

# The Fraternal.

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*LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS for the FRATERNAL should be addressed to the Editor, Rev. F. C. SPURR, Regent's Park Chapel, N.W., and all other communications to the Secretary, Rev. E. D. deRUSSETT, Baptist Church, Harrow.*

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## From the Editor's Chair.

The Retreat, held at Hampstead on November 9th, is described elsewhere in this number by Mr. Stuart. His article merits careful reading. It has been frequently said that Free Churchmen do not possess the genius for holding retreats. There is a fraction of truth in the allegation. I am bound to admit that the so-called 'Quiet Days' some of us have known in years past have been frequently ruined by over chattering; the very essence of a retreat was missing. Mr. Thomson conducted the Hampstead retreat *perfectly*; it is not possible to suggest any improvement upon his method. It was a day long to be remembered.

A retreat for brethren in the S.E. district is to be held at Lee Chapel (Rev. F. G. French) on Thursday, February 3rd. A large attendance is hoped for. All Baptist Ministers, whether members of the "Fraternal" or not, will be heartily welcomed.

Hearty congratulations to Dr. Ewing, our Vice-President, upon his double appointment as Superintendent for the London area in connection with the Sustentation Scheme, and as Secretary of the L.B.A. The Secretary of the Fraternal points out that five out of the eight members of our Council have been appointed as District Superintendents under the Sustentation

Scheme. We offer them also our hearty congratulations. They all have a great opportunity of furthering the interests of the "Fraternal."

The articles in the present number of our paper are of exceptional interest. Dr. Wicks contributes the first of several valuable theological articles. Mr. Vicks' paper is most timely in view of the Evangelical effort being put forth by the L.B.A., as well as in the light of a proposal to make a National mission appeal to the country. Captain Hughes, C.F., deals with a subject which every minister will be called upon to face when the war is over. Mr. Stuart tells the story of the Hampstead retreat.

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## Our Ideals.

"What true preacher at middle life does not recal the fair portraiture of the man, the ambassador from heaven, the shepherd of Christ's flock, which adorned in earlier years the picture gallery of his imagination? What a noble picture it was! How free from earthly stain! How brave and unselfish in service, wedded to noble poverty! How happy in simplicity of motive and zeal in action! How dignified in humble bearing! How salutary and loving in conversation with men! How intimate and constant in communion with God! With mind spiritually illumined, soul rapt with eloquent utterance by the sublimities of your theme, with voice modulated to the thunders of rebuke, the pathos of entreaty and the clarion tones of triumphant faith, you saw yourself standing before eager and silent throngs, an apostle of God confessed! Such was the ideal. Alas! how far distant, as yet, we are from its full rounded realization! In truth, to most men, for all their early dreaming, middle life reveals a rather commonplace reality, and inspiration, with broken wing, limps painfully along, with growing sense of dissatisfaction, through failure to apprehend that for which we were apprehended of Christ as His ministers."

# The Doctrine of Justification by Faith.

By **Rev. H. J. WICKS, B.A., D.D.**

In any discussion of this vitally important subject, one is obliged to travel over ground much of which is familiar to every preacher of the Christian Gospel. But it has been thought that a restatement of some of the great doctrines may be of service, and in that hope I venture to offer this article to my brethren. According to St. Paul's teaching, God justifies men freely by His grace through faith, and by means of a redemption price which has been paid, or (as he otherwise puts it) by means of a propitiation which has been offered. But the limits of our space will make it necessary for us to omit in this paper any treatment of the relations between Justification and the Atonement. We confine ourselves to an examination of the phrase "Justified by Faith." Now for our purpose, we must be at the trouble to appraise our terms accurately, to weigh them with care, for if we do not form a correct estimate of the value of the words we are using we shall build our theology on sand instead of on solid rock.

I.—We begin, therefore, with an enquiry into the precise significance of the word "Justification." There is an age-long controversy on this matter between the Roman Church and those Churches which have sprung from the Reformation. The orthodox doctrine of Rome, as defined authoritatively by the Council of Trent, is that "justification is not merely the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man." In adopting that view the Council was following in the footsteps of Chrysostom and Augustine. In one passage, Augustine admits that it is possible to interpret the verb "to justify" as meaning "to reckon righteous," but he usually regards it as having the signification "to make righteous." Chrysostom takes the same view as Augustine, though he also in one place interprets the verb in a manner contrary to his wont. This occurs when he is

explaining the phrase, "It is God that justifieth." He paraphrases his text thus: "The Judge's sentence declares us just." The Reformers, however, insisted that the verb cannot mean "to make just." Luther, for example, defined his great article of a falling or a standing church thus: "God accepts or reckons us righteous solely on account of (or through) faith in Christ." ("*Deus acceptat seu reputat nos justos solum propter fidem in Christum.*") Beyond all question, the Reformers were right. In order to see that, there is no need to enter into any discussion of the nature of Greek verbs in *ὁω*. The Biblical use of the word will be plain to any English reader who is at the pains to look up the instances of the use of the word with the aid of a concordance. Take, for example, in the Old Testament, Proverbs XVII, 15, "He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord." Or consider such a New Testament passage as Romans III., 4, where St. Paul speaks of God Himself as being justified in His words. Luke has a similar passage (VII., 29), in which he says that those who submitted to John's baptism "justified God." I take it that our Lord's declaration that "Wisdom is justified of her works" (or her "children"), bears a closely similar meaning. To justify God, the Eternal Wisdom, *can* only be to pronounce Him just. But the *locus classicus* for our purpose in the New Testament is Romans IV., 5: "To him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." There is therefore no room for any reasonable doubt as to the meaning of the word. The Biblical *usus loquendi* makes it quite unmistakable. The word calls up before the eye of the mind the picture of a solemn court of justice. The Judge takes his seat on the bench. The prisoner stands in the dock. Evidence for and against the accused man is heard at length. It becomes growingly clear that the case for the prosecution has broken down absolutely. The man is innocent of any offence against the law. He leaves the court without a stain on his character. He is justified. But this is not the scene which

