

THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1915.

The Month.

THE New Year opens with heavy clouds on the horizon. The raid made by a German squadron upon three peaceful towns in the North-East of England has made everyone realize the devastating power of war ; and although we are bound to believe, because the Admiralty has told us so, that such demonstrations "are devoid of military significance," the grievous loss of life which ensued, and the heavy damage inflicted upon churches, hospitals, and other buildings, are a painful reminder of the danger to which the country is exposed. Nor is this all. Indeed, the sufferings and inconvenience from which we who are at home suffer sink into complete insignificance beside the horrors now being almost daily endured on the battlefields of Europe by our own brave men. Thousands of our gallant troops have lost their lives, and thousands more are being brought home crippled and wounded. The sacrifice is being borne as patiently as possible, but there is sadness throughout the land, and the number of families bereaved and of homes darkened by sorrow is greater than anyone likes to think. Moreover, the end is not in sight. It may be that the war will go on for months, perhaps years. No one can predict when it will end, or what more of suffering and sorrow we and ours may be called upon to undergo before the reign of peace begins. In these circumstances it seems almost a mockery to exchange the time-honoured greeting, "A Happy New Year." But is it really so? We think not. Christian

happiness is independent of all environment. It belongs to the inner sanctuary of the soul. It comes from the realized presence of Christ. With this thought in mind, it is not only possible, it becomes a holy privilege, for Christian people to wish each other "A Happy New Year." The wish becomes, at once, instinct with life and feeling. It expresses the earnest desire that, on the material side, every circumstance and happening may bring with it a full measure of happiness; and that, on the spiritual side, there may be continued growth in grace. It may be that the first part of this two-fold wish will not be realized, but nothing except our own waywardness can interfere with the other. Happiness depends upon peace, and the promise is secure, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." That is the true ground of our hope; that is the sun which pierces the darkest clouds. With the mind stayed upon God we can face cheerfully and bravely the baffling problems which seem to lie before us, and so, in no conventional or formal way, but heartily and sincerely, we can wish each other "A Happy New Year."

Neither the fears of some nor the wishes of others have been realized. The Form of Humble Prayer to Almighty God to be used on January 3, the day appointed for intercession on behalf of the nation and Empire in this time of war, contains no provision for Prayers for the Faithful Departed; it is loyal throughout to the teaching of Scripture and the Prayer-Book. The Form is issued under the authority of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and not, as was expected it would be, by Order in Council. How far the Archbishops have power to issue such a service is entirely a matter for the lawyers. This is not the occasion for a discussion of *Jus Liturgicum*, and for ourselves we are sincerely grateful to the Archbishops for providing the Church with an adequate form of prayer which will enable the Church as a whole to unite in one solemn act of intercession at this most difficult crisis in the nation's history. Into the details of

The Day of
Humble Prayer.

the Service we need not enter here. Copies may be ordered from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1d. each or 2s. 6d. per 100), and we doubt not that many of our readers will have obtained them probably before these lines are printed. But there is one passage in the Address, appointed to be read by the Minister at the opening of the Special Service, which greatly impresses us. The whole Address, we may add, is marked by a reverent tone and gracious spirit, and if we quote the following extract only it is because of its special importance in connection with the spiritual aspect of the Great War. After insisting upon the necessity for approaching God in humility and with confession of shortcomings, the Address proceeds :

“Coming thus humbly and thankfully to our faithful God and merciful Father, we shall not seek first the things that are for our private advantage, but the things which will be for the advancement of His kingdom. We shall entreat Him to grant that out of the confusions and miseries of the war there may arise a clearer perception of the true relation between right and might, and a fuller apprehension of the Gospel of Christ as it bears upon the fellowship of nations. We shall have no desire to see our enemies crushed merely for the sake of their humiliation. We shall wish for them, as for ourselves, that their eyes may be opened to know what is true ; and we shall pray that the day may come, by the mercy of God, when we may learn to understand and respect one another, and may be united as friends to pursue the common good. And above all, we shall pray that when the longed-for peace arrives, we may be filled with the determination to wipe out the bitter memory of our strifes and contentions by setting ourselves afresh, as men of goodwill, to the supreme task of leading the peoples of the world to the true knowledge and obedience of the only Deliverer and Master of us all.”

