

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

JANUARY, 1919

THE RUSSIAN

[These sayings on war and peace were set down by Madame Fedorchenko, a Russian nurse, from talks which she overheard among Russian soldiers at the front in 1915, 1916, and 1917. From a large amount of material they are selected, translated, and arranged. These detached utterances of wounded soldiers, many of whom could neither read nor write, lying in their cots, were spoken without premeditation or thought of the nurse's presence. Beyond translation, they are printed absolutely without change. Foreshadowing the inevitableness of events, they seem to penetrate the mystery of Russian character.—THOMAS WHITTEMORE.]

WAR, war! To some expected, unexpected to others. Many a man is unready, unprepared, body and soul. The crude gray forces were driven forth, to be the laughing-stock of the nations, with nothing made clear to them; on the principle evidently that, having lived miserably so far, they might as well die for no reason they knew. Straw was good enough for us Russians to fight the Germans with.

By the wish of Wilhelm, by the order of Antichrist, war has been let loose over the world. War has eaten the corn in the land, and war has cut down nations by their roots. From the beginning of time there has been nothing like it. War is more dreadful than thunder, it is sharper than lightning, and is not more merciful than the wrath of God.

A cloud has gathered amid the clear day; war has come amid the Russian people. The women weep, and the girls, and the little children; the old men brood and swear.

At first, when they took us, seven-

teen of us, from our village, we knew nothing, only just felt bad. At every station we raised a row and swore at the girls, and we sang all the way; but we were homesick all the same. Then they began to drill us, and to some purpose, inasmuch as we even fell off in flesh. And they treated us most contemptuously, just as if we had been fools. Yet we were by no means fools. We all were used to farm-work, every mother's son of us. I worked under my father, and he was very strict. The only free time I had was when I worked at a factory for four months. On my way here I cried right along; I felt I was taking leave of life. Mother has been dead these fifteen years, yet I kept moaning, 'Mother, mother!' as I cried.

Our mother sent for us all. I came from the factory, and these were her words: 'Live, my son, long; but live so that your life may not seem long to anyone else.'

I used to attend to a garden. My father was a gardener, and my grandfather also. They were good gardeners.

THE TRENCHES AND THE CHURCH AT HOME

BY HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

I

EVERYONE must realize that the churches cannot possibly come out of this war in the same state in which they entered it. Nothing is going through this fire without becoming malleable, or, becoming malleable, can resist the pressure of remoulding circumstance. And the men of the army will wield an enormous influence in all the changes. Conscription was an impartial hand, that reached down into America's population and brought up men out of every tribe, tongue, people, nation, creed, and stage of culture. The average man always has been here, but now he has been put where we can reach him; he has been given a chance at publicity such as he never had in civil life, and a place of eminent respect where we mind deeply what he says. The chaplains and Y.M.C.A. secretaries, in particular, are living with him, eating, sleeping, fighting, dying with him. He becomes through them religiously articulate where he once was dumb; and because there are millions of him coming home to sway the future of the nation, he is tremendously important. The churches, facing a new day of unpredictable changes, may well see all that they can see through his eyes.

This stressing of the religious importance of the men in the trenches does not mean that they are becoming saints. There is nothing remotely resembling a revival of religion at the front. Our boys are heroes, and because desire is strong, some insist on presenting them

with halos. The actual fact is that war presents a manner of life where religion has a tragic battle even to survive. To be sure, great souls shine brightest against dark backgrounds. So some whose spiritual life in milder days was little noted, flame out in brilliant faith amid war's horrors, like flares that light No-Man's Land at night. Such men have sometimes given fortunate permanence to their spiritual triumph by enshrining it in letters home, and these have been published so that all could read. And because the folks at home have no other way of judging what is going on within the soldiers' minds than by such literary memorials, these letters have been taken as typical. The whole army has been imagined as stirred by war to faith in God, to lives of prayer, and even to an abiding experience of spiritual exaltation.

