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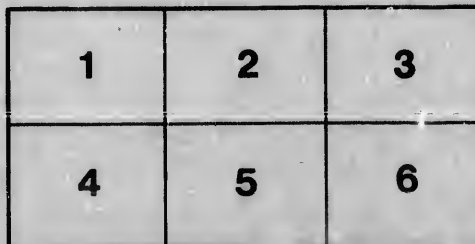
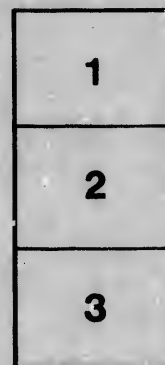
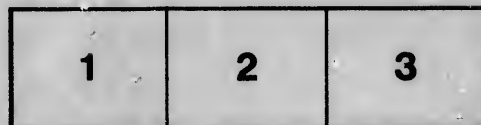
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MODERN
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

CANNOT BE TRULY LIKENED

TO THE

Regiments of an Army.

BY THE

REV. HARRY L. YEWENS, MISSIONARY,

MOUNT FOREST, ONT.

MOUNT FOREST:

PRINTED AT THE "EXAMINER" CHEAP BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.

1876.

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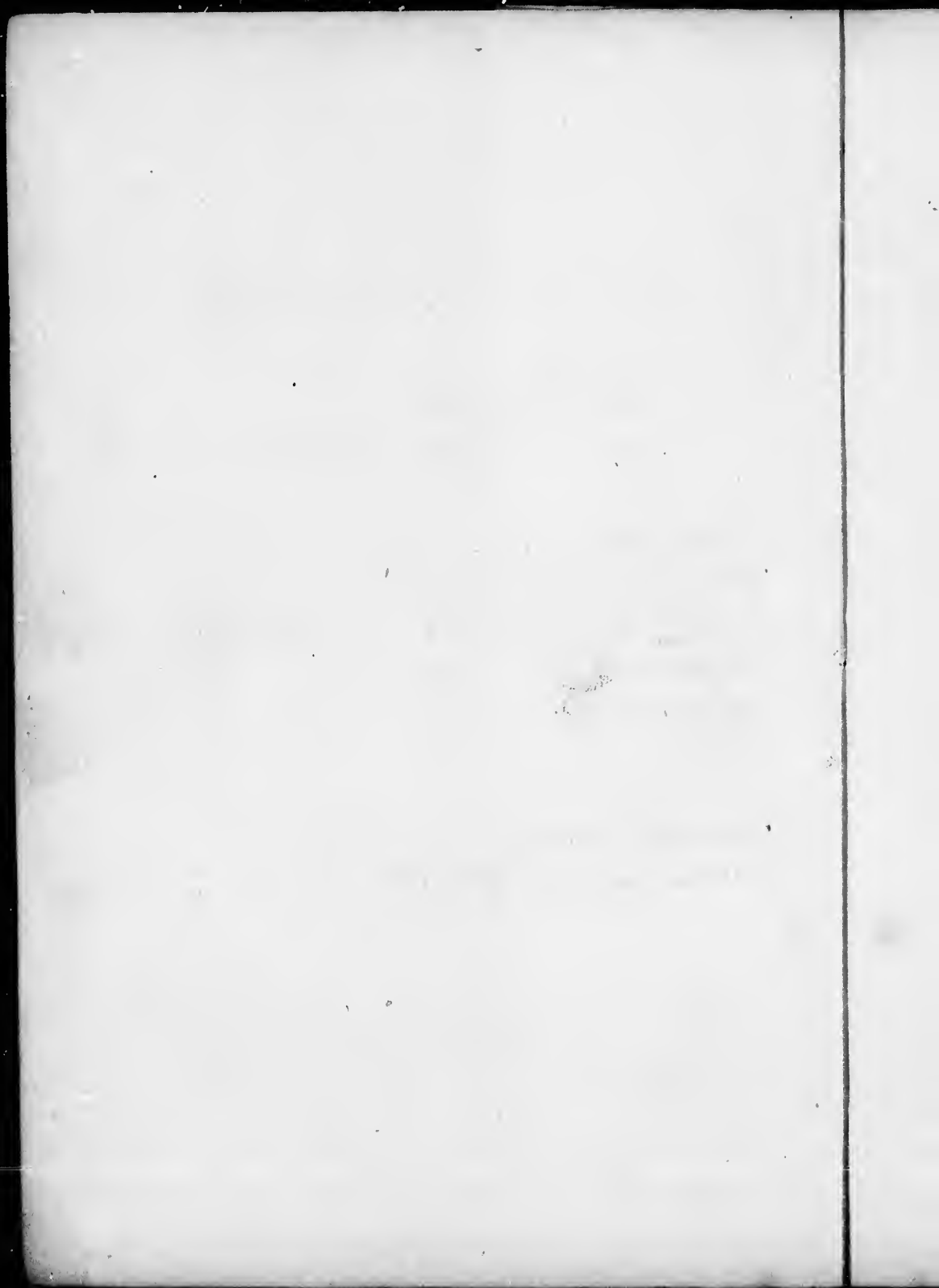
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EXPLANATORY.

