

Editorial

The Friends of 1916

THEY have been good friends, tried and true—great resolute Russia, gallant unconquerable France, patient persevering Italy. Yes, and the smaller friends have not been lacking in their unshaken loyalty—broken Belgium, suffering Serbia, and the rest. It is a great thing to have friends of this kind, and a great joy to know that before another year has passed the friendship will be consummated in a legislative and commercial union that will naturally be the first result of victory.

In thinking over the friendships of the year, it is difficult to say which is the more precious. One admires the marvellous leadership of the Grand Duke as he leads his armies step by step backward across the marshes and into safety; he admires equally the strategy of the brilliant Brusiloff as he regains the losses of the previous season. Most of all he admires the patient endurance and the dogged resistance of the Russian soldiers. There is something, however, greater than all this—the spectacle of a mighty nation practising self denial, of a government forsaking long-established custom in order that the common people might have more of self-government and less of surveillance by police. It is a glorious thing for a nation to attain its freedom, and it is a great privilege for us to be able to claim as a friend this old land with its new life, its new aspirations, and its new ideals. May the friendship never be broken.

There is another great power—brave, beloved France. Our hearts go out in gratitude and admiration as we think of her deeds on land and her sacrifices on the sea. That heroic defence of Verdun, that long, patient struggle in the Somme district, that quick panther-like movement which ended in the capture of Fort Vaux—all this and the other deeds of Joffre, Nivelle and Petain; all this and the sacrifice of wives and mothers, the self-denial of the wealthy and the poor, the elimination of class and creed, fill us with amazement and compel our deepest reverence. The words of Mr. Donald MacMaster, now of the British Parliament, and formerly one of our own leading Canadians, as given on another page of this journal, sum up eloquently the gallantry and indomitable spirit of France. They indicate how much we owe to this brave people.

A Notable Gathering

DURING last month there was held in Winnipeg the first meeting of the Social Welfare Congress of Manitoba. In many ways it was a remarkable meeting, and it deserves more than passing notice. As a people we have been trusting too much to happy-go-lucky effort, with the result that politics, philanthropy, religion and education are more or less in chaotic condition. In other words, we are socially and morally unhealthy, and in some cases the sickness is almost unto death. No one will pretend that the Congress succeeded in prescribing remedies for existing ills. Naturally, there was much declamation, much fault-finding and vaporizing; but there was also much wise planning, sane instruction and noble inspiration. When one considers the good that was accomplished, he can overlook inaccuracies in statement and pardon excesses or lack of balance in judgment. It is a healthy sign when the people of a community begin to feel that the greatest asset is clean, pure, healthy life.

The Feeble-Minded

ONE of the subjects discussed was of particular importance at this time. The problem of the feeble-minded was under consideration. Now, it is true that in England the real feeble-minded number about four in every thousand of the population, while here they are probably not quite so numerous. It would, therefore, on the surface, seem absurd to overlook the interests of the thousand in ministering to the necessities of the four. The greatest problem in a community must always be the education and the protection of the normal minded. Yet, when it is known that the feeble-minded procreate at almost twice the usual rate, and that feeble-minded parents invariably transmit their weakness to the first, second or third generation of their descendants, also when it is known that alcoholism, tuberculosis, epilepsy, illegitimacy, are all connected very intimately with feeble-mindedness, the problem of doing something to protect the nation and to care for the unfortunates becomes a pressing one. Both reason and sentiment urge action.

It is probable that 80 per cent of the feeble-minded are so by heredity. The other 20 per cent owe their unfortunate condition to alcoholism, syphilis, disease or excess in some form in parents, or to accidents before or after birth. Clearly the great opportunity of educators is in protection in some way for the 80 per cent. The best solution of all is, of course, segregation. If these people are placed so that they cannot breed, then the race of feeble-minded will gradually die out. The erection of institutions for all such is an immediate necessity. There are, however, many who will never reach institutions for the feeble-minded who are yet so weak in body or mind that should they give birth to children the result would almost certainly be feeble-minded offspring. Surely there should be some supervision exercised in the matter of marriage. It is nonsense to throw the

burden of deciding in a matter of this kind upon the clergyman. Both, from the point of view of the individual and the state, it would seem to be necessary to enact some legislation bearing upon this point.

It would also be well for young men and women to consider carefully the danger of entering upon marriage with such as are likely to beget weak offspring. Love should not be altogether blind. One of the noblest men in this city loved a young lady with a devotion known to few, but knowing that he had a tendency to epilepsy, and knowing what the result might be in his offspring, he refused to permit himself to think of marriage. Who will say that he was not wise?

Moral Degenerates

MORAL degeneracy is probably due to environment as well as to heredity. The causes of juvenile delinquency and of crime in adults are not known with certainty. For instance, we are not always sure whether a person drinks to excess because he is wrong morally, or whether he is wrong morally because he drinks to excess. The problem of the criminal class has never yet been solved in a satisfactory manner, nor is it likely to be so long as our definitions of crime are so superficial and so lacking in distinction. Who is the criminal—the man who kills a companion in a street brawl, or the merchant who sells impure milk, and thus causes the death of helpless babes and children? Who is criminal—the man who steals a trinket from a dry goods counter, or the man who lobbies with a government in order to get an undue advantage over his neighbors in the matter of trade? Is the child of a murderer more likely to be a criminal than the child of a man who has made a profit out of this war?

This whole question has not yet been touched upon, but there will be a rude awakening one of these fine days. Let it be known that the old commandment has no narrow application when it says that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

There is this difference between the feeble-minded and the perverse. The former cannot be cured. The second can be reformed. One should not leave a home for the feeble-minded. It should be possible for many to have our prisons reformed and strengthened. Some recent investigations said to be thorough, have simply been for the purpose of concealing truth. The spirit of penitentiary life must be that of exceeding kindness rather than that of severity. We have learned this in some parts of Canada. Have we learned it here? That question must be answered to the satisfaction of all.