The fact is far otherwise. The reason for religion's hard struggle at the front must be evident to everyone with imagination enough to put himself in the soldier's place. How lively and acute can a man allow his finer sensibilities to be, when he lives in verminous dugouts, is surrounded by gruesome death, and from time to time plunges into terrific slaughter? The only hope of carrying on is for him to reduce his sensitiveness to the minimum, to habituate his mind to a cool, impassive observation of things horrible, to learn to jest over sights that he once would have fainted at — in a word, to toughen his spirit against the impact of his life and to become as thoughtless as he can. Experience at the front tends to obscure the

loftier ranges of the soldier's life. A devout lover of music, since killed in action, confessed that he did not miss music, because he 'was n't carrying on with those faculties.' Says one chaplain, 'In the trenches, thoughtlessness, in the literal sense of the word, is almost a necessary part of the soldier's equipment.'

This is not saying that these men are not religious. In magnificent ways they are fundamentally religious. They have given self to the more-than-self in unstinted dedication. The very necessity of minimizing life, of which we speak, is the acutest point of their self-denial. And in the cause which they are serving with their very lives, one is sure that the great majority of them feel the divine purpose; in serving it, they seek the help of God. But there is no 'revival' at the front. The soldier does not think overmuch about his religion; he talks about it less; he hates the man who tries to pry into it. It is hard enough to live the part of it that lies next at hand. And one who watches him asks only the chance to help him to do that, —

Hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty!

This subnormal life of the trenches, however, does not mean that our soldiers are negligible witnesses about religion and the church. Of all the men of our generation I would choose to know what *they* think about God, and the institutions that are supposed to represent Him, and the people who are accustomed to proclaim Him. I would choose them, not simply because they are the epitome of our American manhood at its best, but because this experience of war, in spite of the self-limitation which it imposes, has been an apocalypse to every sensitive man who has gone into it. Non-essentials inevitably fall away; the conventional

trappings and drapery of life are torn asunder; men, freed from traditional bias, look first-hand at the grim, elemental facts of life. They are not going through this mingled hell of agony and heaven of devotion without growing wise. The church may well desire to know what they are thinking.

The average American churchman needs a new slant in his view of the relationship which we at home bear to these men in the trenches. We call them 'our boys.' It is a phrase compact with affectionate sympathy and pride. It implies the solicitous attitude of experience toward youth. They still are boys to us. And one who lives with them perceives with thankfulness how marvelously amid war's havoc and monotony they do preserve their boyishness. Their endless good spirit; their refusal to take anything very seriously; their happy-go-lucky fatalism about their chances in the battle; the ludicrous nicknames by which they camouflage the most tragic incidents of war; their extravagant happiness over a little extra food or a specially comfortable billet in a barn; their refusal to complain about anything important, like being blown to pieces; and their insistence on complaining loudly about everything unimportant; and, over all, their joyous conviction that they are invincible — such things are a perennial revelation of the soldier's boyishness, and they make the billets just behind the front the most cheerful place on earth in time of war.

But only a shallow observer can suppose that these men are really as boyish as they appear. In this experience they are going down into the heart of life. They have faced a cause that asked of them their all and they have made the great decision. Death, that skillful discriminator between things transient and things eternal, is their constant companion. They go out night after night,

on roads or into trenches, where high explosive shells sing all around, and shrapnel bursts almost as thick as fire-flies shine on country roads in June. They are often frightened — as one boy said, 'frightened but not afraid!' And while they do not think overmuch, — they cannot and still live, — their thinking moves by clear, sharp, sudden strokes to the gist of things. They see what matters most. They hate cowardice, selfishness, snobbishness, tyranny. They love courage and self-forgetfulness and loyalty and deathless faith that right will win. The best among them have been initiated by this war into an insight that neither books nor schools nor threescore years of civil life can give any man. And the pith of the result is this: they have been where only the elemental needs of men are real, where only the fundamental faiths and virtues matter, and they swiftly divine the essential from the accident. They have a quick instinct for what is genuine, for what rings true and really counts. Above all, they hate ineffectiveness and make-believe and unreal talk. And what they hate they have no patience with; they have learned to fight; they are not tolerant. Woe to the man who even now in France addresses them with unctuous phrase or conventional doctrine or wordy exhortation! He will lose his audience and speak to vacant seats before he has well begun.

And these men, by millions, are soon coming home!