St. Paul's language brings before us when we consider what he predicates of justified men. The accused men whom he has in mind are known to be guilty, yet they are declared or treated as not guilty. They are not justified by their works, but by grace, and through faith. In fact, that which happens in God's High Court of Justice could not take place in a case tried before any human tribunal. It would indeed be a gross miscarriage of justice, it would be fraught with unspeakable mischief to society if any human magistrate did what God does, according to St. Paul's statement of the case. Our English Sovereign only "pardons" a man when he is wrongfully condemned. But God blots out the offences of transgressors. He reckons the guilty as just.

II.—According to St. Paul's teaching, this act of God takes place by means of faith. Dr. Martin Luther's language quoted above is somewhat ambiguous. It would have been better if he had said that God justifies man *per fidem*. But St. Paul's words are open to no misconception. We are justified, according to him, *through* faith, not *on account of* faith (*διὰ πίστεως*, not *διὰ πιστῆς*). Faith is not a meritorious act or state winning a verdict in our favour, but only a condition of soul which makes possible the exercise of God's pure and undeserved mercy.

But what is justifying faith? It is necessary that we should most carefully examine that word. How easily the preacher of the Word may fail in his mission if he uses great Bible words without explanation, if he is not clear himself, and does not make clear to his hearers the significance of vitally important words like this! It is a large part of our business to translate the Biblical phraseology into other language, making its meaning clearer, and giving the truth a sharper edge. Like most men who try to do this, I am accustomed to say that saving faith is exercised when a man surrenders himself to his Lord and Saviour, when he casts himself on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, when in good earnest he begins to endeavour to do the will of God, counting on the grace promised in the Gospel. But is that true to St. Paul's

conception of the meaning of the word? The answer must be sought by the method of enquiring into his own use of it, for, unlike the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he nowhere attempts to define it, unless indeed he does so in Romans X., 8f. I distinguish then three uses of the word in the Pauline epistles. (1) In Romans III., 3, it has clearly the meaning 'fidelity,' for he is speaking of the 'faith of God,' and the R.V. correctly renders it 'the faithfulness of God.' But that is obviously not what St. Paul means by justifying faith, or he would be asserting the very doctrine to which he is so passionately opposed. (2) In Romans IV., 18, faith is the soul's inward conviction of the reliability of certain Divine promises. (3) But in Romans X., 8f, it is much more than that. This, says the Apostle, is the "the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Remember the Biblical idea of the heart. It is not merely the seat of emotion, but also of thought and will. When one declares what he believes in his heart, his speech is the utterance of the whole inward personality, not the mere confession of a belief held by the intellect. It is his recognition of the truth of God, and his self-surrender to God. The inward conviction causes the man to rise up and range himself definitely among Christ's people. That is faith. The same conception is seen in Philippians III., 7-9, where the Apostle declares that he has suffered the loss of all things in order to obtain the righteousness which is by faith. Faith to him was evidently complete surrender of self to his Lord. It is also to be borne in mind that the faith of which he speaks is always the soul's confidence in a Person, therefore it issues in a certain line of conduct toward him as, for example, confidence in one's medical adviser does, and in this case the Person being what He is, it necessarily eventuates in the revolutionising of character. It involves indeed such deep-seated alteration in the life, that, as St. Paul puts it, he who has

faith cannot continue in sin. It is inconceivable that he should do so. He is a man who has died to sin (Romans VI., 1). It is strange, therefore, that Luther did not see that there is no real controversy between St. James and St. Paul. Examination of the different ways in which the two Apostles use the word faith makes that point perfectly clear. For St. James is arguing against the idea that a man can be justified before God by mere orthodoxy of belief, while yet his creed has no effect on his life (St. James II. 19). He was probably controverting men who had got hold of ideas based upon St. Paul's words, ideas which arose from a misconception of his meaning, and were really a grave departure from his teaching. And it is plain that if St. Paul had seen his brother Apostle's words he would have warmly approved of his doctrine, though in all probability he would have felt impelled to add some comment on St. James's doctrine of justification by faith and works. For that teaching might be easily and very seriously misunderstood so as to be made indeed into an utter denial of the Pauline gospel.

