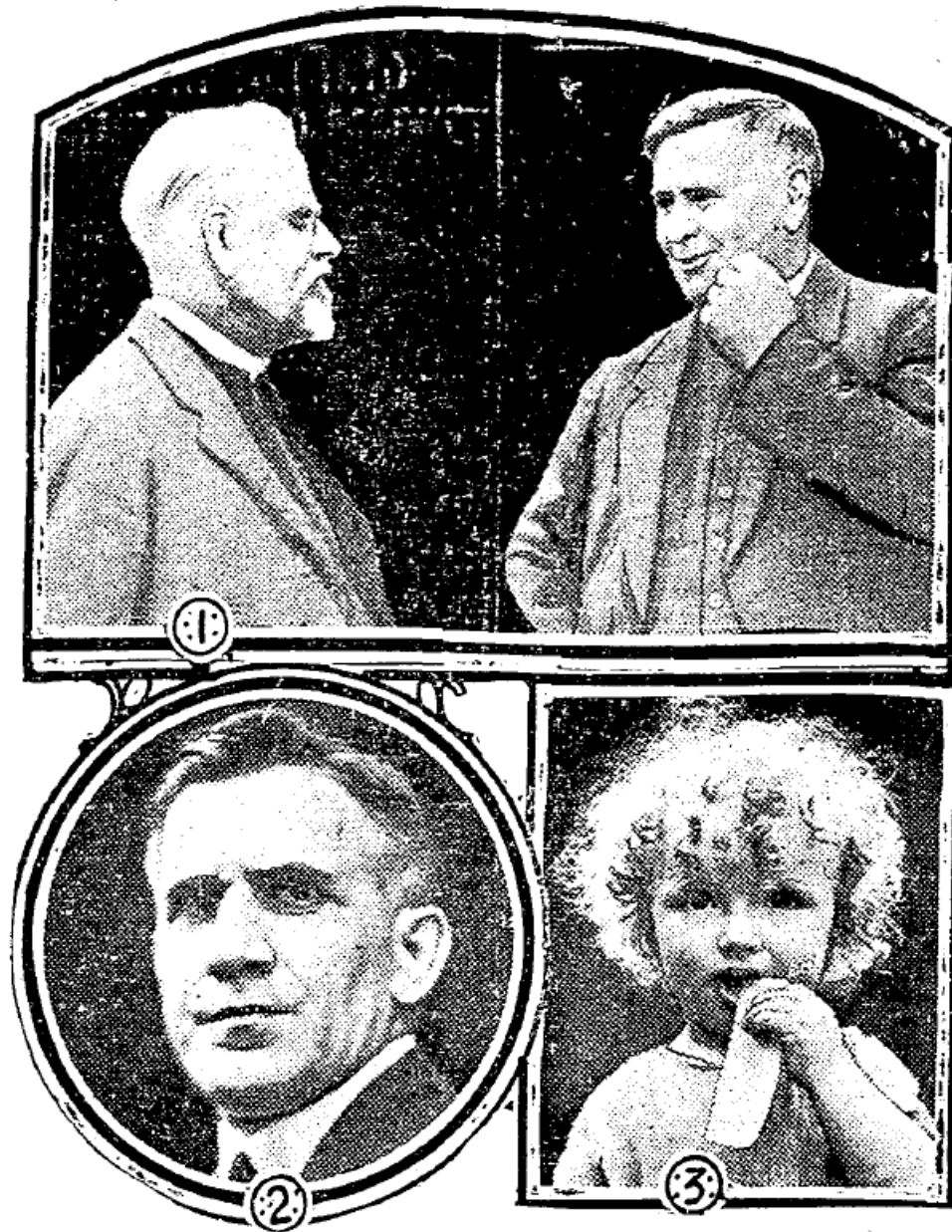


MENNONITES HOLD CAMP MEETING AT STAYNER



Scenes at Sunday's Mennonite Camp meeting at Stayner, near Wasaga Beach, are shown above. (1) is Rev. P. Cober of Kitchener, an ex-elder, chatting with Rev. M. Bricker, presiding elder at Grove Camp, Stayner. (2) Is Rev. Ira W. Sherk of Michigan, who has served 21 years as Mennonite missionary on the west coast of Africa. (3) Is little Harold McIver of Ravenna, Ont., one of the children at the camp meeting.

OLD-TIME CAMP MEETING IS STAGED BY MENNONITES

Black-Garbed, Dour-Faced Preachers Earnestly Set About Business Of Saving Souls On Shores Of Georgian Bay—"No Smoking" Signs Litter Landscape And Short Skirts Are Taboo

By R. E. KNOWLES

Earnestness is the master manufacturer. This applies even to the making of words.

I saw and heard, Sunday, an illustration of the latter. The scene was laid at Stayner, a village-town near Wasaga Beach, Georgian Bay, chiefly famous for a hotel that took a prize as the best conducted in the province.

The occasion was a "camp-meeting", an institution in these degenerate days much better known as a memory than as a current event. This camp-meeting, fearlessly so named was conducted by the Mennonites, a godly company of religionists that had its rise in Switzerland, reinforced by Holland, about the time of Martin Luther.

