

## Messenger and Visitor

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S. MCC. BLACK EDITOR.  
A. H. CHIPMAN BUSINESS MANAGER.  
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### The War in its Moral Aspect.

From the tone of the papers which reach this office from England we judge that the disposition to criticise the British Government adversely on account of its South African policy and the war, is much more pronounced in the Motherland than it is in Canada. Apart, however, from those Irish Nationalists, whose hatred of British supremacy is more bitter than that of the Boers themselves, and the Radicals, who may be counted upon to oppose the foreign policy of every administration, there is probably a general disposition on the part of the British people to give the Government a generous, if not an enthusiastic, support in the conflict which the presumption of the Boers finally precipitated. Mr. Chamberlain's very clever and able speech in the House of Commons, in defence of the Government's policy, probably did something to conciliate adverse sentiment in that august body, and has doubtless proved still more effective as a defence before the bar of public opinion. At the same time it is evident enough that there are many who are not so fully assured as they could desire to be in such a day of national trial that the Government sincerely sought for peace and did all that honorably could be done to avert the war. There is a conviction, which it would appear is quite widespread among Nonconformists, that there has been behind the Colonial Secretary, whether Mr. Chamberlain himself was a conscious part, and instrument of it or not, a force steadily and with invincible determination working to the end that, whether by diplomacy or by war, Boer ascendancy in the Transvaal should give place to British ascendancy.

But questions as to the justice and necessity of the war upon which Great Britain has now entered must be left for the consideration and decision of calmer days. The immediate duty which the whole empire recognizes is to bring this war to a speedy end, and in such fashion that the costly sacrifice which the nation is called to offer may make for the firm establishment in South Africa of those principles of righteousness and liberty for which the nation stands and for the defence of which all its armaments on sea and land exist. If it is true, as has been charged, that the Boer leaders of the two South African republics had determined upon the policy of Dutch supremacy for South Africa, and that it was to this end the Transvaal had been made an armed camp, then it would seem inevitable that a conflict between the two races must come sooner or later, for whether in South Africa or elsewhere, any people that disputes it must be convinced, by arguments that cannot be gainsayed, that Britons never will be slaves to any race of mortal men. And if Mr. Chamberlain felt convinced that the question of supremacy must some day go to the battle-field for decision, he may very likely have believed that so far as Great Britain was concerned there was not likely to be a more convenient season, and that this matter, so important to every interest of civilization in South Africa, might better be settled now, once for all, while the nation was free to turn her whole military power in that direction.

Granting, however, the correctness of such a view of the intentions and aims of the Boers—which perhaps ought not to be granted—and the very serious contingencies of the situation just referred to, it is still a question to which one might well hesitate to give an affirmative answer, whether under such circumstances it were justifiable to apply a coercive rather than a conciliatory policy, and thus to precipitate the appeal to arms. For even if it were hopeless to expect a better mind on

the part of the Boers, war is so costly, so terrible, and after all frequently so ineffectual a method of settling disputes that a Christian Government could only be justified in applying it as a last resort and as a dire necessity. Think of what it means,—the fabulous waste of wealth that must be replaced by the hard labors of the present and coming generations, the gory battle-fields, the hell of torture and of fiendish passion, the sacrifice of brave lives and national bone and sinew, the sorrow which it brings to thousands of homes,—and then the possible long heritage of hate. For when the war is over and the heel of British Imperialism shall have been set upon the stubborn neck of the Boers, will the dispute have been settled? Will it mean peace for South Africa, or shall we see a country full of race antagonisms and hatreds, only to be kept in subjection to British rule by the presence of a costly standing army? Patriotism is indeed a noble and a wholesome passion, it has played a grand part in the development of civilization and is not to be despised even in the misguided Boers. It is grand to see the sons of Britain all over her wide empire leaping to arms at the call of their country, as ready as their sires were to shed their blood in the cause of justice and freedom. We may justly hope that the fruit of this present war will be a larger measure of liberty to all coming generations in South Africa. We, at this distance from the scene of conflict, are perhaps in danger of thinking too much of the patriotism, the glory, the hoped-for victory and resultant blessings, and to forget how barbarous, horrible and unchristian war really is. We hear far off the echo of the conflict. If we but saw it close at hand in all its horror and hideousness we should understand more clearly what General Sherman meant when he said, "War is hell," and into our thought and speech, and even into our prayers about this bloody conflict there would come a deeper seriousness.

