

The White Ribbon

For God, and Home, and Humanity.

Thought for the Month. . .

"'FORWARD' Be our watchword,
Steps and voices joined:
Seek the things before us,
Not a look behind.
Burns the fiery pillar
At our army's head:
Who shall dream of shrinking
By our Captain led."

—H. Alford.

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"A Battlement for Thy Roof"

(Preached by the Ven. Archdeacon F. Kirkham at the Dominion Convention Service, held at Blenheim, in the Church of the Nativity, on Sunday, 15th March, 1953.)

Deuteronomy 22:8: "When thou buildest a new house, thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."

Introduction

How very suggestive is the picture, which this ancient Mosaic building law conjures up before us. The roofs of Eastern houses were flat and served the dual purpose of providing an area for drying grain, or an open-air parlour when coolness or privacy was sought. No doubt it was a delectable spot on a hot summer's evening yet, without a parapet, how dangerous it could prove! Experience of numerous accidents and tragedies caused by people falling off the roof must have eventually constrained the ancient law-giver to promulgate this injunction making it compulsory to build a battlement around the roof. (Quote text.)

As we study this commonsense law we see that it was the householder's moral responsibility and bounden duty to provide a battlement for the protection of any who might ascend to the roof top. Not to do so would render him guilty of the blood of the person who might, perchance, fall from the roof.

(1) Responsibility to one's neighbour

Thus we see enshrined in this ancient building law a far-reaching principle which should govern all our human relationships, teaching as it does our moral responsibility and practical duty to our neighbour; all of which is summed up and raised to its highest spiritual plain by our blessed Lord Himself in the second of the Great Commandments as He gave it to us: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

How then shall we, who claim to be followers of the Master, discharge our responsibility and duty to our neighbour and so fulfil the law of Christ? Again, the house with the battlements is very suggestive.

(2) Safe-guarding Parapets

It is our responsibility and duty as Christians to build the parapets or battlements which safe-

guard human society from moral corruption and spiritual tragedy, and particularly the youth and children of our land who will be the citizens of tomorrow. Below, there is a yawning gulf from which arises the stench of those corruptions which are, on an increasing scale, rotting the soul of our people. We see moral slackness which is a sure sign of irreligion and spiritual declension; we see liberty degenerating into licentiousness impatient of all law and authority; and we see deliberate flouting of the law. But these general signs of moral decay are but symptomatic of two root evils in our midst, namely the twin evils of gambling and strong drink. These two things constitute a deadly cancerous growth that is gradually sapping the life blood and moral fibre of our national character and, if there is any truth in our religion and in the testimony of history, they will inevitably bring about our downfall as surely as the night follows the day unless a much greater and more determined effort is made by Christian people to grapple with the menace at its root. It almost makes one reel to contemplate the staggering, astronomical sums that are being expended in this land each year on drink and gambling.

(a) The Drink Menace

Over £23,000,000 was spent last year on drink alone. The moral wastage from this expenditure cannot be estimated as we try to think of what it means in degraded and ruined lives in whom the glory of womanhood has been besmirched, the strength of manhood dissipated, the image of God defaced. Drunkenness is so very much a social sin having its repercussions on the lives of so many others.

Then think of the physical damage, which cannot be measured, in terms of broken health and homes, expenditure on hospitals and asylums, and in death itself. The menace of the drunken driver has reached such alarming proportions today as to constitute by far our greatest road-traffic problem. Perhaps the death and tragedy caused by the drunken motorist will do more than anything else to stir the public conscience and hustle the drink