That glorious, ominous fact the churches seriously must face. We Christians in America have been asking ourselves, ever since this war began, what we could do for the boys in France. We need now to face another question: what are these returning soldiers going to do to the churches in America? They yet are overseas — three thousand miles of water between

our cherished traditions and their growing insight. Perhaps there still is time. But every day they have become more impatient of sham, intolerant of ineffective words, sick of narrowness and bigotry, scornful of emphases that do not matter and of pretensions that are full of wind. Every day they have learned to face real facts and to fight hard battles. When they come home, they will turn a half-unconscious but scathing scrutiny upon the church and all her ways. Already, as one chaplain says, 'our boys' look upon the folks at home as 'children in experience' compared with them. They went out, boys; they will come back like the Judgment Day.

II

Let this be said with emphasis, — because without it the judgment of the soldiers cannot be understood, — that when they think of churches, they mean *churches*, not the chaplains or the Y.M.C.A. Whenever some phosphorescent tidal-wave, like Dr. Odell's article in the February *Atlantic*, rises to overwhelm the churches, we instinctively raise up the Y.M.C.A. as a bulwark against the flood. See what we are doing in this trying time, we cry; how great the enterprise of the churches' men, how effective their service, how splendid their statesmanship! Within measure, this appeal is just. The Christian Associations do represent the churches in action for the army. Their birth and sustenance are in the churches, their men and women come from the churches. No institution that can throw out such vital and effective means of service is moribund; no society whose representatives can do what the chaplains are doing at the front is in decay. But, so far as the soldiers are concerned, they feel a difference between the churches and these splendid expressions of Christianity's vitality.

And they are right. Back in America's towns and villages our churches stand — Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Old Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian, and what not. With their sermons, ceremonies, prayer meetings, Sunday-schools, Ladies' Aids, Men's Clubs; with their pastoral visitations and their social gatherings, their finances and their fairs, they are the churches. Is it well with *them*? That question we may not evade by praising the Y.M.C.A.

Moreover, when the soldiers in their thinking fall foul of the churches, they do not necessarily lack devout admiration for Christian people and Christian ideas. One gains among our men in France an impressive sense of the universal influence of religious life and thinking in the United States. Thousands of service stars in our Christian homes and in the chancels of our churches represent these men; their spiritual roots are back in the meeting-houses of America; multitudes of them have their early, hallowed memories intertwined with Christian traditions and customs; and now in France they are unspeakably grateful for the service — motivated by Christian spirit and beautiful with Christian filiations — which for their sakes pours from church and home.

A visitor cannot see, unimpressed, among the bastions of a Napoleonic barracks, a company of Americans at a chaplain's service, welcoming new members into the Church of Christ, with representatives of twenty-two denominations, there present, voting to receive them. Or in Y.M.C.A. huts on Sunday evenings one cannot hear, unmoved, hundreds of our men singing, often with no books, the hymns that they have loved back home. Not easily forgettable such scenes! — five hundred men, just going up to battle, singing in a great chorus, —

'I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless.
 Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy
 victory?
 I triumph still if Thou abide with me!'

Against the background of just such scenes, however, the feeling of so many in the army about the churches becomes the more startling. To hear a man, once a leader in the Christian work of church and college, and lately facing grim events in France, cry out in animated protest against the 'milk-fed Christianity' on which he was brought up; to hear him, not flippantly but in agony, berate 'the utter unreality of the old sentimental religion' on which the churches suckled him; to meet his scornful denunciation of the churches' 'dope' even while he was resolving to find God, not lose Him, in this war, is to be aroused from the complacent lethargy which times of peace too often have induced. The information which one gleans in the army does not concern the splendid efforts that the Christian people have been making since war broke out: it concerns the state of the home churches which these men knew before the war began.

To be sure, no one supposes that he can reduce even to a semblance of unity the bewildering diversity of life and opinion in the army. Some of these men will come back from their experiences saints and prophets, and some will return debased and brutalized. Some of these men will bring back a spirit of sacrifice and a capacity for coöperation which will enrich the social life of America for a generation, and some will conclude that they have done their bit and that the world henceforth owes them a living. Thousands of these men never have had interest in the churches and never will have, and other thousands are utterly loyal to the churches and will return with deep thanksgiving to the congregations

which they left. But I do not see how, even amid this confusion of contrarities, one can live long with the army without encountering a certain clear drift and major emphasis among those men whose intelligence and character make their opinions alike most easy to obtain and most difficult to neglect. And this drift and emphasis are very disconcerting to a churchman.