And the newly manufactured word, of earnestness born, first fell upon the air yesterday morning within the vast "evangelistic" tent while the brother who prayed, pleaded for the brother who was about to preach.

"Oh, Lord," came the fervent prayer, "unctionize Thy Servant" — and the new word, to my mind a most useful child, came into being. "Unctionize" is a word that deserves to live, a word that will earn its bed and board.

The prayer was answered. The preaching brother was "unctionized" all right. And as I sat on the rude, backless plank that did duty for a pew, catching from the open sides of the tent the lovely vista of this pine grove, listening to the song of birds in the sunshine (though they tell me it was pouring in Toronto), now and then a little distracted by the flitting songsters that joined the worshipers - as I took in all these things, at the same time marking the unctionizing which was passed on to the great throng, I could not but half regret that the good old camp-meeting, so prevalent fifty years ago, was not more common to-day. A hundred years ago the annual camp-meeting showed Canadian Methodism at its ideal best; to-day the Timothy Eaton Memorial has usurped that proud position.

First Mennonite Acquaintance

Yesterday morning marked my very first acquaintance with a Mennonite congregation. I saw them, if not at their best, certainly at their hottest. They were gathered in Stayner for a purpose. That purpose was the conversion of souls. They had, when I arrived at the great tent, been carrying on this craft, in their leafy and songful temple, for more than a week. They were from all over Ontario. They lived in tents, dotted all over the beautiful grove. They ate in a mammoth dining tent ("children under twelve

half price," I noticed) and I should judge, from yesterdays long hours of observation, that they are the solemnest, even the saddest, bunch of "happy" believers ever saw in my life.

When I entered the tent they were in the midst of a "*testifying*" banquet. A tumultuous "class meeting" was under way. Like Sunday golf at Mississauga the entrants were timed, released at stated intervals. There was, standing, a long waiting list. The leader regulated the order. Without exception, I think, the testimonials began with: "I am so glad this morning than I can say that Jesus . . . etc." or words to that effect. The sovereign and exclusive theme was Jesus. One told of how He saves from drink, another from tobacco, another from worldliness, another from paralysis or a goitre, another from sinful pride. And as the testimonies crowded on each other's heels the air was electric with an accompaniment, from the audience, of "Bless the Lord — Yes, it lasts, it don't pass away—Amen," and "Yes, He's always the same — Glory to His name," all voiced in a hundred different forms while, from time to time, some ebullient brother or effervescent sister would break in with a bar of song, "He's everything to me," or "The old-time religion," or "Somebody came and lifted me."

Supreme Right to Bible

The faces of the great audience were a study. Here, if nowhere else, the primitive in religion still survives. —The *sovereign note* is "*separation from the world.*" The Bible has supreme right of way. If it is "between the lids" that settles it. I talked to a large number of their preachers yesterday. Jonah's three-day marine incarceration is a living fact to them, passionately cherished. Joshua's sun, static in the heavens is a blessed and indispensable truth. Every man to whom I talked *affirmed* that *nothing* but eternal torture awaits every soul that is not sheltered from an angry God by a "paid-the-price" satisfaction provided by the Substitute. Asked as to how this affected the heathen millions who had never had a chance to accept this, no hope of escape was held out. It is "between the lids," and that settles it. This is fundamentalism at its glorious best.

En passant, I cannot forbear to say that, an hour or two alter I heard these dread dicta from orthodox lips. I was privileged to survey this same preacher at dinner. And, for a man who believed that every minute— or is it every second? — so many hundreds of poor ignorant heathen souls drop into the insatiable maw of the bottomless pit, this reverend despondent stowed away a fearful and wonderful meal, smacking his lips and scraping his plate as he settled back, replete, to enjoy an hilarious and mirthful conversation with a friend, peal after peal after peal of laughter suggesting that here we have the eighth wonder of the word — how a man who believes in this wholesale slaughter of the ignorant can ever laugh again.

The Mennonite women, too, were there in hundreds. Sweet-faced many of them, sober and chastened all. No rings - even wedding rings, the older ones never wear. No bobbed hair, none. No short skirts—shorter a little perhaps, but not short. Poke-bonnets and switches were everywhere to be seen.

The one deadly fear at this sylvan cathedral seemed to be a haunting dread of tobacco. One of the preachers told me he did not know a single Mennonite in Ontario who smoked. "Any of their ministers?"

Oh, dear no—although “we had one once that we suspected — but we could never actually catch him at it.”

There are, nailed to the trees, at least 30 or 40 notices prohibiting smoking. In consequence The Star representative, on one of his pilgrimages back to the grove, was compelled to burn a little incense on the profane path without. Thus engaged, I was overtaken by a man about 75, of grave and reverent mien. He brought the conversation round to the point at which he could appropriately reprove me. "Defile not, etc." And, turning to look at him (this story is literal fact and typical of much) I observed a tell-tale mulatto signature at each corner of his censorious mouth. And, to make a long story short, he finally confided to me: I am an old man, and I'm all alone and a bit of a chew after my meals, especially after dinner, is about the only little pleasure I have left — ‘and it don't cost me over \$14 a Year." Thus it would appear that whether in Fundamentalist or Modernist, there is still a bit of human nature that survives in all of us.

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