

THE DAY OF ADVERSITY.

A Sermon preached by the Bishop of Newfoundland in St. Thomas's Church on Sunday, Dec. 6th, 1914.

"In the Day of Adversity Consider."—Ecclesiastes vii, 14.

There are very few thoughtful persons who will not be ready to consent that to our Nation the present is indeed a "day of adversity."

And though it does not belong either to me or to this place to deal with the affairs of nations, yet I do feel that a monitory word cannot be inopportune, and that I am well with my province when I lift up my voice at this juncture, even here, and say "Consider." For it is in the very nature of the excitement which the occasion produces to make the duty of consideration more difficult. And therefore it is more necessary that religion should come in to enforce it. And we can never forget that there is nothing, perhaps, which more grieves our Heavenly Father than this consideration of His providence, according to that affecting climax of all His pleadings, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."

It would be the greatest mistake to suppose that afflictions of any kind, personal or public, ever necessarily produce a true thoughtfulness. All experience testifies of the contrary. Who that has gone through sorrow and trouble could not tell of the disappointments he has felt with regard to the moral effects he thought that trouble would produce upon his mind? Who cannot tell of those times wasted, and worse still, of a sullen, proud, shutting up of himself into his own thought, occupied selfishly and morosely with himself, or of a hardening of heart at the very moment when it ought to have melted, and of rebellious feelings, aye, temptations and falls, such as he never would have conceived to be possible in a time of affliction?

And as regards seasons of public calamity all history bears testimony that times of pestilence, times of famine, times of war, have been characterized to an enormous and incredible extent by an almost unparalleled state of demoralization and vice.

And, to compare small things with great, many of us can remember something of this sort in the days which succeeded the great Fire which laid waste more than half of St. John's in 1892. Have you forgotten the condition of the city on the Sunday and Monday after the Fire? One might have supposed that such an awful visitation would have solemnized the whole community? But what did we see? Immediately men who had previously been regarded as peaceful, law-abiding citizens, gave themselves to robbing and looting, and women were caught in the very act of setting fire to houses. Indeed, had it not been for the opportune arrival of the two warships that were rushed to the scene with blue-jackets and marines to guard our public buildings and patrol our streets the city would have become a prey to an amount of lawlessness fearful to contemplate. It is not vain, therefore, that the Spirit warn us, "In the day of Adversity, Consider."

And now let me pursue the subject very practically, and let me urge you, my people, at this moment to a balanced frame of mind, to be deliberate and serious, never speak or think lightly of this War. A Christian should be above the commonplace, much more above the levity of people of the world. And for this reason—they look only at facts as they come to the surface—the Christian sees always within and underlying

the facts the mind, the will, the presence, the cause, the purpose, the glory of God. Therefore think measuredly, and speak discreetly. It is a very solemn thing with which we have to do.

Hitherto the danger has been to us who are living in this island, remote from the scene of conflict, and engrossed in our own little interests—[and this strikes one especially on coming back from England, and after seeing and hearing all that is transpiring there] to us, I say, the danger is of regarding it as we regard a spectacle, a thing which lies somewhere away from us in the distance, and with which we are not personally concerned. We ought not to feel that. For what is the cause of man, and the cause of the Church, and the cause of God, is our cause. Who knows how near it may come to us and how soon? Therefore try to view and to talk of the matter without prejudice, without party, but, still more, without trifling and without indifference. There is too much of eternity in it that we should ever run at that low level.

As war goes on there is always a danger of the lowering of the moral standard in those who are affected by it. For instance, there is always a tendency to think less and less of the value of human life. The mind familiarizes itself far too quickly with slaughter, and the awful sacrifice of victory. Therefore be always reminding yourself of what life is in God's sight, what one life is, what it has cost, what it is worth, what is its destiny. Never forget the souls of sailors and soldiers. There they lie by thousands, all those dead bodies—had they not souls? Where are they?

And remember, the battlefield is not the whole of the War. Is it the chief part? There is the pageant, and the eye is delusively drawn to its focus. But what is behind? Follow the ambulances—go into the hospitals—visit the mansions and cottages, the homes of the bereaved—the widows and the orphans—see the devastated land, and the silent factories, and famine stalking widely wherever the foot of armies has trod—and hear the wail of wretchedness echoing long to the shout of triumph—that is war!

And if you think of this, need I say?—never do you omit to do all you can to reconstruct the broken pieces: always throw your bias in every conversation you ever hold, or anything you ever write, throw your bias on the side of peace. Do not merge your individual responsibility in this matter in the general ocean of politics, strive in every way you can to advance peace. And no one knows, or can know, how far any word he says or writes may reach for evil or for good, for discord or for peace. Therefore always lead everything to peace.