So far as I can see from months of living with the army, there are some things in the churches' life on which the hostility of the soldiers especially will fall. For one thing, how intolerable to those who have caught the devotion of the army is a certain habitual selfishness in the churches' appeal to men! If in France to-day, in speaking to the soldiers, anyone suggests that perhaps they soon will die, that if they do they may go to hell unless they are 'prepared,' and that therefore they had better believe something religious to avoid the sad contingency, that man incontinently shuts up, or else he leaves France, or more probably he does both. The soldiers will not listen to him; the army will not tolerate him. The reason is not simply that playing on morbid fears is an assault on the army's morale: a deeper reason makes this all too familiar appeal of the churches unendurable. There is a fundamental antipathy between such talk and the spirit in which the whole army is living. The former is thoroughly self-centred. The latter is gloriously self-forgetful.

To be sure, soldiers are not super-saints in their lack of all care about themselves. Self-regarding motives never can be absent from complete humanity. Not a few in the army still look to religion as a means of safety, from shell-fire if not from hell-fire. They use God as a last recourse in desperate emergency; they regard him, so one chaplain reports, as 'little more than an extra rifle'; their religion is

sheer magic for selfish purposes. At their best, however, the soldiers, when they think about themselves, rejoice in the personal enlargement, the inner satisfaction, the individual rewards for valor, the anticipated share in future victory, which are the just recompense of sacrifice. They care deeply about the quality and fibre of their individual lives. In the fellowship of a common task they would not for the world have to make the humiliating confession of Masefield's sinner,—

'The harm I done by being *me*.'

And even such high self-regard is subordinate; the fore-front and cutting edge of all the army's thought is for the success of the crusade. 'I used to wonder at the Cross,' an American soldier in France said to me; 'not now! I think that Jesus was a lucky man to have a chance to die for a great cause.'

How can many of the churches in their present mood expect to appeal to a man like that? Come to God that you may be safe — will *that* do? Come to God for there is in his hands solace for believers — will *that* do? 'Far more important than your work in France is the preparation of your souls to meet the Lord who speedily will return' — words used by a preacher to troops on an American transport; will *that* do? Will any mean, self-centred motive do?

Let no one suppose that soldiers are blind to this contrast between selfish religion and the spirit of the army. One of the British chaplains quotes from an English officer an opinion, the full import of which no modern churchman can afford to miss: 'The reason I don't like religion, padre, is that it's such a selfish thing. It simply threatens sinners with hell and promises comforts to the good.'

Now, religion can afford to be called many names; but in this generation of

splendid self-sacrifice, for religion to be called 'a selfish thing' is to condemn it to irretrievable perdition. Many will cry at once that this officer's verdict is unjust — a gross caricature and perversion of the facts. And it is unjust to all progressive Christian thinking. But as I recall a long and intimate association with the churches, I am not so sure that with clear conscience I can charge that soldier with misrepresenting the appeal, to which I have listened till my soul grew sick. As a lad, I was frightened half to death because I feared to go to hell — not by my family, bless their sane and wholesome spirit! but by the church. At nine, I suffered tragic torments because I thought that I had committed the unpardonable sin, and so was 'lost.' All through my lusty youth I perjured my soul almost beyond redemption in collective expressions of a deep desire to

Wash my weary feet
In the crystal waters sweet,
Over Jordan!

And while the finest, sacredest things of life have come to me out of the church, and my deathless gratitude belongs to her, a hidden anger still is there against this wretched play upon my selfish fears and selfish hopes.

When to-day we hear the most popular evangelists still consigning whole classes of our citizens to hell, while all the leading ministers and laymen of the community applaud; when we hear still the old appeal that men should come to God because they thereby save themselves for future bliss in a golden paradise; and when the chief effect of the war on multitudes of American Christians has been to set them interpreting the prophets to discover the date of the world's end and of their own ascension into glory, how can we say that that English officer was utterly unfair? The churches for generations have

been urging upon us an individualistic and self-centred gospel. We have been continuously supplied, in hymns, in liturgies, in sermons, with Jonathan Edwards's dominant ideal, 'I make seeking my salvation the main business of my life.' Even when this self-regarding motive has not been centred on a *post-mortem* heaven, it has been centred quite as selfishly on this present life. God, a gigantic policeman, forever clubbing those who break his traffic regulations, and feeding with goodies from his ample pockets those who mind his word, so that one had better keep upon his kindly side — H. G. Wells is not the only one who was brought up in the churches on that kind of deity. It was a senior chaplain, who, returning from the front, wrote of our religious thinking, 'It has descended through a steady gradation of selfish prayers and anti-social hymns, till it reaches its final degradation in that definitely and shamelessly unchristian chorus, which was recently so popular in revivalist meetings, —

'That will be glory — glory for me.'

