

THE CHURCHMAN

February, 1915.

The Month.

Where we
Failed.

THERE have been great happenings since we last wrote on the events of the month. The first place must of necessity be given to the Day of Humble Prayer, observed by the nation in connection with the war on Sunday, January 3. It was a memorable event, and might have been rendered still more historic if only the precedents of other times had been followed. Notwithstanding all that has been said on the other side, we still regret that His Majesty's advisers did not see their way to call for a Day of *Humiliation*. No doubt the adverse views to such a description expressed by the late Queen Victoria at the time of the Crimea War—to which the CHURCHMAN was the first to call attention—carried great weight ; but they were not pressed then, nor should they have been allowed to prevail now. What could it matter to us as a nation what Germany or Austria-Hungary might think about England "humiliating" herself before God? Nor would it be of any material concern to us if even the Allies misunderstood the position. If—we speak with all reverence—God understood our action and the motives which prompted it, it were enough. On this matter we are entirely at one with the Bishop of Durham, who expressed his regret that in the original call to observe the day more emphasis was not laid upon repentance and humiliation. "I do not mean," he continued, "that we

have, humbly speaking, any call to repent regarding the origin of the war or our part in the warfare. Rather, I thank God that Britain never drew the sword with hands more nobly white and clean. And assuredly she never sent out fleets and armies whose morale of soberness and kindness, along with a sublime and indomitable valour, was so true and high. Nor ever were the lives of her heroic sons yielded up in a purer self-sacrificial spirit by those sons themselves, and by those whose anguish of bereavement over them is so holy to our hearts. . . . But . . . we need to remember, in the dust before God, the grievous modern drift of our society, in all its classes, towards ideals unworthy of Christ." It is just in this respect that the observance of the day failed in what should have been its greatest expression. Sufficient stress was not laid upon our national sins and national shortcomings, which, whatever interpretation may be given to the word, do most assuredly call loudly for national "humiliation" before the Lord if so be that the nation as such is prepared to repent. This brings us to another point of criticism. We are in full sympathy with those who favoured the setting apart of a weekday rather than a Sunday. The observance touched the Churchgoers, but it left outsiders to a very large extent unaffected. If a Royal Proclamation had been issued appointing an ordinary working day to be observed, with shops closed, amusements stopped, and work reduced, as far as possible, to a minimum, it would have had a great effect. It would at least have made people think, and clergy and others would have had the opportunity of pressing upon the nation at large, and not upon their own congregations only, the call to national humiliation for national sins. Many—perhaps the large majority—would have despised the call, but some, at least, would have given heed to it, and, what is of the highest importance, there would have been official acknowledgment before God and man of the need for national humiliation for national sins. We press this point as strongly as we can, because we are sure that it still needs consideration, even though the appointed day has passed away.

**A Great
Observance.**

But, having offered our criticism, we hasten to say that the observance of the Day of Humble Prayer on Sunday, January 3, was of a most impressive character. And it was remarkably widespread. It would, perhaps, be too much to say that the day was recognised in every church in the country, but we imagine that there were not many parishes which deliberately and designedly stood outside the effort. In the public Press most attention was given—quite naturally—to the larger services, but it is important to recognize that in a matter of this kind the humbler gatherings may be equally effective as a factor in the spiritual life of the parish or village or town. All Christian people must be thankful for the great crowds which thronged St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral, York Minster, and the other great central churches of the country, and for the spirit of earnest prayer and supplication which seemed to have taken possession of those present. In most cases we believe the several preachers used their opportunity to the best spiritual advantage. It is not always safe to judge of the quality of a sermon from the abstract of it which is given as a report in the daily newspapers. If it were, we should begin to despair of the preaching capacity of the Church of England. The reporter is on the look-out for topical "copy." Merely spiritual aspirations do not appeal to him; they are not suited to his purpose; and so it comes about that men who take their impressions only from these published reports are sometimes inclined to think that sermons are now little more than leading articles, instead of what they should be—and what in most cases we believe they really are—a living message from God to the soul. In several parish churches the sermon was dispensed with, and in its place was read the very beautiful Homily provided in the appointed Form. Where this was done reverently and impressively the effect was most stimulating and helpful. In other cases the Homily was omitted altogether—to the congregation's great loss—and the sermon was preached as usual. But, after all, the main interest of the day was not in the sermon or the