These pages owe their publication to the fact, that some remarks in the same line, made by the Rev. Mr. Yewens at a certain public gathering in Mount Forest, were commented upon by a later speaker, not with argument, nor with courtesy, but with ill concealed sneer, and discourteous epithet. Such weapons the Great Master has not put into the hands of His servants, therefore Mr. Yewens is content to reply with plain reasoning.

Mount Forest, Jan. 16th, 1876,



MODERN
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

CANNOT BE TRULY LIKENED

TO THE

REGIMENTS OF AN ARMY.

False metaphors, inappropriate similes, are among the most frequent and effective aids to erroneous opinions and mistaken beliefs.

Figurative language has a charm for all minds. Perhaps the pleasure, certainly the influence of it increases in proportion as men are less and less capable of sound logical reasoning. A figure that carries on its surface an appearance of being applicable to any subject is gladly received, and soon becomes firmly embedded in the mind. Every argument which may afterwards be presented to the understanding is made to pass under its shadow before it can reach the judgment. Thus, blocking up the avenues by which the central faculty of the intellect receives the materials upon which to act, a false figure can hold the mind so firmly to the allegiance of error, that this will not be dislodged from its throne by a large amount of sound reasoning.

It is no trifling thing, then, to prove, if one can, the falseness of a figure which men have accepted in relation to an important subject of thought. If successful we shall open some minds to the light of Truth before shut out; how much of connected truth may follow in its train it may be difficult to anticipate; still less can we foretell the benefits that one truth clearly and fully admitted into one mind shall work out.

A number of years ago, a public speaker, possessing more liveness of imagination than soundness of judgment, put forth the simile, at a public meeting in England, that the Religious Denominations of Protestant Christendom were like the Regiments of an Army, fighting, indeed, with

certain diversities of form and order, and under separate and distinct officers, but all in One Common Cause, under One Supreme Commander, against One Common Enemy.

The conceit was pretty enough, but, alas, it was false. It was eagerly caught up, however, by many persons who cou'd not or would not look beneath its superficial statement; and, from that day to this, it has been so frequently repeated, as to become, with many, a decisive test by which to try, not only the soundness of other men's thoughts, but also the character of their minds, almost the truth of their religion.

These pages are written to prove that the simile is false.

It may not be amiss in the outset to take note of the fact, that in the New Testament, although the Christian disciple is spoken of as a soldier, and many facts and circumstances of warfare are employed to represent the conditions and features of spiritual life and work, yet the Christian Church is never described under the emblem of an Army. This omission, and the character of those emblems under which the Church is represented in Holy Writ, may well suggest a doubt as to the fitness of the one in question, except in a very partial and imperfect application.

But it may be urged that the constant use among all Christian bodies of the language of the poet--

"One Army of the Living God,"

amounts to a general acceptance of the emblem, which therefore cannot be set aside by any individual.

Well, be it so. We are ready to admit that the figure may be used: but we would contend, if necessary, that it is applicable only in a limited sense—that it is a figure of very inferior force and value to those which the Holy Spirit has employed in the Sacred writings.

But it is necessary to add, that an army, used as a figure of the Church, does not of necessity involve Regiments. The armies of ancient times, especially those of which mention is made in the Bible, were ignorant of them. The armies of the feudal ages had them not. They are a product of modern times and circumstances.

"But," it may be said, "an army must have some divisions." Doubtless—and the divisions of the armies of former days corresponded exactly to those divisions which only the Scripture of God knows, as rightly appertaining to the Christian Church. They were local. The men of the same country, or part of a country, were marshalled separately under their own officers, and fought together, side by side, in the field. So in the Epistles of St. Paul we read of "the Churches of the Galatians," "the Church of the Thessalonians," "the Church of God which is at Corinth," and so on. But no where do we find the least recognition

of any other kind of division than that of locality acknowledged as right in the Christian Church; though we do find other kinds of divisions (ones in principle with those of modern days) condemned.

But now, in order to show that, in every point of view, the "Regiments of an Army," and "Modern Religious Denominations," are diverse in the principle of their respective relations, let us observe these facts.

In modern military organization the Regiment is the true unit, and an army is a composite body formed of many units brought together to serve the need of the time. The Army has no existence apart from the Regiments which compose it; but each Regiment continues to exist as a unit, though removed by the superior authority from one Army, and joined to another, or separated from any relation to other troops and existing by itself simply as a Regiment.