Against the background of the millions of self-forgetful men who fought in France, how dark this record looks! Many a soul is being saved there. Many men, returning, will bless America with a heft and range of character that they did not have before. But they did not go to France to save their souls. They forgot themselves, and went to France to save the world. They are learning that innermost salvation that never comes except through social sacrifice; they have found their lives by losing them in a cause. In the midst of them one feels furiously the shame of the selfishness with which the churches often angle after men.

A lieutenant in the British army writes, 'The war has undoubtedly widened the gulf between the man and

the churches.' I see no reason to suppose that that will not be true in the armies of America. A God who calls men to

. . . smite the lies
That vex the groaning earth,

these men can understand. A God who sets men to hard tasks and gives them inward power to battle through to righteous victory — war introduces thoughtful men to Him. The Christian God of costly moral purpose, building His Kingdom among men — if the church would only lift Him high! But in the name of all the mighty social tasks that await the concentrated energy of the race, now and in the days of reconstruction, let the churches stop making men suppose, what one chaplain says the soldiers think, that religion is nothing more than a 'bribe for protection by a benevolent God!'

III

When the returning soldiers open their assizes, another indictment will undoubtedly be pressed against the church: the pettiness of her sectarian emphases. From the days of the prophets until now, august souls in religion have tried to make first things stand first, and to save the church from her arch sin of 'specializing in irrelevancies.' And in our generation, the belated futility of our denominations, the shame of our stress on dead issues and our negligence of live ones, has been so obvious, that scores of voices have been lifted in agitated protest. But still our churches, for the most part, have jogged on their complacent way. Circumferential trivialities have become the business of the churches. The intellectual classes, trying to think real thoughts about live issues, have gradually drifted away, until Christianity faces to-day, in the defection of the universities, not from religion but

from the churches, a crisis of the first magnitude. The forces of labor, fighting real battles for immediate needs, have passed in multitudes from alienation, through hatred, into contempt of the churches. Social idealists, mystified by the carelessness of the ecclesiastical establishments about the great ends of social reformation, have appealed until weary, and in droves have sought other instruments of service, other sources of inspiration. Thousands, grown spiritually thin on the dry husks of theological speculation or platitudinous exhortation, have gone off into sects, both sane and crazy, to seek some contact with reality. And millions, still members of the denominations, wistfully loyal to the life for which the denominations are supposed to stand, hold hard by God, but find the churches' message and programme uninteresting and unimperative.

And now the crack of doom sounds over the old world as it used to be, and all things are melted and remoulded before our very eyes. Do we of the churches still think that in undisturbed serenity we can jog on in the old rut?

That this is a real issue, as critical as any which the church has faced in all her history, one feels who has lived with the men in France. Whatever else this war has done to thoughtful men in the army, it has made them see that life is short, that only a few great things in religion matter, and that it is a waste of breath to spend much time on accidentals. The main issues of religious faith often loom large at the front. 'God and Heaven seem more real here in the presence of suffering and death,' writes one soldier, 'than they ever did at home.'

But the minutiae of our denominations — what possible importance can the returning soldier see in them? They are an impertinence. Protestants of all kinds, Catholics and Jews, men