Can we say now, looking back on all this, that St. Paul is supported in this teaching by the words of Christ? For myself, while recognising the spiritual authority of the Apostles as men in a very high degree illuminated by the Holy Spirit, I frankly confess that I gain fresh confidence in Apostolic teaching when I find the Saviour sanctioning it as He does unmistakably sanction the main substance of that doctrine. In attempting, then, to answer our question, I think it must be admitted that there is scanty material for our purpose in the Synoptic Gospels. Still, we have the parable of the Prodigal where the offender is reinstated in a position of favour purely by grace; and we have Christ's words to the sinful woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee." His words in the parable of the Sower are also *ad rem*, when He says of some hearers that "the devil cometh and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." If, however, we take St. John's Gospel into account as we should, we have words of our Lord in V. 24

which might well be the basis of St. Paul's position, words indeed in which the Saviour uses the same forensic illustration. There are also words of Christ—like words of St. Paul for that matter—which may be taken as teaching a judgment based absolutely on merits and demerits. I leave out of consideration the judgment scene at the close of St. Matthew XXV., because that seems to me to be clearly our Lord's description of the judgment of heathendom. But in one place He declares that only he who habitually does the will of God—that is the force of the Greek present tense—shall enter into the Kingdom of God. If, however, we realize the large deep meaning of "faith" as St. Paul uses it, is it not clear that where such faith really exists, it will infallibly issue in those right habits which are the sure proof of its presence in the soul? So the Pauline doctrine, supported by our Lord, is that we come into the light of God's favour by the exercise of that faith which is "the assent of the understanding and the consent of the heart." If that faith is ours, we have not a good hope merely, but may say with John Wesley, "An assurance was given me that my sins were forgiven, even mine." By faith we come into that position. By the daily renewed exercise of the same faith we retain that position.

III.—What are the effects of the act of justification? In a human court it would mean that no penalties are exacted. They cannot be, for the man is innocent. But it is the guilty who are justified by God, and penalties are not wholly remitted. They come on the offender in the course of nature; but "consequences are God's commentaries," and the commentary is not withheld though the man is justified. If he has been licentious, if he has indulged evil habits, if he has forfeited the confidence, love and respect of men, he will not by faith escape the consequences of his wrong deeds.

The fact is, that when we speak of justification by faith we are using the language of metaphor, and the figure of speech is not capable of setting forth the full truth. God and man are related not as mere magistrate and offender, but as Father and

child. Therefore He can do what a mere judge must not do. He can blot out the guilt of the offender. The magistrate dismisses the justified man from his court; but the Father does far more than that. He receives His child into the closest fellowship with Himself. The best illustration we can get is found when we consider the action of a noble and Christlike human love. That action has three stages. First—there is grace to the unrepentant offender. We cannot have the same genial and intimate relations with him as we might have had if he had not done the wrong, or as we might yet have had if he truly repent. If his fault be serious we must not condone it for his own sake. In the case of a father, the very strength of parental love will make the wrongdoing more serious in his eyes than it can be to any stranger. Yet the true father will make it plain to his child that he still loves him, and will strive to bring him to a right mind again. Our Lord lays that duty upon us all, not simply requiring from us the easy task of forgiving an offender when he comes humbly asking for it. "It's not to be expected, I suppose," says Mrs. Glegg, "as I shall go to the mill again before Bessie comes to see me, or as I shall go and fall down o' my knees to Mr. Tulliver and ask his pardon for showing him favours. But I shall bear no malice, and when Mr. Tulliver speaks civil to me, I'll speak civil to him. Nobody has any call to tell me what's becoming." Mrs. Glegg speaks the natural language of the human heart. But Christ teaches us the nobler way, requiring us to be the first to seek new relations with a transgressor. Then, in the second place, there is grace to the repentant, the instant renewal of suspended relations, the blotting out of the offence. But there will be a third stage. The restitution of the wrong-doer to all his old privileges, to the fulness of intimacy and confidence, will be a work of time if he has offended seriously. It cannot be otherwise. If he gives proof of his worthiness, if he is proved and tried in many a matter, the time will come when he will be honoured with full trust, and the old affair will be buried deep beneath conduct which does him too much honour for the fault

to be called to mind. The forgiveness is instantaneous when he repents. But the full effects of it will be worked out slowly. That illustrates, I say, what God does. I would not consent to Ian Maclaren when he says, "Christ does not come between a man and the consequences of his sins." He does. True, there are penalties from which He does not save us, but Ian Maclaren's statement wants qualification. Christ does not save a man from *some* consequences of his sins, and that is mercy, since the consequences are chastening and corrective. But He does save us from the dread ultimate penalties at God's judgment seat. Moreover, when sin is forgiven, it is the making of a new friendship between us and God. He obeys His own law. He seeks us while we are unrepentant. Directly we repent we are received into fellowship with Him as His forgiven children. That means the coming again of God into a life from which He has been shut out, and that coming of God into a life issues inevitably in the ennoblement of the forgiven man, his salvation. It will take time for the full consequences of the forgiveness to develop. But when a man is forgiven, all good is given to him in germ. Its final fruit will be that every evil consequence of his sin will be destroyed for ever.

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"The power of the Christian message lies in the combination of its content with the personality of the individual who declares it. The Word, the living thing which awakens the spiritual life in men, is a distinctly personal thing, and no proclamation of a message avails anything except it have passed through the crucible of a personal experience. The true preacher communicates something of himself; and it is his own living self that vitalizes the message."