Homily, but in the Intercessions, and we are glad to believe that a deep and an abiding impression has been made. Thousands of men and women have realized, as they have never realized before, the importance, the value, and the reality, of prayer in all concerns of life. They have learnt, what perhaps as a nation we have been too slow to appreciate, that God rules in the affairs of nations, and that true national strength cometh alone from Him. And what will be the result of that great Day of Prayer? If we acknowledge—and it is the Christian's profoundest conviction—that God hears and answers prayer, we must believe that a mighty blessing will be outpoured upon our nation. It may not come in the way we look for it; it may even tarry until God shall see that as a nation we are prepared to receive it; but come it will, in His own time and in His own way, in answer to the humble prayer of His believing people.

**The Spiritual
Life of the
Nation.** Much has been said, and we doubt not will continue to be said, about national sins. These are many: some of them open, flagrant, and revolting; others secret, subtle, and fashionable. But the greatest blot of all on our national life, and the hardest to remove, is the indifference to religion which characterizes so many of our people in all ranks and all classes. It is right that these our sins and failures and shortcomings should be denounced, but denunciation does not at all adequately meet the case. Has not the time come when a definite attempt should be made by the Church to awaken the spiritual life of the nation? Beyond all question, many thousands of people have had their religious feelings stirred by the observance of the Day of Humble Prayer, and there is a real danger that unless the impression thus made is speedily followed up it may become effaced. Can nothing be done to take spiritual advantage of so unique an opportunity? The question is engaging the minds of many, and several proposals have been put forward. Let us be careful that, whilst we are discussing ways and means and methods, the opportunity does not slip away. We are profoundly convinced

that if anything is to be done effectively it must be done now. When men speak of influencing the spiritual life of the nation, it seems at first sight to be an almost impossible task. But is it really so? Certainly not. The nation is made up of individuals, and it is the legitimate pride of the Church of England that by its splendid parochial system every individual is within reach of spiritual ordinances. To the Church of England, then, it belongs primarily to use this opportunity, by means of its parochial system, to bring religious influence to bear upon the nation. The proposal has been made that in every parish there should be—possibly in Lent—a week's Mission, with the parson of the parish as his own missionary. The suggestion is one that has our cordial sympathy and support. Objections have been made to it, and we are aware of the many arguments by which it may be assailed. A Mission, it is said, requires a long period of preparation; the parish clergyman is not the man best suited to conduct a Mission in his own parish, and so on. But these are surface difficulties. No doubt a Mission in the ordinary acceptance of the term does need a large amount of preparation; but if we drop the phrase "mission," and speak rather of a definite Evangelistic effort in every parish, is it quite reasonable to suppose that a longer period than a week or two is required to prepare for it? The first day of Lent is February 17; would it not be possible for a clergyman to prepare himself and his people for such an effort, say, in the week March 21 to March 28? The objection that a clergyman is not qualified to conduct such an effort strikes us as less serious. It is in his commission, so to speak, that he has to lead his people to Christ; and we are perfectly certain that the spiritual life of both pastor and people would be greatly helped if from time to time the clergyman gave himself definitely to Evangelistic work, seeking to bring every member of his congregation into living relationship with Christ, and to win as large a number of outsiders as possible. Such an effort is always worth the making; to-day there seems overwhelming reason why it should be attempted. Another proposal is that the whole season of Lent should be

used for Evangelistic purposes, adapting the preaching at the ordinary services as occasion should require. No doubt other plans will readily suggest themselves to other minds ; but what we feel that the present situation calls for is that the parochial clergy should make some determined effort, on lines which they find to be best suited to their parishes, to deepen the impression made by the observance of the Day of Humble Prayer, and to bring their people to definite decision for Christ. If this were done on any large scale—and we see no reason why it should not be attempted—it would mean a real uplift to the spiritual life of the nation.

