

Welcoming Back British Columbia Soldiers

[These notes of an address delivered by Rev. Principal John Mackay, D.D., were secured by the B. C. M. representative, as we felt that the message might well be put on record to indicate the welcome of Vancouver and British Columbia to her returning men. The Regimental colors of the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders of Canada were hung in St. John's Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, before the original unit (16th Battalion) left for the front. Principal Mackay was Chaplain to the 72nd before the war. It should be added that the service at which the address was delivered was closed fittingly, not by the music of the "Dead March," but by the resounding notes of the Hallelujah Chorus.—Ed. B.C.M.]

IN times when tremendous forces are shaking human society and tragedy is touching every home, no book in the Bible speaks with more ringing notes than the Apocalypse of St. John. It was written when the mighty Roman Empire was tottering to its fall; when lust and cruelty and utter selfishness were shaking it to its very foundations. In such a state of society the lot of the Christians was peculiarly hard. The Jews hated them because they had sprung from their own fold and claimed to be the full and free fruition of all that was highest and best in their faith. The Romans hated them because they could not join in their idolatrous rites, and their pure lives were a continual protest against Roman sensuality and cruel lust.

Great economic changes were sweeping over the world and discontent and unrest were everywhere. When there was a popular outburst of fury, the Christians were made the scapegoat. When a Roman emperor wanted to please the mob or show his own loyalty to the pagan cults of the times, he slaughtered the Christians until many thousands had been done to death by every fiendish device that pagan savagery could devise.

John the aged Apostle had seen multitudes of his own friends and of humble, godly men and women, whom he loved as his own little children, done to death. Men of weaker mould would have given up the unequal struggle in despair before the giant forces of tyranny and sin. But not so these Christians. They gloried in the opportunity and gladly died for the Christ they loved. But the hearts of those who lived were sad for the noble lives so dear to them, gone out in such terrible fashion.

And John in his lonely exile in the Island of Patmos, as he thought of the sufferings of the humble followers of his Master, of their cruel deaths, was lonely and sad. But to his enraptured gaze the panorama of eternal things was unfolded. He saw Pagan Rome, the heartless murderer of the saints of God, hurled to earth utterly defeated and broken. And looking up he saw Heaven opened and from the lips of countless throngs of white-robed martyrs burst the triumph song, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Then he understood. These men suffered to reign, they died to live. The world has a meaning, truth is eternal, its triumph is sure. "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

What but this should be the keynote of this service? We are met with sad hearts as we think of the brave lads who by their thousands passed through the Old Seventy-Second, and now lie sleeping on the battlefields of the world, or, like one of their brave chaplains, murdered on a hospital ship and sleeping in the deeps of ocean.

How splendidly they marched to the skirl of the pipes and the swing of the sporrans, and with what sore hearts we followed them out to their Gethsemane and Calvary. And the other day when the few broken survivors of the noble Seaforths came back, with what joy we cheered them home again, yet how black that very return made the cloud of

sorrow on the homes forever robbed of husband or father or son or lover, and how sore were the hearts whose hunger for loved faces will never know surcease in this world.

But is that the whole story? Is our service today to be a mournful dirge? I trow not. We, too, can have our apocalyptic vision in the new Heaven and the new earth they died to bring in.

The old spirit of Babylon that was the curse of Pagan Rome, the spirit of luxury and lust, of tyranny and brutality over right, of falsehood and treachery—the sordid, cruel, lying earth spirit never had a more complete incarnation than in modern Germany. For forty years with fiendish ingenuity her rulers set themselves to poison the soul of the whole people, to make them sensual and grasping, false and cruel, sordid and base. Every triumph of modern invention, every advance in science and philosophy, was turned into an instrument of destruction and death, ready to be launched on "The Day." And the day came. Belgium and Serbia and Armenia and Poland were martyred. France was bleeding at every pore. The blood of countless millions of murdered men and women, was crying up to heaven for vengeance, and there seemed no one to hear. How near we came, time after time, to the triumph of the Blonde Beast of Europe, only God knows. But it was not to be. Thank God for the Seaforths and the hundreds of thousands of other Canadians and the millions of the best free men of earth, who heard the call and went and fought and won.

We shall never forget August 4th and 5th, 1914, when every officer and man of the Old Seventy-Second volunteered to go to the front. Then came the 72nd Battalion and the 231st, and countless drafts who joined them and went from them to other units. They saw what it meant. They knew that all that made life fair and sweet was menaced. They knew it was the cause of the weak and helpless against the strong and brutal, of all that was high and holy against all that was sordid and vile—the Cause of God against Satan. They went and fought through long and bitter days and months and years, and thousands of them died. Who will ever forget Ypres, and Courcellette and Festubert and Vimy Ridge and Cambrai and a hundred other bloody fights, on whose fields some of the bravest officers and men of the Seaforths and kindred units lie sleeping?

They took the rich, full cup of young life and dashed it to the ground in one great act of sacrifice for God and for humanity. And Germany, the modern incarnation of the Babylon spirit, lies crushed and broken, more signally and dramatically than any power so great was ever broken. And what of those who stayed their cohorts and their lives, the heroes we honor today? Wherever they felt the call of right, and

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