

The Georgetown Herald

Wednesday Eve., Jan. 21st, 1920

The Task Before The Church

(By J. E. Middleton)

"Do not imagine," said Rev. Dr. F. J. G. at a recent meeting, "that the Forward Movement was started by the Church leaders because they had nothing else to do." It was well that such a warning should be given, for undoubtedly some persons not familiar with the facts may misunderstand. No manufactured emergency could command such energy and vigor as many eminent clergy and laymen are putting into this campaign. They realize that the Church must do a great thing now or else confess themselves incapable of the grace of spirituality.

Anglicans, Baptist, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians have been faced with the same problem. They are seeking a solution separately and at the same time in common. They have confidence that as soon as the people of Canada realize the necessities of the time, men will be found to meet them.

What are the necessities? First they relate to the established missionary stations among non-Christian peoples. During the war, many opportunities appeared for expanding the work abroad. But the calls upon the Canadian people were so frequent and so insistent, that the churches sought merely to hold their ground. For that reason, no new hospitals could be opened, no additional schools could be established, and no houses or other buildings could be erected. Further, the supply of recruits for the mission field failed. The young men of Canada were in Flanders. Even some of the young missionaries got leave to go into khaki. One may imagine the difficulty of "carrying on" for four years under such circumstances.

With the end of the war, prices have gone higher than ever and the exchange situation has become involved and difficult. The salaries of missionaries in the field are scant, and frequently their meagre cheques are greatly lessened by exchange discounts. A building programme is imperative; remarkable opportunities appear for an expansion of the missions, particularly in India and China. For instance, China is considering the establishment of no fewer than one million primary schools, and looks to the missionaries to help formulate a normal course for teachers. Everywhere, the story is the same; restricted means, a lack of missionary preachers, teachers, doctors and nurses, and a lack of understanding among the home church-people about the nature of the emergency.

In Canada, also, there are whole districts not yet served by the ministry of religion. There are tribes of Indians still wholly Pagan. There are colonies of settlers, lately come from foreign lands, whose manner of life is not helpful, either for themselves or their children. A

"sanitary conscience" is lacking. Missionary volunteers for the work that is waiting to be done have been scarce. Now that immigration is beginning again, new towns will be springing up, and new demands upon the churches will be made.

The declining value of the dollar has brought deficits to a score of colleges established and maintained by the Churches. It is necessary to put these vitally important institutions on a proper financial footing.

Then also the Superannuation Funds for retired clergy need immediate augmentation. The average sum received by a clergyman, forced by physical disability to leave the active work, is about \$400 a year. It is an excellent sum for living on, but no income for living on.

Calamitous with all these pressing needs is a drift of materialism and pleasure-seeking which has chilled the earnestness of many Church members and turned their eyes away from their spiritual welfare. In order to meet the needs abroad, it is vitally necessary to foster Canadian citizenship to a level of responsibility of their high calling.

Besides, this is a day of unrest. A time of following after innumerable "isms" each of which is guaranteed by its fatuous inventors to bring of all to Utopia. It is well for the Christian Church to insist now, as ever, that the remedy for a world diseased is not some new or old sociological-cure all. It is rather the plain Gospel of Jesus Christ, put in practice, the working out in common life of the Golden Rule.

Surely it is time for a Forward Movement; it is time for Churchmen to give proof to the world that they are not mere members of a Sunday Social Club, but partakers in the heritage of the saints, co-workers with the noble army of martyrs, whose vision, whose energy, and whose sacrifice have brought to mankind a measure of civilization.

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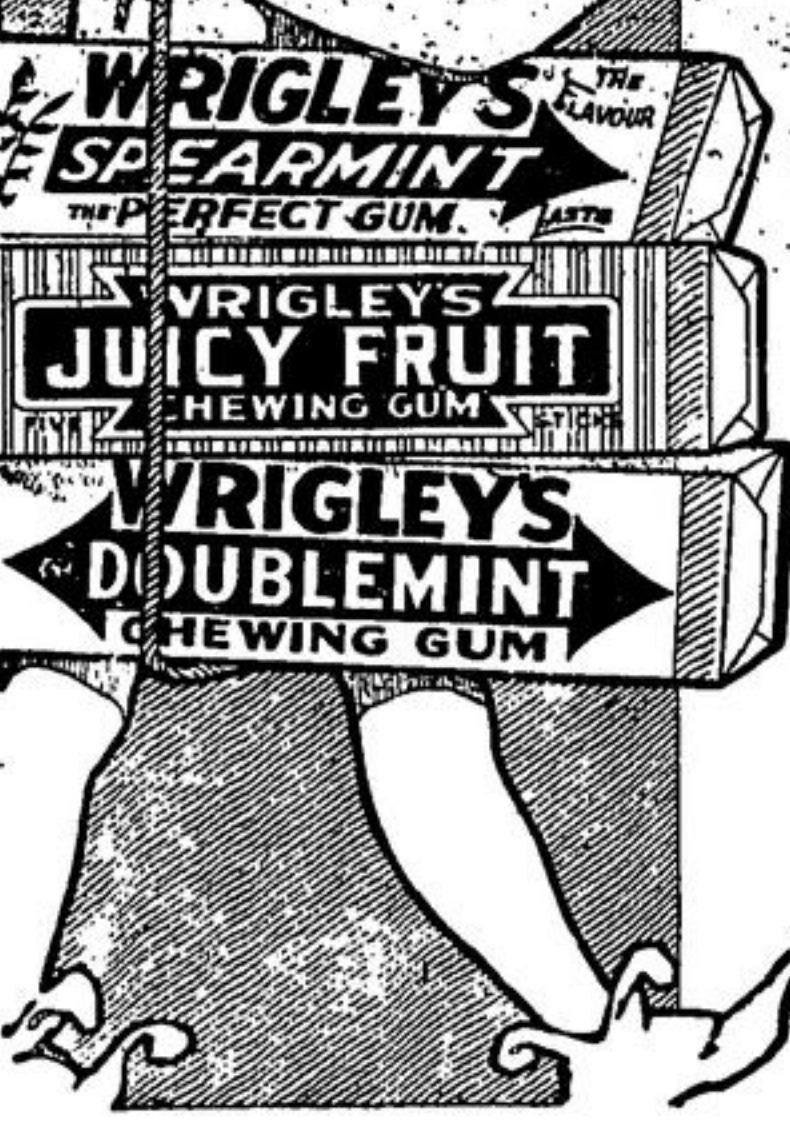
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