*Richard Roberts.*

## The Larger Evangelism.

By **Rev. C. W. VICK.**

The professional evangelist has fallen upon evil times. No one is content with the results achieved by his labours; no one is satisfied with his methods. This is not due to any conspicuous inefficiency on his part, or any lack of sincerity, though Moody's superb qualifications and tremendous enthusiasm have never been equalled, and the bow of Ulysses has found no man to draw it since. It is due to a number of causes, and it is more profitable to accept the result than to speculate upon the influences that have produced it. No man can prophecy with safety. It might even be that the upheaval of the war will create a soil in which the professional evangelist may again reap a great harvest. But at present the signs are not favourable.

Meanwhile the need for evangelism remains. The camping generations pass and pass, and new faces constantly take the places of the old. Each generation, each individual of each generation needs the evangel for his own soul's good, and for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ. Regeneration is not hereditary, though favourable conditions may be. The son of the saint is not always a saint, and the alluring road into the far country is open before his feet, which are sure to stray in its direction if they cannot be persuaded into the narrow way. Looking round upon his own congregation, looking with equal wistfulness upon those who stray shepherdless beyond the walls of every fold, the minister of Christ is constantly wondering how these may be won. He preaches, not without sweat of soul, if he is an honest man; not without winsomeness, if he has realised the sweetness of the Master. Yet the vast majority go their own way, utterly ignoring his message and his Lord; and even of those who listen, how few respond! Sometimes he wonders if another voice would not arrest the careless and awaken the somnolent. Sometimes he

gives his church the opportunity of trying this doubtful remedy, only to learn after the change that things have not greatly improved. Sometimes he summons to his aid a brother beloved with greater evangelistic gifts. There is a little stir for awhile, and that is all. Then a voice whispers, "Why not be your own evangelist?" This is perhaps the most promising suggestion of all. Was it not an early pastor who was exhorted to "do the work of an evangelist," and thus fulfil his ministry? But to carry out this suggestion we need to remember that the dimensions of evangelism are those of the new Jerusalem, the length, breadth and height are equal. Hence we must widen our definition of evangelism. It has become—

(1). Associated with excessive advertisement, great audiences, catchy music and crowd psychology generally. But evangelism is not limited to these methods. It may reveal itself in the devotion of a Sunday School teacher, in quiet personal dealing in a minister's vestry, in a letter written in a study, in a pastoral call.

(2). As our definition widens, it must deepen. To awaken a transient emotion, to drench a people with sentiment, to work a fleeting change by something perilously like hypnotic suggestion is not true evangelism. Emotion has a great place no doubt, but it is emotion kindled not by human energy, but by divine revelation of a Love that shrank not from the Cross, and passing over into the awakening of conscience, the persuasion of judgment, and, above all, the reinforcing of the will.

(3). Nor is the effect of evangelism felt only once for all. We all need periodic conversion. Not only is the soul, awakened from its most deadly slumber apt to fall asleep again, but it is prone to build on every new ledge of achievement an harbour wherein it lingers drowsily and loses its roll. "Awake, thou sleeper!" was addressed to members of a Christian Church. The war has reminded us that a narrow evangelism may produce men deeply concerned about the individual soul, yet as indifferent to the social, commercial and national implications of the faith as

the natural man. Such an evangelism has too often brought a man within the sphere of a conventional Christianity and left him there. It has revealed grace as a privilege rather than a calling, and forgiveness as a comfort instead of a challenge. It has sometimes made a pharisee of the whilom publican, and concealed the fact that Christ's commandment is exceedingly broad.

The secret of the apparently greater success of the evangelist, as contrasted with that of the pastor, is here revealed. The evangelist prophesies to the dry bones. They come together, stand upon their feet, and as he speaks the Spirit breathes life into the forms. Then his work is done. But the evangelist-pastor has to set that army to great achievement, and work and conquest. To be born again is to begin life, not simply to receive it.

Such a conception of evangelism demands high qualifications.

(1) A man who would serve it well must be himself throughout. He must not go forth in untried armour if God has made him proficient with the sling and stone. He must not struggle with the drag-net if he only knows how to cast a line. Moody's qualifications were God's gift to Moody, and they are not to be borrowed, or imitated, or hired.

(2) Determined to be himself, he will adopt the methods he feels he can best use, not trammelled by the old because it is old, or a slave to the new because it is new. If he can speak to the multitude he will both seek and create opportunities of doing so, not even neglecting the "sweet uses of" advertisement, within the limits set by modesty and sincerity. If such gifts are not his, let him not despair. There are individuals to be won, visits to be paid, letters to be written, confidences to be cultivated. The crowd will not come to hear him? Well, but all around his church are streets full of homes. Here Rachel is weeping for her children, and there a haggard man with a telegram from the War Office in his hand, is going blindly up to his chamber crying, "Oh, my son! would God I had died for thee, my son, my son." In yonder room a lad's mother is packing his box

while he dreams of the new appointment in a distant town and its perilous and unaccustomed freedom; and elsewhere a pilgrim of eternity who has lived only for time has just been warned that time for him draws swiftly to its end.

(3) Nor will he neglect to adapt his methods to the people he would win. A sermon is effective not in the proportion in which something has been said by the preacher, but in the proportion in which something has been assimilated by the hearer. A patient study of the lives and circumstances of those whom we would win would make many of us better evangelists than we are. But John Bunyan, in his rhymed preface to the *Pilgrim's Progress* has said this once for all.