The whole Church ought to feel a debt of ^{“Christianity and the War.”} gratitude to the Vicar of Islington, and to those associated with him, for assigning for consideration by the Islington Clerical Meeting—held in the Parish Church on January 12—the great subject of “Christianity and the War.” It can hardly be questioned that many devoted Christian people have long been anxious for some guidance and assistance which might help to the solution of the many problems which this war raises in their minds ; and we think that on the whole they will have every reason to be satisfied with the counsel which came from the Islington speakers. There was a readiness to face the real facts of the situation, and to avoid everything sentimental and unreal. In some few quarters where there has been a tendency to arouse what we can only regard as a wholly mistaken sympathy with Germany, but scant justice has been done to our own position. It is quite right that everything should be done to prevent the righteous anger which has taken possession of this nation from developing into anything approaching hate of the German people ; but it is in the highest degree mischievous and wrong to insinuate that there is much in our own action that should make us look with less severity upon Germany. We believe our nation’s hands to be absolutely clean in this war ; we regard Germany as the wanton and wicked aggressor ; and we find no difficulty at all in praying God to

grant us the victory. Nor do we think this attitude to be incompatible with the teaching of Christ. In these circumstances we feel thankful for the sobriety and saneness of the Islington message, which, because it was restrained and wise, lost none of its spiritual power. From first to last the addresses were excellent, and Mr. Procter's own modest contribution to the discussion was not the least remarkable. He dealt frankly with a question which is passing upon many minds. "Our blessed Lord in His Sermon on the Mount," he said, "was, to my mind, setting before His Church a Divine ideal towards which she was ever to press with prayerful aspiration, but the absolutely literal carrying out of its specific injunctions was not always immediately possible in an unchristianized world. Why, if every thief who would take my cloak was to be suffered to take my coat also, and I must not restrain his purpose by locking my door, very soon my whole wardrobe would have disappeared. But this surely was not intended, and in our interpretation we must compare Scripture with Scripture." There is a strong common-sense ring about these words which we are glad to note. When once our part is justified—and of the justification of our nation's action Mr. Procter's address left us in no doubt—it is not unspiritual to recognize that it must be prosecuted to the end.

The Dean of Canterbury devoted his paper to a most careful and able exposition of St. Paul's words :
The Task of
Christianity. "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4). It is in this very principle, he declared, that is to be found the only, but the sufficient, justification for the maintenance in a Christian world, and by Christian States, of the awful sword of war. If justice is to be upheld between nations, and, above all, between weak and strong nations, the forces, he contended, must be maintained in adequate strength, which can alone avert or avenge injustice. But perhaps the

most telling part of the Dean's paper was that in which he insisted that the task of Christianity in relation to war was the momentous and supreme office of promoting among men that apprehension and that love of righteousness which ought to be the controlling force of all their actions, and showed how the opposite spirit prevailed in Germany. We cannot forbear quoting the following powerful passage :

"The action of our enemies in this war (unless we ourselves are utterly deluded, which, I am sure, is not the case) is obviously based upon a completely perverted conception of what righteousness and justice are. It is based upon the avowed and violent rejection of the Christian standard of righteousness and justice, upon the repudiation of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It is a further illustration of the perversion of which even well-intentioned human nature is capable, that this unchristian ideal should have taken possession of so large a proportion of a nation which, in the past, did as much as any nation in the world to bring the pure and simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ home to all their own people and to Europe at large. What perversion of human nature is not possible when the land of some of the gentlest and tenderest of Evangelical influences—the home, for instance, of Kaiserswerth, in which our own Florence Nightingale was trained—becomes the land of Nietzsche and Bernhardi? That which the Christian Church has to do is to proclaim and maintain among all peoples and nations and tongues, and, above all, in those European nations with whom the physical control of the world rests, the Christian spirit—the spirit of Christ—the spirit of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. In proportion as that spirit, through the words of our Lord and His Gospels and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is maintained among individuals, are they granted a right judgment in all things. In any people in whom the Christian spirit was predominant we may be sure that the arrogance, the pride, the passions, and the ambitions which have provoked the present war would have been impossible."

It is thus we see that the cultivation of the Christian spirit tells against war; and if war, unhappily, should come, it will thus be restrained within the limits of just and Christian purposes.

The England
of the
Future.

