of the Commission, wherever there are candidates, on Saturday, November 28th, 1914.

Incumbents of parishes or superintendents of Sunday Schools should make application for question papers, not later than October 20th to the Sunday School secretary of their diocese, stating the number of copies of each paper, Junior, Middle and Senior, they will require.

Two examination papers will be set in each grade, one on the Scripture Lessons and Scripture Memory Work, and one on the Prayer Book Lessons and Prayer Book Memory Work. Candidates are required to pass in both Scripture and Prayer Book papers in order to receive the full certificate of the Commission.

Three silver medals, in connection with these examinations, are open for general competition, viz:—(1) For the pupil, in any part of the Dominion, taking the highest standing in the examinations of the Junior grade. (Offered by Grace Church, Toronto). (2) For the pupil, in any part of the Dominion, taking the highest standing in the examinations of the Middle grade. (Offered by a gentleman of the diocese of Rupert's Land and known as the Rupert's Land medal). (3) For the pupil, in any part of the Dominion, taking the highest standing in the examinations of the Senior grade. (Offered by St. Alban's Cathedral Sunday School, Toronto).

Laymen's Missionary Movement

The United Laymen's Missionary campaign in the Maritime Provinces will begin on the 14th of this month, at Campbelltown, N.S., and will be carried on through many of the chief cities, such as St. John, Fredericton, Halifax, Pictou, Sydney, Liverpool, and other centres in Nova Scotia will be covered—about 30 places all told. Among the speakers will be the Bishop of Fredericton, Dean Lloyd, Canon Gould, L. A. Hamilton, D. M. Rose, Rev. Dr. Herridge, H. K. Caskey, J. W. Howe and other representatives of the various communions.