(4) "Many a good minister of Jesus Christ is breaking his heart that there are so few results from his work." So one hears. If that means that he is deeply concerned, not about the numbers of his church membership, or the size of his congregation, but about the Kingdom of God, it is good news. A broken-hearted ministry will produce another pentecost. The supreme need is to keep the altar-fires burning brightly. "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love."

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All Subscriptions for the "Fraternal" are now due—1/- for Membership and 1/6 for the Magazine. Please remit to Secretary.

## How to Approach Men.

By Captain L. G. HUGHES, C.F. (serving at the Front).

Every minister, at home, is aware of the difficulty of finding a means of "approaching" people. Many a time now I have longed to be "introduced," or find how to introduce myself to a man. The same difficulty, but in a more accentuated form, faces the Army Chaplain. True, his opportunities are great and unique. He has a mission to men—to all sorts and conditions of men; the variety is almost infinite, and this adds to his perplexities.

In the base hospitals and camps, one is never quite certain whether he is addressing a son of the soil or a son of a Peer. You meet the horny-handed sons of toil in the A.S.C.—drawn largely from the dock areas of our seaport towns, smart "business" fellows in the Administrative sections of the A.S.C. and A.O.C.; Parsons, Graduates, Teachers, Medical Students, Commercial Travellers, men of means and men without means, etc., etc., etc., in endless variety, making up that most remarkable organisation—*England's Volunteer Army*.

Truly a base camp, with its numberless activities, is a wonderful parish. In one's daily routine may be heard the "burr" of the Scotty, the rich brogue of the Paddy, the broad accent of the Tyke and the musical cadences of the sons of my dear old Wales. They are all here, and the Chaplain has to find a way to the hearts of all.

The soldiers feel much natural reticence to talk about themselves, and a certain aloofness when the Chaplain is near. I have frequently found men yearning and longing to break through, but are held back by this reserve. Further, many of the men are out of touch with religion altogether. They have, for years, held aloof and regard religion as a system "played out." Another, and perhaps a greater obstacle, is the allurements of the subtle and mani-

fold temptations to which they are subject out here, away from the restraining influences of home and friends. The Chaplain has to ask himself, and supply the solution as well, how are these men to be approached? It is not an easy matter.

When I left Sheffield to assume the duties of Chaplain, I took particular care to see that all my best sermons were safely stowed away in my kit-bag. I thought, that having done duty before, they would be found useful in France as well. But I soon found out that my Yorkshire sermons would not do in France. Tommy can stand a straight manly talk and you can "hit out" as hard as you like; but the stereotyped "first" "second" and "third" he will not have at any price!

The Chaplain has to proceed on broad, human lines. Stereotyped methods and anything savouring of cant and artificiality must be avoided. "Tommy" dislikes humbug and "*namby-pambyism*," and will have none of them. There are at least three avenues of approach along which one may proceed with every prospect of success—the Personal, Social, and the Institutional, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the second and last are the safe avenues to the first. Through the "Social" you can generally get to the "Personal."

A Chaplain must have an endless reserve of geniality, optimism and sympathy—supplementary, of course, to a dignified manliness and transparent sincerity, but above all he must "find the level" of his man. He has to take his stand on the same plane as the men he is addressing. For instance, here is a typical little dialogue—and which can be heard, with slight variation, many times a day in the hospital wards. The Chaplain enters a ward, and with a smile bespeaking sympathy and large-heartedness, enquires—

"Well, laddie, how do you feel to-day?" "Oh, fairly well, Padre, thank you; cannot complain." (This when the poor chap is at the same time minus an arm or leg or both!)

"That's right. Here, have a cigarette? Let me light it for you, etc, etc."

This little chat frequently ends in a *request* for a "few verses" or a "little prayer," or a "few lines" to someone at home. That one human touch, that little gleam of sympathy has thawed and melted away the barrier of reserve, and you get straight to the heart. And may I remark in passing that, after this disastrous war is over, I shall treasure nothing more than the letters I receive from the parents and friends of the lads with whom I am in this way brought into contact. How abundantly true it is that "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

There is much needless incense, of a kind, offered up in many churches at home, but in our experience, the incense arising from a sympathetic cigarette, oftentimes points the way to higher and nobler things.

A game of draughts or chess, with a tactful remark now and then thrown in, helps many a lad to "play the game of life" honourably and well.

My colleague and myself have recently established at Boulogne an Institute, with reading and writing rooms, games, healthy refreshments and recreations; and the success of the undertaking has exceeded our most sanguine expectations.

This social side of our work proves to the lads that we are out to make them happy, to help them to keep straight, and that we have their personal and intellectual welfare at heart. What is the result? The men attend in crowds, as though by instinct, our devotional services on week-nights and Sundays. They turn to us with renewed trust and confidence for guidance and help. The other evening a soldier approached me shyly and diffidently at the close of one of our services, and said, "Excuse me Padre, I have not been to a service before for fifteen years, but I'll come to hear you again." I just tapped him on the shoulder, and said, "That's right, mind that you do. I shall expect you." And he *did* come, and is *still* coming.