In the Christian organization the Church is the true unit, and any proper divisions are but fractions of that unit, which have come into being by its own power of extension and growth under the Blessing of its Head, and if any of them can be absolutely and perfectly cut off from its relation to the unit, it then ceases to be altogether.

Thus the principle of the relation in each of these things is utterly diverse from, and contradictory to the other.

Does any one doubt the facts thus stated? We will prove them.

It should be observed, by the way, that the name, Army, is employed in two different senses. It expresses, on the one hand, the whole military force of a country, organized, and subject in every part to a Central Authority, as when we speak of "The British Army" or "The Army of the United States." On the other hand, it is given to a distinct body of troops, gathered together in time of war, and operating together in the field, under the supreme command of one General Officer. In this sense, in every great war, each side has more than one Army in the field.

Here comes out the partial and imperfect character of the emblem; for, in truth, the two distinct uses of the name, Army, have to be combined and commingled in order to apply it to the life and work of the Christian Church. Most truly that Church is, if an army at all, an Army in the field of active warfare; but then, there is, and can be, only "One Army of the Living God"; while in every great war, as everybody knows, each nation has, and must have, more than one army in the field, operating and fighting independently of one another.

But to proceed to the proofs of the facts just now stated.

The Regiment, say in the British Army, is the true unit. In the feudal age every great Baron armed his own retainers and vassals, and

they fought under his banner. There was no Regiment. When that system gave way before the encroachments of the principles of personal liberty, &c., out of which modern society has grown, certain great Lords, and others, under the authority, and by warrant of the King, raised, each in his own district of country, a body of men for military service, which that great Lord and his subordinates officered, and led into the field, under the King's commission, given and certified by his sign manual. Such was the beginning of Regiments, and in that beginning each Regiment is seen to be a distinct unit. Hence an Army, whether it be the Standing Army of Great Britain, or the "Army of the Crimea" in the Russian War, is but a name for a number of these units--these Regiments put together on paper or on the field. The Army may, and will, melt away into nothing when in time of peace the Regiments are separated and dispersed, but each Regiment remains a true unit still in its own appointed quarters.

How wholly opposite and contradictory is the original and inner relation of the Church of Christ. In this, the Church--the Army--is the true unit. The great King did not give his warrant and commission to Peter to go and raise a Petrine Regiment, to Andrew to raise an Andrewine Regiment, to John to raise a Johannian Regiment, and so on; but he said, in relation to the work which these, and others also, were to do by His authority and under His commission--"Upon this rock I will build *my Church*." The Church is the true unit; and as a unit it was as perfect and complete on the day of Pentecost, when, under the first active operation of the Spirit of God, its organization was accomplished, and the City of Jerusalem held all its members--it was, we say, as a unit, as perfect and complete then as it is now, when its fractions are spread out in every land.

Now let us turn the picture--let us look at this simile from the other side, the origin and beginnings of modern Religious Denominations, and how will these compare with the original creation of any Regiment in an Army.

Most modern Religious Denominations in this country are derived from bodies of the same name in England, and originated somewhat thus:--there being already a Church--a division of the Christian Army--in England, certain persons, belonging to it, charged it with more or less of unfaithfulness or disobedience to the Great Master, in respect to some matter of doctrine or of duty, of regimen or of practice; on such ground they came out and separated themselves, some at one time, some at another; some on this side some on that; they set up each a new camp; and occupied themselves with going round among the tents

the Christian soldiery, persuading and enticing them to forsake the standards under which they had been fighting, and come and join their new "Regiment"

Let us now take the case of an Army in the field, engaged in active warfare, and ask how far such a manner of creating a Regiment would be possible? What would be thought of—what would be done with the man who should attempt it? What name such a "Regiment" would receive? We need not waste paper and ink in spreading out the comparison. The mere suggestion of it is sufficient to make apparent, at once, that this "Regiment" simile is not only false, but foolish.

Yet again, for but a moment. The Regiments of an Army are engaged in fighting against a common enemy. What success would this Army have? How long would it stand up in the field before its foe? What would speedily become its condition if the Regiments of which it is composed spent one quarter, or one-tenth of their time in winning recruits from one another, in squabbling over a raw countryman as to which Regiment he should join, in showing the enemy what each might consider the weak places of another Regiment in the battle, and so forth? Yet this is what is done, and must be done, in large measure and degree, by some Denominations, as necessary to their very existence. For the doctrines of some Denominations are so utterly contradictory to those of others, that the life and growth of the one must be a cause, or an effect, of the decrease and decay of another, or of others. And in other cases, where the essential necessity may not be so apparent, the history of Denominations shows that the fact has ever been much the same. Some common warfare against the great adversary of God and man there may be; but alas, too much of the time, and energy, and skill of Religious Denominations is wasted in mutual antagonisms and fierce contentions—in seeking to build up each its own strength and following, not by gaining from the general enemy, but by pulling down, and drawing from one another. But this course simply would not be permitted in the Regiments of an Army. It would be utterly destructive of the whole organization, if it could exist. Therefore the simile under consideration is manifestly false and misleading.

