

## Messenger and Visitor

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### God and the Nation

It is wise to recognize a power and a wisdom greater than man's in the development of national life and the determination of national destiny. A people may err presumptuously no doubt in taking it for granted that they are the specially favored children of Providence, and in assuming that all things must work together for the furtherance of their own national enterprises and ambitions. On the other hand a people may err still more egregiously in ignoring the influence of the Divine Hand upon the affairs of this world. Men propose many things which are disposed according to a higher purpose than their own. Men and nations do many things for evil, which a higher wisdom overrules for good.

In our own country at the present time, it is plain to see that national development is proceeding along lines determined largely by conditions and events over which the Canadian people have had little or no control. The time was, not so very long ago, when many astute observers of political affairs, both in this country, in the United States and in Great Britain, were declaring that the probable destiny of the British North American colonies was to be absorbed into the United States. The time was, too, when such a destiny was viewed with more or less favor by a very considerable number of the people of these Provinces, and when a generous commercial policy and a conciliatory attitude in reference to other matters might possibly have prepared the way for a political union. But whatever chance the great Republic may have had to effect a peaceful conquest of Canada it threw away, when, instead of admitting the northern half of the continent to participate in its trade on favorable terms, the United States adopted the policy of building up its tariff walls to an almost prohibitive height against Canadian products, and maintaining toward this country an attitude which in other respects has been far from conciliatory. The effect has been most effectually to check any sentiment favorable to annexation that had found place in the breasts of Canadians. The products of the Dominion, shut out from United States markets, have sought, and, in increasing volume, are finding a market in Great Britain. And with its trade, the thoughts and affections of Canada have turned the more strongly to the Motherland. Within the past few years the people of Canada, as well as those of the Australasian colonies, have been developing a consciousness of their dignity as a component part of the British Empire. And now in this great war, under the black shadow of which the British nation stands today, the bonds which bind together in one nationality the peoples that compose this Greater Britain, are being cemented in blood. The talk with which we were so familiar a few years back, as to its being the manifest destiny of Canada to become a part of the great American Republic, is no longer heard, nor is there heard from across the sea any of the "little Englander" talk of the colonies being a source of weakness rather than of strength to the nation. Never were the reciprocal relations between the daughters and the motherland so cordial, never were the bonds so firm that bind all parts of the empire into one.

The British nation is at this time passing through a most trying experience. Her enemies—and they are many—see her placed in a position which cause them to shoot out the lip at her and to exult in what

seems to them the signs that the days of her supremacy are numbered. But we need not regard the utterances of envious nations as if they were the prophets of the Lord. For nations, as well as for individuals, there are providential chastisements, and neither in the one case nor in the other are the stripes received wisely interpreted as proof that God has forsaken those who have trusted in him. It is wise in national, as well as in personal, affairs, not to judge the Lord by feeble sense. The cloud that now hangs so heavy and black over the British Empire may hold more of mercy and blessing, both for this Empire and the world, than the most brilliant successes upon the battlefield could have brought. It is more than probable that chastisement was needed, and that an easy success for the British forces in this war would have meant a curse rather than a blessing. The jingo spirit has been too much in evidence, and some of the utterances heard even in the pulpits seem to come rather from the—

"Heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard,"  
than from the Christian heart, that cries—  
"Thy mercy on thy people, Lord."

For the British Empire, so greatly blessed of God in the past, and now gathering to itself large elements of strength in the healthy, vigorous life of its great and growing colonies, we confidently hope still greater things than the past has revealed. But it will be well if the present experience shall work in the nation a stronger faith in God, and a true humility which shall rebuke all arrogance of heart and vain boasting of wild tongues. For the nation that is to receive God's largest blessings and be his minister to the world for good, must be able to accept humbly his rebukes and learn the lessons which he teaches.

### Making Disciples

In the Bible lesson for the current week are seen the first disciples of Jesus gathering to their Master. The passage contains much to interest and to instruct. Here is John the Baptist, standing forth in rugged honesty and beautiful humility, in his character of herald and witness-bearer, pointing his own disciples to that greater One in whom are met the supreme heights of Lordship, and the profoundest depths of self-sacrificing love, who is the world's king and the world's sin-offering—both Son of God and Lamb of God. There is a great and beautiful lesson for us in John's attitude toward Jesus,—his kinsman according to the flesh, his Lord according to the Spirit. In John's great loyal heart jealousy finds no place. He knows that he is not himself that Light for which the world has so long waited. But the Light is come, and he, rejoicing to be its herald, is content to disappear at the coming of the perfect day, swallowed up, like the morning star, in the fulness of that light of which it is his glory to be the harbinger.

It is instructive to observe how men came to be associated with Jesus as his disciples. We may feel sure that he did not choose men without respect to their fitness for intimate discipleship and apostleship, and on the other hand, it was certainly not their great qualities, as men count greatness, that determined his choice. Each one of these men experienced and demonstrated the truth of that principle which Jesus enunciated, "To him that hath shall be given." The men mentioned in the lesson were evidently all disciples of John. They were his disciples in this sense at least, that they had been attracted by his preaching, had listened to his message, and had believed his prediction of the Messiah about to appear. Two of them were with John when he pointed out Jesus, and declared him to be the Lamb of God. At once they followed Jesus that they might know more of him, and hear the truth from his own lips. And as they listened to his words, the conviction strengthened in their hearts that John's testimony concerning him was true. They also went to seek their own brothers—men who doubtless were of like spirit with themselves, and when they had found them they brought them to Jesus, that they too might hear and believe.