I was much touched a day or two ago by a lad who was about to leave for Serbia. "I thank God for this home, sir," said he (meaning our Institute). "It has kept me straight. You have

not only been an officer. you have also been a brother. You have helped heaps of lads to play the game." Such testimonies are frequent. Our great aim, in our Institute, is to create a homely atmosphere—a home from home, where we can meet the men at their own level—and it gives us a ready and safe avenue of approach to the hearts of the fellows. The word "Home" has now a new significance to them. You need only hear them sing as often as we do—"Keep the home fires burning," to realise what it all means to them.

These men will, we hope and pray, soon return to the homeland. Are the churches making ready for them? A remarkable feature of this campaign is the yearning for spiritual things on the part of our young men at the front, and it behoves our people at home to see to it that, when they return, the hearth fires in their spiritual homes will be all aglow to welcome them.

The watchwords of the future in our dealings with these men must be "sympathy," "large-heartedness" and "broad-mindedness;" and when the "boys come marching home" may the churches realise that they will appreciate and place an immeasurably higher value on these qualities than on narrow sectarian creeds and dogmas.

The "Padre" is respected at the front, and through him, the Church of Christ which he represents; and when the day of reunion takes place, may the church realise that many of these brave fellows who have faced death and hell on the blood-red fields of France have turned to the consolation of the Scriptures; relied on the promise of Christ; and placed new and higher estimates on revealed religion. She must not in any way be found wanting. The lads need a real warm home in the church, and it is the bounden duty of those at home to see that this home is ready for them when they return.

## Our Retreat.

(Written by request.) By Rev. J. A. STUART, B.A.

It was only a small company that met at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church for our day of contemplation and prayer on Tuesday, Nov. 9th. Would it be a fair inference that London Baptist ministers need more of such opportunities, on the principle that Luther had to give three hours a day to prayer in order to get through all his work ?

At all events, this is no time for adding to the number of merely ecclesiastical functions. We have been living through an epoch of endless conferences, seeking to derive inspiration from one another. Our assemblies have been orgies of speech-making. Our very prayer-meetings have been speeded up, under the call "let there be no waiting, please." Mentally and spiritually, we have suffered from a species of that disease known to nerve-specialists as *agoraphobia*, dread of large expanses, fear of empty spaces. The prayers of the age have voyaged from headland to headland, have loitered around our homes rather than reached out towards our home.

But for some time, we have all been aware of the rise of another current of feeling. From every side has come a demand for silence, for listening. Many of us have read Mr. Cyril Heffer's recent book, *The Fellowship of Silence*. Alongside much with which we must disagree, and some little that verges on the merely sentimental, most of us found there something that echoed already familiar questionings. We have all been searching for something that might bring the world an immediate perception of the spiritual, and restore its lost sense of God. It is natural to find us, different as we are in temperament and experience, each fingering the latch to a different door. The point is that with one consent we have turned from the doors that lead out into the world, and are seeking for one that opens on the Holy of Holies.

The need we feel is not new. What is new is the widespread consciousness of it. It is a good sign that our ministry should be interrogating itself as to its share in the prevailing dulness of spirit, and feeling after a new contact with reality. We may have more responsibility than we have realised for the decline of public worship. I recall a pungent remark of Dr. Forsyth's, that the disbelief in prayer arises less from scientific difficulties than from the kind of prayer men hear from us in public worship. It is significant that we have heard much in these latter days of answers *to* prayer, concrete, ponderable, and of a certain apologetic value; but little of answers *in* prayer. Ours is a prophetic ministry, not a priestly; or if priestly, exercised only in the unseen; yet few of us are masters in the art of listening, which goes before all prophetic speaking.

We are all conscious of the dangers that lie about the mystic way. Its value must always depend on the results that it can show, when brought to the test of Christ. But if it have in it any promise of good, surely it ought to be safest in the hands of men whose creed and practice are directly based on the New Testament, whose evangelical tradition needs no Hermann to remind them that our fellowship is always through Christ with Him who is, in His highest revelation of Himself, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever be the dangers of Mysticism in general, they were not evident in the fellowship of silence which formed the first part of our Retreat. We met in the church, only a handful at first, never, I think, more than fourteen. The sense of spaciousness and even the sound of the gale outside were helpful. Our President, the Rev. P. T. Thomson, M.A. had charge throughout the day. The morning session of three hours was given to prayer and meditation on our own spiritual needs, and the high requirements of our calling. By a number of carefully chosen scriptures, passages from the classics of our faith, words of great souls who have known and encountered such temptations as ours, our thoughts were brought to face our own weakness and insuffi-

ciency, and led to contemplate the fulness and grace of our Lord. There were many fruitful intervals of silence, broken only as one would pray out of a soul deeply stirred; another would start a verse of a hymn that uttered his thought. Some of the later passages read for our guidance were of the most practical counsel; and if we were helped to mount up with wings as eagles, we were never allowed for long to forget that there lay before us a time when we must run and not be weary. There may have been a certain loosening of grip towards the close, a tendency here and there to follow some individual line of least resistance rather than the guidance of the leader. Till we are better habituated to the discipline of long concentration, it is probably in the last hour and the first that we need most to feel the leader's control. This is not said by way of criticism of Mr. Thomson's handling, which was wise in judgment, devout and unforced in spirit throughout.