of forty different nationalities, speaking many tongues and approaching God by many avenues, have lived, endured and died in France together. They have not weakly submerged their differences in the common thought, but they have learned to love and honor many men from whom they differ more than some men with whom they well agree. They have grown impatient of false and insignificant divisions between themselves and their comrades. They would not easily tolerate being told that they must not fight beside an American Indian because of King Philip's War, or beside an Englishman because of Saratoga. It seems obvious and important in France that the tasks which unite modern men in a common enterprise for the weal of humanity must not be broken up by insistence upon differences that should have died a natural death years ago. And plenty of the soldiers see that this thing which must not happen is happening in the churches. Excommunications because of forms of baptism or theories of the Eucharist; debates waged with weird fury over whose hands were laid upon whose heads in apostolical succession; heresy trials about old miracles or fine points of authorship in Biblical literature; quarrels over creeds that the Christians of the second century fought the Gnostics with, or in the fourth century used against the Arians; ferocious insistence on points of doctrinal difference that were live questions when Knox shook Scotland or Calvin in Geneva held intellectual court for all Europe, but which it is a shame now to keep from decent sepulture — what sense is there in basing our churches upon these, in making ecclesiastical divisions follow the boundary lines which these denote, and in causing men, like our soldiers now, to think that Christianity chiefly is concerned with the maintenance of these?

Writes one lieutenant, 'The majority have not the foggiest idea what Christianity is all about!' Write six chaplains in a concerted statement, 'Men have absolutely no clear conception of the Christian religion.' Well, why should they have? Washington Gladden surely would not be alone in saying, 'While therefore I had as large an experience of churchgoing in my boyhood as most boys can recall, I cannot lay my hand on my heart and say that churchgoing helped me to solve my religious problems. In fact, it made those problems more and more tangled and troublesome.'

Is this judgment harsh? Then let a returning soldier speak for himself. He came home from war and went to church, and this is what he wrote: 'The sonorous ritual was recited with prosaic monotony; the scriptures were read without sympathy or understanding, as though their language were too sacred or too unhuman for mortal articulation; the singing was a thing of faint and feeble beauty, dwelling afar from human emotion in the sanctified east, a thing of delicate frailty in which it were sacrilege for the assembly of the faithful to have any part or lot; the collection of the metallic offering was accepted as a welcome diversion from the more solemn and sanctimonious routine; the sermon was a stunted dissertation upon the importance of the Church, the greatness of her mission upon earth, the value of her consolation when one is not finding everything rosy in the secular world, and ending with an appeal to everyone to do something vague and ethereal and indefinite for Christ, in order that they might obtain a spiritual certificate of fitness for a state of felicity in the world to come. . . . This lifeless conventionality, this numb inertia, this sterile stagnation, this insipid, lukewarm Laodicean pap!'

I will not vouch for the justice of

that. Only I know that a Christian soldier came home from war and, endeavoring to go to church for help, wrote that. And there are very many Christian soldiers coming home!

Granted that they are not infallible! We need not make them popes because they are heroes. Anyone who knows them understands that they are not even noted among themselves for nicely balanced, even-handed justice. They make snap judgments like other men; rather more than other men, they are given to swift, hard condemnation of things that they do not like. They are not famous for finesse. But while the soldiers' judgment often is abrupt and fallible, we know well, when we cease poulticing our consciences with soft complacency, that any impatience of the soldiers with our belated sectarian divisions is justified.

For a long time now we have been concocting excuses for our lamentable situation; we have grown fluent with historical explanations of present ills, and with comforting analogies of other institutions' similar misfortunes. The day for this pleasant dalliance is over. Whitewash cannot forever support rotting timbers. The hour of the church's crisis and of her splendid opportunity has struck. An aroused spirit of religious faith, social hope, and splendid sacrifice is rising among men. It centres around great matters, not trivialities. It must have gangway. And the present churches are about as well fitted to express and further it as are the boundaries of ancient Indian tribes to form the basis of the new League of Nations.

IV

Whatever differences of opinion there may be about these criticisms of the churches which we have just discussed, there is one point on which, in the British and American armies alike, I

have found absolute unanimity. The men of the army quarrel with the negativeness of the churches' ethic. The British chaplain who, better than anyone else I know, has a grip on the religious conditions in his army, writes, 'I am beyond all question certain that one thing which repels Tommy in our churches is our negative attitude toward life.' We of the churches, in our pleasant day-dreams, love to picture Zion calling the evil world to righteousness. It is a shocking experience therefore to discover that our most virile manhood strenuously objects to our whole idea of what righteousness is. The soldiers seriously think that the character which the churches seek consists of little more than abstinence from a multitude of pleasurable things. In the midst of a tremendous generation, when men are rising to superhuman heights of positive character in service of gigantic aims, the churches often stand, in the imagination of the soldiers, insisting on a list of prohibitions, which the army as a whole regards with sheer contempt; thinks it narrow, negative, piffling; passes it up as unworthy of a real man's ambition to observe.