So it is always; those who have advanced toward the truth with attentive ears and honest hearts, shall receive larger measures of truth as their capacity and willingness to receive it enlarge. The eyes that are open to the light and promise of the morning star, shall by and by behold the glory of the rising sun; the ears that are attentive to the voice that cries in the wilderness—"Prepare ye the way," shall by and by hear the voice of the king himself. Those who are ready to accept the invitation of Jesus, "Come and see," will by and by be able to say with full conviction, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is not given to every man to be a John, a Peter, or a Paul, but to every humble, believing, soul, it is given to enter the inner circle of intimate discipleship, and in some real sense to be an apostle of Christ.

We learn from the lesson also, how the circle of

discipleship was enlarged. Evidently it was largely through the influence of those, who, having come near to Jesus, and having felt the influence of his matchless personality, went and sought out their brethren or their friends, to tell them of him whom they had found, and to bring them also to Jesus. It is by this means largely, that the knowledge and the power of Christianity has been extended through the world. An Andrew finds the Christ, and goes and tells his brother Simon; a John comes into loving touch with the Master, and brings to him his brother James; Philip is found of Jesus, and straightway announces to his friend Nathanael that the Messiah has come; a woman feels her heart laid bare to the pure eyes of Jesus, and hastens to tell her friends and acquaintances of this Searcher of hearts, and to ask, "Is not this the Christ?" Personal testimony, reflecting personal experience, has ever been a most potent factor in promoting the spread of vital Christianity in the world. More convincing, more potent to bring men and women to Christ, than the most eloquent enforcement of truth, is the broken testimony of some contrite heart which, bowing before the Lord, has felt the healing touch of his love, and received the gracious assurance, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." What the world needs today is more of this testimony,—more of the experience out of which such testimony is born.

### Editorial Notes

—It is doubtless a great thing to have convictions, but it is to be feared that what a great many persons cherish as their sacred convictions, might better be described as their stubborn determination to look upon only one side of a question.

—As an illustration of how silly a great preacher can be, when left to himself, as Ian Maclaren would say, we have Dr. Joseph Parker saying, "I know that the twentieth century begins on January 1st, 1900, and no man in his senses can doubt it."

—Some religious newspapers in the United States seem to fear that any effort on the part of the people of that country to relieve the famine-stricken people of India would be an unjustifiable interference with the prerogatives of the British Government, whose duties, they consider, must be understood to include an adequate provision for the wants of all its Indian subjects. But as the famine is said to be sorely pinching some twenty-five or thirty millions of people, in those parts of India which are under the rule of native princes, American philanthropy need not feel restricted or embarrassed by the apprehension that, in aiding the starving people of India, it would be assuming any part of the "white man's burden" which legitimately belongs to John Bull.

—We learn that Rev. Charles A. Eaton, of Toronto, is to visit the Maritime Provinces in the latter part of March or early in April. He is expected to lecture in St. John, and perhaps in other places as well. Mr. Eaton, who is a native of Nova Scotia and a graduate of Acadia, is a man of much more than ordinary intellectual power, and for some years past has been a recognized and growing force in the religious life of Toronto. He is a man of large heart and broad outlook, an earnest and intelligent student of social and political problems, intensely patriotic and deeply interested in whatever makes for human welfare. We are very much pleased to hear of Mr. Eaton's intended visit to the Maritimes, and we doubt not that when he shall appear on a platform in this city, or elsewhere in these provinces, he will receive a very hearty welcome.

—Two Englishmen distinguished in the world of letters have passed away, both at an advanced age, since the new year came in. One was Dr. James Martineau, eminent as philosopher, educator and theologian, who died January 12, in his 95th year. Dr. Martineau was of Huguenot ancestry and of Presbyterian parentage. He rapidly rose to eminence as a lecturer, preacher and writer, and in various fields of thought and learning became a recognized master. Theologically Dr. Martineau was classed as a Unitarian, although he did not care to be called by that name, and he probably had much more in common with Trinitarians than with most of the Unitarians of America. The other eminent name which has been lately added to the roll of the departed is that of John Ruskin, whose death occurred on the twentieth instant, having nearly completed his eighty-first year. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and graduated in 1842. He devoted himself to art, and won distinction, not as an artist, but as an art critic. He was also a great ethical teacher, and the intensity of his convictions and expressions on ethical subjects made him seem akin to the ancient prophets. In point of style Ruskin takes rank among the very best of English prose writers. Two other names of lesser note, but not unknown to fame, have been added to the death roll during the month. These are R. D. Blackmoor, best known as the author of "Lorna Doone," and G. W. Stevens, the distinguished war correspondent and author of "With Kitchener at Khartoum." Mr. Stevens died of enteric fever at Ladysmith.

—Writing in the London Baptist Times, of the progress made by the Free churches of England,

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