After the morning session came an interval, when our hosts kindly provided refreshments for us. The simplest of provision only, bread and butter and cheese, with hot coffee, hospitably substituted (by reason of the rawness of the day) for the cold water which we had been promised. This meal was daintily served, and it left us wondering why the ladies of our churches should ever be burdened with greater preparations. If our assemblies wants make the experiment of abolishing the more elaborate luncheon, they would not lose by losing the atmosphere it generally evokes. So at least we all agreed, in the light of our day's experience.

In the afternoon session, Mr. Thomson read to us a challenging article on the new attitude of our day to things spiritual, and thus brought us to face some of the urgent questions of life and death and sin that are being pressed upon us. We were allowed ample freedom to express our views, which we did with much variety but no less friendliness. There was never a better preparation for such discussion than those three hours' prayer together. We could, and did differ, but we could not have fallen out. Again we betook ourselves to prayer, realizing humbly our need of

guidance, yet rejoicing in the glorious Word of which we are ministers.

Last of all, we gathered around the table of the Lord. It was a short and simple service, but it left us with a deeper sense of the Love that met us there. We proved once more that to be brought near to Christ, is always to be brought back to the Cross. "It is only in His wounds that we can touch Him." "He said, Peace be unto you, and He shewed them His hands and His side." And in that vision we saw once more our own source of help, and the hope of the world.

It remains only to express our gratitude to the friends at the Garden Suburb Church for the hospitality and perfect harmony of all their arrangements. To Mr. Thomson we are deeply indebted. He met his great responsibility without a fault of spirit, and with great power of devotion. Very much depends on the leader, and he did not fail us at any point.

A second retreat for our London brethren has been fixed for Thursday, Feb. 3rd, at Lee Chapel, to be conducted by the Rev. F. G. French. We hope that wherever members of our Fraternal find themselves within reach of one another, they may make use of our experience. It is not difficult to organise such a day, and the gain is out of all proportion to the labour involved. There is need of few things, or even of one, when we sit at the Lord's feet to hear His word.

## “The Crucifixion of Alsace-Lorraine.”

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Some knowledge of the Alsace-Lorraine question is essential to a proper understanding of the war now raging. Aided by the personal interest and assistance of Mons. Lecomte, the Deputy-Consul-General for France in London, Mr. H. J. Cowell, of the Baptist Union Publication Department, has prepared a Lecture, illustrated with lantern views, entitled “The Crucifixion of Alsace-Lorraine.” Most of the views included have been made especially for the Lecture, which is historical and descriptive rather than military. So far as is known, no other Lecture on the subject is available in this country.

When the Lecture was given at Kingsway Hall (Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, Superintendent), the Deputy-Consul-General was present, together with the President of the Patriotic League of Alsations and Lorrainers in London. Mons. Lecomte afterwards wrote:

“We had such great pleasure in attending your lecture on Alsace-Lorraine that I feel it my duty to express to you again my best thanks for such a lucid and sympathetic exposition of the real situation and feeling of this unhappy country.”

The President of the Alsations and Lorrainers also wrote: “In expressing to you our warmest thanks and compliments, I am the interpreter of all Alsations and Lorrainers who were present at your lecture. You charmed them so much that they all felt to be in Alsace-Lorraine in reality. We are proud to call you here in England the champion of our noble cause, and hope that you will have in future every success in giving your lecture.”

Application should be made direct to Mr. Cowell at 49 Nelson Road, Stroud Green, N.

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“It is the strong basis of the life rather than its surface movements which really matters, and there is no work in which character tells more forcibly than in the Sacred Ministry. What a man *is*, rather than what he has or does, is the force which in the long run tells upon his parish. The real spiritual force of the preacher depends on the character which lies behind his word and gives it life and force. There are dead words and living words: the dead word of the parrot and the living word of the prophet. The man who speaks words which do not belong to him, which are not a part of his being, although decked out with all the artifices of oratory, gives to the people stones instead of bread.”

PAUL B. BULL (C.R.)

## Open Court.

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### “The Ideal Modern Minister.”

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The Rev. A Graham-Barton writes critically of Mr. Acomb's article in the last issue: “Mr. Acomb has done well, but in some matters he has missed the mark.” “He is not happy in his reference to the Redeemer as ‘a Divine naturalist;’” “he has missed St. Paul's interpretation of the Cross;” “the writer's idea of inspiration is singular,” etc.

The Rev. W. T. Address, of Brockenhurst, offers “an earnest and sorrowful protest” against the same article. As against Mr. Acomb, Mr. Address would follow Dr. Beet's suggestion, “that all St. Paul's doctrines are but legitimate developments of the germinal truths uttered by our Lord. To oppose St. Paul is dangerous. Mr. Acomb exaggerates the importance of the minister's individual view of truth. The minister has not to invent but to proclaim a gospel. This Mr. Acomb seems to forget,” etc.

[Both of these letters are long, and it is impossible to find space for them *in extenso*. The above, however, contains the gist of them.—Ed.]

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From A.W.B.—“There are certain matters of extreme importance which the Free Churches must immediately face unless they are prepared to witness their own rapid decline. It is no longer possible to deceive ourselves as to our real situation. We are not only not advancing: we are steadily going back. If the figures which have been recently privately collected as to church and school attendance were published, they would stun the country. We ought at once to have the courage to face such questions as: the absurdity of having two services of one type per Sunday: of our antiquated form of service with its four or five hymns and the long prayer: of the continuance of incompetent teachers in our schools: of the nervous strain imposed by the system of a ‘one man’ ministry of preaching, and the like.”