At first I was disposed to call this interpretation of the church's teaching most unjust. And so far as many churches are concerned, it is unjust. But I remembered the minister who preached a long Sunday evening sermon, for the acknowledged purpose of persuading a few of us to sign a pledge never to drink sweet cider as long as we lived. I remembered with resurrected wrath that, as a boy, I missed my one and only opportunity to hear Edwin Booth in *Hamlet* because some brethren stirred my sensitive conscience on the wickedness of the theatre. I recalled the agonizing scruples induced by fervid sermons against everything that a normal boy wants to do, from dancing the Virginia Reel to reading George Eliot's

novels. The whole programme of negative ethics, which the churches have so insistently proclaimed, came up out of the limbo to which years of forgetfulness had consigned it. If everywhere in the army one finds these splendid men thinking of Christian character in terms of negation, whose fault is it? For years the solicitous, paternal attempt of the churches to build a protecting hedge around their people's character has been confirming the idea that the marrow of Christian duty is 'Thou shalt not.' Granted that the vanguard of the churches is far beyond the spot where this criticism strikes! One returns from France with the impression graven deep, that the vanguard of the churches is very much smaller than he used to think, and that the bulk of the churches is a long, long way behind. The righteousness of the saints, in the general estimation of the army, is little more than *anti*—*anti* dance, theatre, cards, drink, smoke, profanity, and all fun on Sundays.

Some of these things we all may earnestly hate and vigorously fight; in others of them we well may see the peril; but that the demands of Jesus on human life should be so emasculated that discipleship to Him becomes a list of negations, however important, is one of the major sins of the churches. And it is a sin whose nemesis now has its foot upon the church's doorsill. For whatever war is bringing out in these men overseas, it is surely eliciting the masterful, positive elements in character. Courage, self-devotion, fortitude, unconquerable cheer, fidelity to comrades, loyalty to undertakings, perfect willingness to die for their cause—these things seem great in the army. One understands, as he never could before, Jesus' moral emphases: spiritual virtues, supreme; spiritual meannesses, most damnable; sins of sudden passion, tremendously disapproved but merci-

fully forgiven. As one takes the moral measure of some of the worst of these men, rough as sin but loyal as the saints, one keeps recalling a verse of the gospels: 'Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.'

A sergeant of the British Regulars, seeing gas-patients die, — twenty-four hours of drowning agony, — exclaimed to a friend, 'This sort of thing makes me want to suffer everything for everyone once and get it over!' Consider such a man going home to hear some dominie, who never came within sight of so vital a Calvary, urging through a whole sermon the sin of baseball on Sunday afternoon. Is this overdrawn? Yet it is a picture that hangs in the minds of the soldiers. They honestly think that the ethical interest of the churches chiefly centres in just such questions of abstinence.

These soldiers see ahead of them a generation facing prodigious problems, on whose successful solution the weal of humanity depends. They see arising questions of international organization and of social justice, which, unanswered, will make defeat out of the most splendid victory that they can win. They see the need of great character directed to great ends. They do not want to die in vain. They want a fairer, more fraternal world to show for their travail. But only vaguely, if at all, do they associate the churches with that deep desire or rely on them to help much in achieving it. The churches which they have known have impressed multitudes of them as having no ethical enthusiasm for anything except negative ideals of individual behavior. And one returns from France vehemently feeling that, in the midst of so great a generation, to be a small man or a small church obsessed by piddling prohibitions is disgrace.

Can written words make this fact sharp enough to pierce clean through the church's self-content? Donald Hankey has said that many of the finest characters in the army, whom Christ would have loved and in whom he would have seen his spirit, are often, not only unallied with the churches, but utterly unaware that that sort of character has anything to do with the aim and interest of the churches. I know no competent observer, in the whole line of France, who would not, with whatever regret, consent to that lamentable report. The church as the organized force of militant righteousness, fighting the evil of the world — how fair a picture! But multitudes of these men in the army, utterly unchurched, are not representatives of the world's evil. They are the very salt of the earth, its benediction and its hope. This is the point of the sting which drives a lover of the churches out of his silence into this agonized complaint. The only use of the church is to gather up humanity's best, to be the coöperative unit where those who would fight for the highest against the lowest may take their stand. And lo! the church is failing just there. The best is escaping her. It is finding other voices to speak through, other agencies to work through; and in individual characters, like multitudes of these men in the army, it rises to superb heights, careless of the churches, sometimes scornful of them.

