

Canadian Churchman

Toronto, July 6th, 1916

The Christian Year

The Fourth Sunday After Trinity, July 16th.

The eighth chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans is one of the most marvellous portions of Scripture. As some parts of the midnight sky are, above all others, ablaze with stars; so these pages of Holy Writ are radiant with "jewels five-words-long, that on the stretched forefinger of all Time sparkle forever." Mighty doctrines, glorious hopes, crowd upon one another in the triumphant march of the inspired language of the Apostle. He recounts the free, Spirit-led, and victorious life of the "man in Christ Jesus"; he tells of the transcendent future assured him in the predestined counsels of God; he records the invincible and eternal love of Christ Jesus our Lord for those for whom He died. But the vision of the Apostle penetrates further. He sees this love spreading out beyond the bounds of the human family to the utmost confines of the Universe. He proclaims a Gospel not for Man only, but for the whole Creation.

This Gospel for Creation, this proclamation that God's purpose of blessing is boundless as His works, bears a message not merely of the profoundest interest, but of the most satisfying comfort. Few thoughtful men can look at Nature, as she is at present, with her carnage and her struggle and her futility, without a sense of sadness. The cry involuntarily rises, "To what purpose is this suffering?" Some shallow optimists prefer to ignore this aspect of things. "God's in His heaven—all's right with the world!" But St. Paul frankly admits the dark and naked fact. "The whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." But note that the pains are travail pains. They look forward to a longed-for birth. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

This magnificent hope is as old as the Old Testament. It finds a classical expression in Isaiah 65. It was a favourite theme with the later Apocalyptic writers, at whose hands it was grossly materialized. It forms the basis of the incomparable description of the New Jerusalem in the closing chapters of the Revelation of S. John the Divine. In what form can we hold it in this twentieth century, when science has so largely determined our conceptions of cosmical revolution?

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.

So Shakespeare expresses the truth that science teaches—the mortality of the material Universe in its present form. The same truth was proclaimed by the Psalmist of old. The heavens "shall perish, but thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment." But beyond this temporal world we believe there to lie a spiritual and an eternal world. If the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved we believe that we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. That world, too, may have its material aspect. "That is certainly the working hypothesis which, until negated, we ought to make." So writes the great thinker and scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge. Into the glorious liberty of that world all God's creatures, at the great consummation, will be emancipated.

(Continued on page 424.)

Editorial Notes

Our Circulation Manager.

As a further indication of the fact that those in charge of The Canadian Churchman do not intend to leave any stone unturned in making the paper a success, we are pleased to announce that Mr. Walter Sunter, an earnest young layman of the Church in Toronto, has been appointed Circulation Manager. Mr. Sunter has for several years been very active in Sunday School work, and is a member of the Toronto Synod. He has, moreover, a good business training and is a good platform speaker. We bespeak for him the co-operation of all our readers in his important work.

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The Late Bishop Scriven.

The date of the death of the late Bishop Scriven was given in last week's Churchman as Wednesday, June 21st, and his age as about 63 years. This should have read that he passed away in his sleep during Monday night between the 19th and 20th, and that had he lived until the 28th of August next he would have been 66 years of age. The Bishop had gone to Comox Valley to visit the Rev. J. X. Willemar, of Sandwich, in whose home he passed away. The funeral took place in Victoria on Friday, June 23rd.

His kindly disposition endeared Bishop Scriven to all who knew him and his intimate knowledge of the diocese fitted him for the position that he occupied so short a time. The diocese, while being most fortunate in the personnel of its bishops, has been unfortunate in the frequency of the changes during the past few years. We earnestly trust that it may be guided aright in the serious responsibility that has once more been laid upon it of choosing a spiritual overseer.

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The Work of Synods.

We have watched more closely than usual the business transacted by the various Synods at their recent meetings. One naturally looked for some progressive step at the present time, indicating a realization of the seriousness of the situation facing both Church and nation. The example of the great leaders of the Church in the Motherland made one hopeful that something would be done. But what does one find? Apart from the charges of a few of our Bishops, little, if anything, to indicate that anything out of the ordinary was taking place. Such questions as the deepening of the spiritual life of the Church, the supply of men for the ministry, the steps to be taken in view of the return of thousands of men from the trenches of Europe—matters that concern the very life of the Church, were given scant consideration as compared with financial returns and reports. Time was spent on matters that appear almost insignificant against the background of the present world war, and while the subject of the war was undoubtedly in the minds of all, and considerable attention was given to the subject of universal registration, the relation of the Church to all this and the steps that should be taken to safeguard the spiritual interests of our country received little attention. Is it any wonder that the Church makes so small an impression on the man on the street? When a few thousand more of our sons and brothers have shed their life blood for us we shall possibly begin to realize our share as Christians in the war.

Professional Synod Goers.

A young layman, a church warden and delegate to one of our Synods, referred recently in conversation with the Editor of the Churchman to the large percentage of lay delegates who do little, if anything, in the way of active work in their home parishes. Nor is he the first who has noticed this. The custom, still too common, of electing men mainly because of their position in the community, financial, professional or political, is a disgrace to the Church and a tremendous source of weakness. Likewise, the custom of electing the same men year after year, creating as it too often does, a sort of proprietary claim on the position, to the exclusion very often of better qualified men, ought to be discouraged. We quite realize the value of sending men who are familiar with the business of the Synod, and it would be a misfortune to have too frequent changes. We realize also that there are many good men in business, professional or political life who are able to do splendid service for the Church. What we wish to emphasize is that the utmost care should be taken in the choice of the men who are sent to Synod, and that the most important business to be transacted is not the financial, but that which has to do with the more definitely spiritual work of the Church.

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The Church and the Crisis.

The Bishop of London is taking a very active part in the preparations being made in England for the National Mission to be held in the autumn, and his addresses must give food for serious thought to those who hear him. He has been on the firing line and realizes the serious character of the situation facing the Church at the present time. He does not mince matters and does not hesitate even while the war is in progress to speak his mind. Addressing a meeting recently in the North of England he reminded them that "it was only natural that the nation should expect a national message from the National Church in the greatest crisis of its history." "Unless," he said "it had some message to the soul of the nation it could write itself down as a failure." He referred to the drink bill as one of the greatest indications of the need of action, and added that "it was a shock to the nation when the drink bill went up from 160 millions to 170 millions in the first year of the war, and a still greater shock when it went up to 190 millions. It was no good denying that these drinking habits had got hold of us as a nation, and were now imperilling our very safety."

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Church Union.

Church Union, so far as the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists are concerned, promises soon to be an accomplished fact. That it will take place more rapidly than many expect, is quite possible, as there are scores of small centres that will probably take matters into their own hands and not wait for further action on the part of the governing bodies. We trust that the step that has been taken will prove a blessing to all concerned. We regret exceedingly that there is likely to be considerable litigation before matters are finally settled, particularly in view of the return of soldiers from the front, when peace and harmony amongst Christians will count for so much. There are many able and consecrated men among the leaders in the movement and we feel certain that they will do their utmost to avoid bitterness. Let us pray that they may be given the wisdom they require in dealing with the situation.

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