Canon Simpson, of St. Paul's, dealt eloquently and brilliantly with "God's Call to the Nation," explaining that God is calling loudly for more and better Christianity; and the Bishop of Chelmsford, who followed, read a paper which most aptly illustrated better Christianity

in action. His immediate subject was "The Church's Duty to the State," and he pictured the England of the future in glowing terms, showing the Church's responsibilities :

"The England of the future is bound to be more democratic than ever, but woe to England in that day if Christ be not the people's King! In a letter recently received from the front a chaplain wrote: 'You must press upon the "Terriers" and others whom you may meet that they must know Christ before they come out here. It must be part of their training. They will need all the religion they can get. This they will soon find out.' These words may be applied to the democracy of the future. 'They must know Christ. They will need all the religion they can get.' If this is true—and any man who has studied history knows it to be true—then the duty of the Church to the State is clear. She must preach Christ. Religion and politics must not be divorced as in the past. The mystical and ethical must be mingled together. The Sermon on the Mount must be preached from Calvary, and not Calvary from the Mount of the Sermon. But this must not be taught as two Gospels, but as one. Bethlehem and Golgotha both proclaim the same Christ. Bethlehem saw Him living for men, coming on earth for men from the Father, linking Himself for ever with sinful men; Golgotha proclaims Him as dying for men and commending His soul for men into the hands of His Father. If the full Gospel is proclaimed, then heaven will be proclaimed on earth, for he that believeth will have 'the Life,' the Christ, and where Christ is there is heaven.

"The Church will be quick to teach the State the lessons drawn from the present. She will affirm as a necessity, for both nation and individual, integrity and sincerity of motives. A nation's and a man's word must be a bond. Neither master nor man must be free to break his plighted word. The 'Scrap of Paper' must be held sacred, at no matter what cost. The keynotes of the life of the nation must be Truth, Justice, and Brotherhood. Truth must prevail. Deceit and lying in trade and commerce must cease. Diligence in business must be coupled with serving the Lord. Justice must be in the ascendant. The master must be just to the man, and the man to the master. The difference of position between them must not be a pretext for the violation of justice as between man and man. The Ten Commandments are not destroyed, but strengthened and ennobled, by love becoming the fulfilling of the law, and man must gather the inspiration to love his neighbour from the love begotten in him by his love to God. The Church must teach, in season and out of season, that God is the beginning and end of all Truth, Justice, and Brotherhood."

This is a great ideal, and we trust that the Church may rise to it. The tone of the whole meeting was eminently practical and useful, with its emphatic call to prayer as a panacea for the difficulties of the times. In this connection Mr. Darbyshire's paper was specially noteworthy.

We desire to offer our cordial support to the **Alcohol and the War.** movement for promoting amongst soldiers and civilians the taking of a patriotic pledge of total abstinence for the duration of the war. The movement arose out of a Conference held in London, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which resulted in the formation of a Central Emergency Committee, of which Dr. C. F. Harford is acting as Honorary Secretary. Dr. Harford, in the course of the paper he read at the London Meeting of Lay Churchmen on January 16, referred in eloquent terms to the appeal issued by Lord Kitchener and the late Lord Roberts, but more especially he centred attention upon the action of Russia, which (in the words of *The Times*) "in sternly prohibiting the sale of spirituous liquors has already vanquished a greater foe than the Germans." Dr. Harford added on his own behalf:

"It is said that this action on the part of Russia gained for her army several days in the work of mobilization, and the benefit of that has been incalculable in enabling her to resist the onslaught of the invader. Would that we could follow the example of Russia and save ourselves from this fearful disability, which is even now seriously hindering the efficiency of our troops in training, and thus diminishing the fighting capacity of our all too small, though grandly heroic, army. But we are a democratic nation, and drastic action cannot be taken without the will of the people, and at present we are not half awake to the enormity of the danger which confronts us from this cause, for the nation is tied hand and foot by the great financial interests which are bound up with the drink traffic and the slavery of habit which seriously limited our freedom."

We are inclined to think that Dr. Harford takes too pessimistic a view of the situation. Public opinion moves slowly, but it is moving, and there is reason to believe, to take but one example, that the earlier closing of public-houses has commanded all but universal approval. The offices of the Central Emergency Committee are at 55, Paternoster House, E.C.