Let the matter stand, sharply put! For generations the churches have been calling men to fight the world's worst; their present task is, first, to see if they can somehow become once more the rallying-point of the world's best. Urgently we desire these men of the army to accept Christianity. But before we succeed, many of our churches will have to get a type of Christianity that it is worth the real man's while to accept.

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Such are the places of obvious conflict between the men in the trenches and the church at home. One other might be added. Comradeship is the glory of the army, and in that comradeship previous wealth, rank, occupation do not count. Only manhood matters. I do not see how these soldiers are coming home to many of our churches, where pews are owned or rented, and where the congregation is so seated that a man's relative income can be estimated by his comparative distance from the altar of the Lord's sacrifice. The class-divisions in our churches are in ill accord with the democracy of the army. There is a shocking incongruity between an attack at the front — rich and poor, learned and ignorant, prominent and obscure, going over the top together — and a congregation in a wealthy metropolitan church singing, —

'Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war.'

As one considers these accusations which the spirit of the army brings against the churches, — the selfishness of our appeal, the pettiness of our sectarian emphases, the negativeness of our ethic, the undemocratic quality of our fellowship, — he sees that they are no theoretical complaints. They fall upon us all in vital spots. Some, in this last generation, were for saving the churches by keeping them theologically and ritually orthodox; some were for saving them by making them liberal; and now the army drags up the manhood of America where we can talk with it — and behold! the soldiers do not know much about our points of controversy, take little stock in any of them, waste no time to think or wind to talk of them, but seem to feel that, liberal or orthodox, our churches may incontinently be consigned to obliv-

ion unless they can make some vital changes in their *life*. Some of the soldiers are liberals; they consciously think in modern terms and argue modern problems; some are so orthodox that they lay bets, calling Y.M.C.A. secretaries to hold the stakes, as to whether they have guessed right the date when the forty-two months of Revelation's thirteenth chapter predict the ending of the war! The men in the trenches have no distinctly theological message for the churches whatsoever. The army's specialty is not speculation.

But these men are learning everything that fellowship in devotion, sacrifice, suffering, and death can teach. At their best they are very gallant gentlemen. At times a minister who lives with them turns bitterly upon himself — O sleek and satin-voiced dominie, what can you tell these men about life's realities? And when these men smite the churches with their criticism, they strike us where we live.

These accusations of the soldiers pierce like spear-thrusts into the heart of a churchman with the army. His comfort is that a deeper message from the army's men still is lurking underneath. One who lives with them feels at times not so much the sharpness of their criticism as he feels the poignancy of the appeal which, often dumbly, they are making to the churches. I heard a lecturer, speaking to a great audience of Americans in France, turn aside to plead with them about the church. He pictured to them their possible return to America, not negligent of the church, or alien, but concerned to blow to smithereens the conventionalities that impede her usefulness and to make of

her again the place where those who march with God can find their point of rallying. Not even denunciation of the Kaiser called out more long and eager cheers.

Once let these men feel that the churches have been stabbed wide awake, that, like all other institutions in this direful, slaughterous generation, they are resolutely planning for a new and greater day, and the best men of the army will run out to them. Atheism is negligible at the front. The army as a whole believes overwhelmingly in God and immortality. The churches' day of crisis with the army's men is also her day of unprecedented opportunity. Let the churches proclaim social aims worth fighting for, not a mere selfish gospel of safety; let them lift up the central faiths of the Christian life, with the fringes hanging how they will; let them make ethical negations only the shadows cast by the great light of positive ideals; let them practise as well as preach fraternity; and, doing these things, let them draw together in one common cause, because they have learned how much they all agree and how insignificantly they differ! They need not fear the return of the army, if they will do that.

Facing this coming decade with its unbounded opportunities to fight for things worth while, I should desire before all else to be a Christian minister. But to be a contented minister, a conventional, placid minister, soothingly mellifluous on Sunday while the whole world is on fire — that is anathema! As in every great generation of the church, the glory which the ministry offers to robust young men to-day is the glory of a fight.