### The Scriptures a Source of National Strength.

It was important to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the restored community under Nehemiah and Ezra, that the walls of Jerusalem should be rebuilt, that all prudent measures should be adopted and the most strenuous efforts put forth to secure the safety and material welfare of the people who were yet but a small and feeble folk. To this end the leaders, and especially Nehemiah, had labored with indomitable earnestness and courage, and, in spite of all the guileful and open opposition of enemies, with an encouraging measure of success. But the leaders of the restored Israel were wise in recognizing that there are things more important to the health and prosperity of a people than the most impregnable of city walls and all other external defences. The strength of a community or a nation consists much less in such defences than in the character of its people. If Great Britain's navy and all her equipments of war were presented to China today that would not make of China a strong nation. Nor is the strength of a people determined merely by the measure of its brain and brawn. A high degree of national strength is not attainable apart from moral excellence. The virtues of patriotism, courage and perseverance—virtues so essential to national strength and continuance—can flourish at their best only in a people among whom conduct is controlled by enlightened conscience. Laxity of morals in a people means a loss of national strength. When virtue has failed in the individual life and in the home, when municipal and political life has become hopelessly corrupt, the semblance of national strength may for a time remain, but it is as true of that nation as it is of a rotten-hearted tree that its glory is departed, its doom is sealed and the crash of ruin is impending.

Never has it been so widely and intelligently recognized as it is today that a really vitalized and healthy morality must be rooted in religious faith. The branch separated from the parent stock may for a little time support beautiful and fragrant flowers which have drawn their life from a deeper source, but soon the flowers fade and the withering branch is powerless to reproduce their beauty and their fragrance. What is purest, sweetest, most healing and purifying in the moral world today draws its life from Christ, and, cut off from him, its beauty and its blessing fade and fail. The leaders

of the new Jewish community were wise in their endeavor to nourish and strengthen the spiritual and moral life of the people through instruction in the teachings of the sacred Scriptures, through which the holy will and the redeeming love of God are revealed to man. And such instruction is no less important to the lives of men and of nations in our day. If the Bible of Nehemiah's day was as worthy of attention, the Bible of our day, being so much greater both as to quantity and the fulness of its revelation, is still more worthy the study of this generation. It is no empty saying that "the Bible is the secret of England's greatness." There are, of course, natural forces and elements of power not to be disregarded; but the people whose reception and expression of Bible teaching has been most intelligent and complete march in the vanguard of civilization. To millions of individual lives not consciously or professedly Christian, the Bible is ministering sweetness and light and power. Skeptics and agnostics may pronounce the religion of the Bible a superstition, but none of them probably would vote to have the Bible, with all its ministers and its influences, banished from the community in which he makes his home.

### Editorial Notes

—Sir Wilfrid Lawson, widely known on account of his long and able services to the cause of Temperance in Great Britain, attained the age of three score years and ten on the fourth of October. He was presented with a congratulatory address by the staff of the United Kingdom Alliance. The address referred to the consecration of Sir Wilfrid's life to the highest interests of humanity, assuring him that in the homes of countless thousands throughout the world his name was greatly loved, and in years to come would be held in lasting remembrance as the apostle of peace as well as of temperance.

—Several Canadian dailies have each sent a special correspondent with the Canadian contingent to South Africa. Among these is the Montreal Herald, which is sending not only a special correspondent thoroughly versed in military affairs, but also a special artist, who will furnish the Herald exclusively with sketches and photographs of the scenes on sea and land in which the Canadian contingent shall participate. This artist, Mr. S. C. Simonski, is one of the leading Canadian illustrators and the Herald is doubtless to be congratulated in having secured his services.

—Dr. Joseph Parker has of late been preaching every Thursday in his City Temple pulpit, and the congregations, according to the British Weekly, are such as must delight the preacher. In rain, sunshine or fog, there is the same eagerness to hear, and ministers from all parts of London are to be seen in attendance. On a recent occasion Dr. Parker preached from the text, "He that is now called a prophet was before-time called a seer," one application of which was as follows: He that is now called agnostic was before-time called a blind man. I prefer the before-time description, said the preacher, it seems to get nearer the truth. I never knew a blind fellow-creature who was proud, but who ever knew a humble agnostic?

—It will be seen that in another column the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ministers' Annuity and Relief and Aid Fund pleads with characteristic earnestness and ability this good cause which he has so much at heart. A few weeks ago we devoted some attention to this subject, and it seems unnecessary to do more now in this connection than to call the attention of our readers to this subject as one most worthy of their support. To make such provision for our infirm ministers and their families, or for the families of those who have fallen in harness, is surely a duty which our people will not wish to neglect. As we have before pointed out, one generous annual collection in each of our churches will meet the requirements of the case. We hope that the collection for which Dr. Saunders appeals may be both general and generous.

—It must be a good many years, we should judge, since this part of the country has presented so wintry an appearance at this season of the year. We seem to have passed from summer to winter at a leap. For much of the weather during the past week, if not exactly summer-like, was at least of that mild and pleasant sort known and esteemed as