And let me urge upon you another consideration. If this war continues there can be no doubt whatever that times of distress and suffering are before us. If the war continues we shall be at war prices. Many men will fall in business. Some of us will have our incomes diminished. The sick and the wounded are already counted by hundreds of thousands, and call for sympathy. You may not be able to go and render your personal attendance, but they will be within reach, and in need of your gifts and charity. So will your poor at home. Therefore at once begin to order your expenses, so that you may be ready for extra calls which will certainly come. Retrench: curtail your indulgences, so you will be safe. So

towards God, done for Christ's sake, it will be an appropriate and acceptable act itself of humiliation, and so you will make room which love will want for its exercise. I advise you to go softly. It will become such a time as this to walk in pride, to flaunt in fashion, and to roll in selfishness. Is it not rather a time for humiliation and thought and repentance and amendment?

And still more—pray about this war. In your private prayers do not forget it; in your family prayers do not forget it; and in Church remember it. Come to the special services of Intercession which are held in all our Churches on Fridays and Sundays. Besides the Special Form of service which has been prescribed by authority there are several parts of our ordinary service which are admirably applicable. Take occasion by them, and throw more than usual feeling and intensity when you come to those sentences—"Give peace in our time, O Lord; because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God." "That it may please Thee to give to all nations unity, peace and concord: We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord."

There was once a war which was ruled so much by the battle in the plain as by the hands which were held up upon the Mount. And at this moment the English nation is that Mount, and the prayers of the Church throughout the British Empire, if they be patient and sustained, as Moses was, will do more to decide the issue and maintain the right than all the batons of Generals and the guns of Dreadnoughts.

But the man who would "consider" must have his eye more upward. What if man threatens, what if the passions of men are raging? "The Lord reigneth, the Lord reigneth; He sitteth above the water floods." Do you understand that? In the familiar language of prophecy the waters are always the nations. "He sitteth above the water floods"—i.e., above the agitations of nations—"and He remaineth a King for ever." "He ordereth all things after the counsel of His own will." "He shall work and who shall let it?"—and the wrath of man shall praise Him; and if there be any wrath that does not praise Him, that wrath shall not be, for "the remnant of wrath He will restrain." Therefore however mysterious, however awful, this war may seem, do not give way to foolish fears, and unbelieving apprehensions. Have faith in Sovereignty. The "masses of mighty fleets and armies are but puppets of which He holds the strings. Kings may reign and Emperors may decree, but the command of the Lord, it shall stand. "Be still and know that I am God,"—"for I know the thoughts which I think towards you"—says God to His own—"I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

We had, perhaps, thought in our simplicity that the age of war had passed, and that in the march of civilization we had reached a point where everything would have been settled upon moral principles, and by the laws of international jurisprudence. But God is teaching us what we might have learned from His Word, that it is not so, nor will be, so long as this Dispensation lasts. Before the flood this was man's character—"Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil continually." And after the flood he swept over the earth, and done its worst this is the character still. God is careful to identify the very words—"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." And all that has raged over our world since the creation, and all that has happened to it, and all its sufferings, and all its education, and all its culture—[how we hate that word "culture"! It has been so grossly abused]—and all its advancement, has never made man really one bit wiser. We have reason to believe and expect that as the end of the world comes on, things will be quite as bad, aye worse. Arts and sciences will never hush war, and knowledge and experience will never change man's heart, or weaken human passions. It is Christ's coming which will do that; and then, and only then "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

And all these things which are beginning now to come to pass in the earth, they may be—I do not say they are—but they may be the predicted signs and harbingers of the Advent. Greater things than their authors ever thought of may be evolving from those movements which we are so anxiously watching. Therefore lift up your heads: be ready to catch the first light of the morning as it breaks upon the hills: be prepared: stand in your lot: be wise: "consider."

Men and women must see clearly in order to work accurately. Both hand and brain are guided by the eye, and good vision necessarily means better work, more quickly and more easily done. My special line of work, with the aid of glasses is to fit other people who are in need of glasses. R. H. TRAPNELL, Eyeglass Specialist.

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Here and There.

MORE DIPHTHERIA.—A case of diphtheria was reported to the Health Authorities from Quidi Vidi yesterday afternoon.

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AN OMISSION.—In the list of acknowledgments towards the Christmas Broc. Collection, published in yesterday's issue, the following was omitted:—T. P. Hogan, St. Patrick's, \$1.00.

THE CADET.—We thank T. J. Foran, Editor of the "Cadet", for a copy of the December number of his interesting magazine. The publication contains many timely topics dealt with in an interesting manner by well known writers, is copiously illustrated, and should meet with a ready sale.

Doctors and Gas Fires

In an article which recently appeared in the London "Evening News," Mr. W. G. Faulkner stated: "In making my inquiries I discovered one significant fact. This was that one company—the Gas Light and Coke Company—had among their consumers 2,500 doctors who had gas fires installed in their houses, some as many as ten or a dozen; that 1,500 of these doctors had become users of gas during the past three years; and that not one had ever given them up."

Professor C. V. Boys, F.R.S., says, in the "Standard": "Sentiment and inertia are the only obstacles against the general adoption of gas fires and cooking appliances. Wonderful strides have been made, in spite of deep-rooted prejudices. A gas fire, burning with a blue, is an admirable agent for heating a room; and, as a scientist, I fail to understand how such a gas fire dries the air in a room more than any other fire."—nov17,14

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