Once more. We have already said that we find in the Epistles of St. Paul divisions in the Christian Church, one in principle with those of modern days, condemned. We adduce, in proof of this, two passages, out of many, that are plain and emphatic in their application. They both occur in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, where we read, first, (Chapter i, verses 10, 12, 13) "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing,

and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. * * * Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" And again, (Chapter iii, verses 3, 4,) "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

It would be impossible to produce any ancient writing in which the facts and conditions of one age are more clearly and emphatically condemned under the forms and names of the circumstances of another than in these passages, the open standing and mutual relations of modern Religious Denominations in any city or village of to-day, are condemned under the form of those divisions which many of the Corinthian Christians ought to establish in Corinth of old.

These Corinthians desired to organize just such "Regiments" as our modern Denominations, and they would give the Colonelcy of one to Paul, of another to Cephas or Peter, of a third to Apollos. But the great Apostle would have nothing to do with any such work. He boldly declared that it was a sin against the Saviour; not a spiritual work but a carnal one, which was contradictory to, destructive of the true faith and life of Christian men. He abhorred the thought that the Christians of the great city of Corinth should present the spectacle which the Christians of every little village in the land present to-day.

They were divided, doubtless, into several congregations, by the simple fact of worshipping together in different houses or localities, (Romans xvi., 16; see also v. 5; I. Corinthians xvi., 19; Philemon 2) but they were not several Communion. they still together formed but *One Church of God which is at Corinth.*" Most abhorrent to St. Paul's mind was the possibility of their being divided, separated, and known not simply by the name of Christ, but by the names of men, His servants, whether Peter, or Paul or Apollos, or of any other earthly name. The names Baptist, Wesleyan, Universalist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and the like, express the very same principle which St. Paul, as above, so emphatically condemned. This therefore is the very fact which some would put in so false and mischievous a light, when they would represent it as like the Regiments of an Army.

Of the name Episcopalian, we will just add, that the Church of England is wholly ignorant of it, her daughter Church in this land needs not to

know it, and every Churchman would surely act most closely to his principles by repudiating it as the name of his religion.

The preceding pages having been written, a little must be added to prevent, as far as lies in our power, the misrepresentation which some, it must be feared, would gladly make of them.

While, then, we emphatically assert that the divided condition of modern Christendom is a contradiction of what the great Head of the Church required of His people, and therefore protest against the hiding of its proper character under the false and misleading emblem of the Regiments of an Army, we yet gladly acknowledge that the Christians of past days are much more responsible for this evil condition than those of to-day, multitudes of whom inherit Schism as a misfortune, and a blight upon their fair portion in Christ. We rejoice also in the evidences of various kinds, rising up all around, that the Spirit of God is striving with men for the lessening, and gradual eradication of this great blot upon our common Christianity. We have hailed it as among these evidences, that, in this village, four Christian bodies, of two names, that were standing separate, and more or less antagonistic, have lately become fused into two. Though a small matter by comparison, yet it shows the advance of the same better principle among Christian people which we see elsewhere manifested in common actions upon a larger scale, and having a wider influence. It also exhibits proof of an inward consciousness of the fact, which the Regiment simile smothers up, that the smaller and less important the grounds of difference, the greater is the sin against the Master in our existing divisions.

Great obligations of obedience to the Master's Word—of faithful holding to the Truth which we understand him to have revealed, may afford a certain kind of justification for our standing apart, while, through the blinding influence of sin, and the small measure of Divine Grace used, the mists of ignorance and the fogs of error deceive sincere and faithful men, each keenly conscientious in the obedience of that point of truth or duty, which each perhaps sees only dimly and imperfectly. But the division which can claim no important principle as its root, no necessity of strict obedience to the Master's Word, so understood, or even misunderstood, as its cause, is surely without justification, wholly carnal and guilty.

No good, then, but harm only, can be done by saying "our differences are but trifles: we are only divers Regiments in the same Army." If

our differences are but trifles, we are great sinners against the Lord, our Master; for the Bonds by which he unites us into One Body are no trifles, but are very weighty and of solemn authority.

Rather let us clearly recognize the full importance and authoritative character, as in the Master's sight, of those principles and duties (where they really exist) which divide us, of necessity, and then set the keener watch, and the closer guard, that the breach of charity may be rendered as small as possible. While, in the formal and solemn service of the Lord, the obligation of principle and of duty requires us to work separately and apart, let us, in all private and social ways, as men and fellow citizens, seek to draw near together in the spirit of wisdom and of love, that we may rightly understand each other, and do each other good.