The Church a Working Force

THE churches have recently received no little attention, because of the attacks levelled at them by public speakers and by the press. They have been accused of supineness, of cowardice and neglect; and to their failure in time of crisis is attributed in a large measure the political debauchery, the industrial deceit, the economic injustice, which have disgraced our country's record. There may be some ground for the accusation, but it is certain many things have been said which are unwise and uncalled for. Those who have blustered most have often not taken time to inquire carefully as to the real purpose or mission of the churches, according to the mind of the Great Founder. Worse still, they have held the churches responsible for the sins and omissions of those who never go to church, or who do so simply as spectators or religious idlers. There should be some fairness and logic in all this matter.

It is quite reasonable to suppose that He who founded the Christian church had as clear an understanding of its proper aims and methods as those who are asserting themselves so confidently to-day. In the early years churches were free local organizations. They consisted of men and women bound together for mutual inspiration and comfort, animated by a common hope and true to clearly-defined ideals. They were above everything else missionaries—preaching their evangel at home and even to the uttermost parts of the earth. When they succeeded in getting men and women to join their order, they taught them the laws of christian behavior. They had in mind, more or less, clearly social and civic righteousness; but they sought these ends not by preaching to the outside world, but by transforming their own membership.

Probably the churches would be wise to-day to follow the pattern laid down for them. A preacher usually cuts a sorry figure when he tries to tell a legislature how to manage the affairs of the country or a council how to manage the affairs of a city; but if he tries hard enough he can do something much better—he can develop in his membership the qualities that are necessary to good citizenship.

The first duty of the church is clearly to deal with its own membership. A church that evangelizes the world and which insists upon good behavior in its members, is the greatest boon to any community, but a church which fails to demand good conduct—that is social, industrial and political righteousness—in all its members is untrue to the principles of christianity and a curse to the district in which it is placed. A church which makes a big noise over

evangelism, and which forgets to emphasize duty, honor and righteousness, deserves no sympathy. A church which remains silent or inert because certain of its members find it to their advantage to wink at unrighteousness deserves the fate of extinction. A church which is four-square against deceit, cunning, and injustice deserves to thrive, and will surely thrive, though all the forces of hell are arrayed against it.

The Peace Proposal

YES, we long for peace with a steadfast and insatiable longing. We are sick and weary of war with its toll of death, destruction and misery. But we are sure that every last one of us will die fighting rather than agree to a peace which is no peace. The Allies were everlastingly right in spurning the suggestion of the chancellor of Germany. There is no discussion with a nation which has not kept and which will not keep its faith. "Better trust in our unbroken army, than in the broken faith of the enemy."

Among the things the Prussian mind cannot grasp are these—that Britain is not in this war by choice nor for the sake of gain, but simply to defend the faith and protect the world against tyranny; that there can be no sheathing of the sword until truth and right are vindicated and wrong and crime atoned for; that in every British heart there is room for two feelings, detestation of the Prussian military caste, and love and respect for the plain German people; that the energy put forth by ourselves and our allies is but a faint indication of the energy that will now be shown.

The wrongs done to humanity have been too great, the sufferings of Belgium and Serbia too severe, the cries of murdered babes, enslaved workmen, drowning mothers, too pitiful for us to forget them all. Nor is our memory likely to fail us any the more when we are forced to endure the blatant and vainglorious boasting of a chancellor who while he fears both his people at home and his enemies in the field, yet blusters and swaggers as if he really believed himself assured of ultimate victory.

There are one or two good things in this peace proposal. We are sure the German people are tiring of the war; they are beginning to know the truth, namely, that their military leaders led them into their trouble; the leaders themselves know they have reached their limit, and it is from now on all down grade; the neutrals have estimated the situation fully and carefully and their finding is not flattering to the nation which brought about the war. As for ourselves and our allies it has given us hope, and courage, and linked us together with new and firm resolve. And so we are in it to the end. The only end that is worth considering is peace which guarantees liberty, to men, to nations, to humanity. Until such liberty is assured our motto can be none other than this—"Prussianism must be destroyed."

Militarism

IN the London Times appears an article which it is good for us all to read. Its closing words are these: "There is a danger, in all the exasperation and strain of this conflict, that we shall ignore this most obvious lesson, that we ourselves shall catch the Prussian disease from our enemies. And no talk about Prussian militarism will preserve us from that disaster. Nothing will preserve us from it except a clear understanding of the nature of militarism and of the fact that it is ultimately based upon fear, not upon hope; that it is hypochondria, not health. This is a dangerous world, and the only way to safety in it for nations, as for individuals, is to live dangerously. Prussia has tried to live safely, and she has been more threatened in her national existence than any other nation. She has trusted in herself rather than in righteousness because righteousness seemed too dangerous to her. The lesson of the present war is that it is safer at last to trust in righteousness. But that is a lesson which all Europe as well as Prussia has yet to learn, and the war will have been a ghastly waste of all good things unless it teaches that lesson, unless it is known in history as the event which refuted all the heresies of 1870."

The Passing Year

WHILE there is no special virtue in the first day of a new calendar year, there is, talk as we may, something of solemnity about the passing of another year of our era and the birth of a new one. To every individual of us it must bring some thought of the value of time and the swiftness of its passing. Who of us is free from self-reproach for time wasted? We can always have time enough if we use it rightly. For the future it should be the aim of every reader of this magazine to have a right appointment of time, which means a well ordered life. This, in no small way, will add to our success and happiness during the year 1917.