The richness, fulness, and beauty of this passage will appeal to us all. It can hardly be denied that there has been even among Christian people a lamentable failure to bring our thoughts about the war into that strict relationship to the law of Christ which He assuredly demands of us. We know that the cruel, wicked, and often inhuman outrages perpetrated by the German soldiery have been such as to arouse the deepest indignation and to shock the conscience of the civilized world, and that it has been almost impossible to entertain towards those responsible any genuinely kindly feeling. But yet what does our Christian profession demand of us? We are not sure that

from our pulpits we have always received that help and guidance in this matter which we were entitled to expect. Not a few sermons have too much resembled leading articles from the secular newspapers, and have been devoid of any true exposition of what should be the real Christian attitude. The coming of the Day of Humble Prayer offers to us all the opportunity of making a new departure. We need not the less desire or pray for the speedy and decisive victory of our arms, but we need the more to be careful not to offend in thought, word, or deed against the Divine Law of love. We realize to the full that it needs a special measure of Divine grace thus to feel towards those with whom we are at war, but grace will certainly be given if we seek it. In this connection we are glad to find that the Form of Prayer includes intercessions "for those who fight against us."

There is a remarkable similarity in tone and substance between the passage we have just quoted and the views which find expression in the new number of "Papers for War Time," which deals with "The Witness of the Church in the Present Crisis"—a similarity so striking as almost to suggest a common authorship. But be that as it may, we have no hesitation in commending the pamphlet to the thoughtful consideration of all who desire that the Church's witness should be faithful and true. It is issued anonymously, but it sets forth principles which must be weighed and measured by themselves, independently of the writer who gives them their own peculiar setting. Six "distinctive truths" are mentioned, to which the Church, "because it is the Church of Christ," is bound at the present time to bear clear and unequivocal testimony. These are :

**The Witness
of the Church.**

"1. The Church, by its very nature, transcends differences of nationality and race.

"2. One of the characteristic features of a genuinely Christian experience, in contrast with that of pagan religions, is the place given to repentance.

"3. There is nothing in the Christian moral ideal more striking and distinctive than the command to love our enemies.

"4. It belongs to essential Christian belief that evil can be effectively overcome only by spiritual means.

"5. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that, terrible as the war is, it has been the occasion of a purification and elevation of the national life.

"6. In an enfeebled and devastated world the Church is called to keep alive the beacon of hope."

Each of these points is elaborated by the writer, and his paper is full and fresh in suggestiveness, thought, and power. We regard his contribution as having quite the most far-reaching importance of any of the "Papers for War Time" yet issued. We thankfully adopt as our own his closing words: "We will not shut our ears to the call of the solemn hour in which we are living. Some order of love and freedom, of fellowship and brotherhood, is the goal towards which mankind through all its struggles blindly strives. The pledge and earnest of that new order is divinely given to us in the Church of Christ. The anguish of Europe will not have been in vain if in it the Church is born again. And there is no reason why it should not be born again, if in penitent and longing hearts there dawns a new vision of what God meant His Church to be."

The Disparagement of Missions. A newspaper is supposed to be so well informed on most matters that it is the more surprising that in a recent issue of the *Daily Sketch* there were some very disparaging remarks about foreign Missions. The writer admitted that he had "never been particularly enthusiastic" about them, "but," he went out of his way to add, "when I learn that a Hampstead church has been holding a bazaar, by means of which a large sum of money will be sent out of the country at a time like this for the attempted and very problematical conversion of some far-off heathen, I—well, marvel." It is extraordinary that, at this time of day, any man professing to be a publicist could give expression to such views. "Attempted," "very problematical"—has the writer never heard the story of the conversion of the South American Indians, or the natives of Uganda, or the South Sea Islanders? Does he not know that the testimony of statesmen to the value

of Missions is overwhelming? We will only quote the words of one to whom this disparager of Missions will assuredly listen—the present Marquis of Salisbury. Speaking at the C.M.S. Centenary Meeting, he said:

“It is only because we know that in the train of the British Government comes the preaching of Christ that we are able to defend the Empire of which we are so proud. Therefore, gentlemen, I ask you to pledge this meeting to the Christianity of the British Empire. I do not care in what quarter of the globe it may be, I do not care what may be the political exigencies of the moment, I do not care what colleges of secular instruction you may establish, but unless, sooner or later, in due and proper time, you carry with those institutions the definite teaching of Christianity, you have done nothing at all.”

We note also that the Editor of the Missionary Press Bureau has sent a reply to the attack which is particularly *ad rem*. He points out that Mr. Harcourt has accepted the offer of the services of the Fijian troops. “The forefathers of these men were cannibals until the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries managed to get a foothold on the island. Since then they have ascended the scale of civilization, until they are considered good enough to fight with our troops in France.”

A rumour is current in well-informed Church circles that the final decisions of the Convocations on the question of Prayer-Book Revision are to be deferred until after the war. If this report be well-founded, we congratulate the authorities upon coming to so wise a determination. Anything which would be likely to accentuate our unhappy divisions is gravely to be deprecated at this juncture; and there can be no question but that, if the more controversial changes suggested by the Convocations were carried into effect, there would be on the part of a large and influential section of the Church a very serious revolt. It may be taken for granted that the formal authorization of the use of the Eucharistic Vestments would be stoutly resisted by the Evangelical School, and there are other proposals in the scheme of Revision which are not less objectionable.