## Prayer Union Notes.

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By Rev. J. W. EWING, M.A., D.D.

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With the New Year our Denomination enters on a new era. Our independency relents a little. The churches draw more closely together, and the Denomination accepts a new responsibility for its ministers. It is an hour of glad hope in many a village manse, and in the home of many a "down town" pastor.

But neither organisation nor finance will realise our hopes, unless with them, to sustain and inspire the new movement, there is found a quickened fellowship. We must have more love and brotherhood, and to get these we need to come nearer to Christ. The Fraternal and its Prayer Union are, therefore, pointing the way of true advance. If our Union is real, and our prayer-bond faithfully preserved, we shall do much to make this new epoch the morning of a very bright and sacred day.

May I ask for special prayers on behalf of the newly-appointed "General Superintendents?" If their work, often so responsible and delicate, is to succeed, it will need to be the outcome of sympathy, insight and strength, which will be possible only as the result of a Divine endowment. Longing, as I know they do, to be true helpers of all the ministers and the churches, I am sure they would say with one voice, "Brethren, pray for us."

Under the stress of the war another brotherhood is springing up throughout the land—I mean the order of Officiating Ministers, who are caring for the wounded soldiers in our hospitals. The little "O.M." badge forms a bond of sympathy and interest wherever its wearers meet. Few opportunities of our time are more precious than those found at the bedside of brave and

suffering men. And it is evident that in thousands of lives prayer is becoming a new power. "We were in the trenches one evening," remarked a wounded soldier to me, "when a young comrade, who had never seemed religious, surprised me by saying, 'At home my father and mother and the kiddies are praying for me, and I mean to pray for them—and for myself.'" Under the stars, and before the guns, men feel the pull of the Unseen.

I am glad that the Fraternal, encouraged by the spiritual helpfulness of the Retreat at the Hampstead Garden Suburb is arranging for another, to be held at Lee, at Mr. Goldsmith French's Church, on February 3rd. Such meetings, in which brethren get down to bed-rock realities, must tend to foster both comradeship and vision.

I feel constrained to take as my Devotional Classic for this number, "The Imitation of Christ," for, though so well known, it is of such supreme value, and so accessible to all, that a reference to it may prove of greater practical use than a discussion of some more recondite volume.

"The Imitation of Christ" probably exercises a wider Christian influence than any other book, except the Bible. Translated into fifty languages, and passing into 6,000 editions, it has fed the spiritual life of innumerable believers in many lands and communions.

Though its authorship is not certain, the evidence points strongly to Thomas á Kempis, who was born at Kempen, in Germany, in 1380, and became first Canon, and then Sub-Prior, of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes in Holland. Thomas was an expert writer, delighting to copy the Bible and other religious books, and in a collection of his beautiful M.S.S. was the "Imitation," which was believed to be his own production by those who knew him best—his brethren in the Monastery.

The teaching of this priceless little book may be summed up as follows:—(1) The vanity of the material, and the glory of the spiritual, world. (2) The beauty and attractiveness of Christ, the Master of the spiritual realm. (3) The importance of the conquest of self, through fellowship with the Cross of Christ. (4) The value of solitude and silence, amid which the soul may realise itself and become intimate with Christ.

Like every book, the "Imitation" is open to criticism. Its standpoint is that of the recluse; its theology is not always clearly evangelical; and it lays an undue emphasis on the sacraments.

Yet in spite of its defects the "Imitation" makes appeal to the universal Christian heart. Calm and reflective in temper, clear and direct in expression, it gives the vision of a soul stayed on God. With none of the passion of Bernard or Teresa, and none of the philosophy of Boehme, it nevertheless moves with the sure step of the mystic among the deep things of the soul and of God, and will always be precious to those who, amid this vale of shadows, seek to walk in Christ's footprints along the way of the Cross.

The book may be had in many English editions, but my own copy, which I treasure, is in Latin, an Oxford edition of 1874. I do not think any translation can bring out the terse and rhythmic beauty of the original, but I append a few typical extracts, which I have done into English as well as I could.

*"On the Love of Jesus above all things."* "Happy is he who knows what it is to love Jesus, and for Jesus' sake to despise himself. One ought to relinquish that which is loved, for The Beloved, because Jesus wishes to be loved above all. . . . Love Him, and hold Him as thy Friend, who when all things pass away, will not fail thee, nor suffer thee to perish."

*“On the Love of Solitude and Silence.”* “Seek appropriate seasons of leisure, and think often of the mercies of God. Leave curious things. Read such books as produce penitence rather than mere occupation. A certain man said, ‘As often as I have been among men, I have returned less a man.’ We often prove this when we talk long.”

*“On the Royal way of the Holy Cross.”* “In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from foes. In the Cross is heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross is joy of spirit. In the Cross is the sum of virtue, in the Cross is the perfection of holiness. There is no safety of soul, nor hope of eternal life, except in the Cross. Take therefore thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt enter into eternal life.”

“The highest wisdom is, by contempt of the world, to take one’s way to the heavenly kingdom.”