

Some After-War Problems for which we ought to prepare.

THIS paper will be at once condemned on many sides as exceedingly premature and mistaken, for we do not know and we cannot tell what will be the exact situation after the war. The writer knows this quite well, and considers it highly probable that he will be anxious to recall a great deal that is here stated when peace is restored, if not before. But it seems worth while to make the venture, even if it has no other result than to make people think, because the issues of the present struggle are bound to be so stupendous and so far-reaching.

Already the horizon is heavily charged, and it should do us good rather than harm to set our brains, our imaginations, our hearts, to work on the large variety of new problems which we may have to entertain; to endeavour to marshal the many possibilities and probabilities of the future, and to look through them and to grasp what will be involved; to train ourselves, as never before, to take big views, large views, long views, of our changing life. And the writer is not alone in this view, for already different bodies of earnest people are seeking to fortify themselves for what must come by giving themselves to such thinking—*e.g.*: The General Committee of Women's Church Work at their summer meeting have taken as their topic for discussion "Preparation for the Work of Reconstruction after the War"; the Laymen's Missionary Movement has done even better, for they have issued a most inspiring "Message for the Times" under the title of "The War and the Future," in which they express themselves thus:

"The clouds of war seem to hide the peaks. We are failing to look at the great future beyond the war for which our men are fighting. . . . The war has brought to Europe the magnificent opportunity of a new beginning. It has broken the entail of the past. . . . Before the pressure of the old routine has numbed our senses, it is our duty to cut fresh channels in which the new tides of spiritual life may flow. Out of the collapse of civilization as we had known it, out of the utter failure of the ways of thinking and acting which in our self-sufficiency we had chosen, we may be led into a new and better world."

Thus, it is no individual, no wild opinion that we are in for a transformation on a scale which will baffle most of us for many years, and which we are only wise to seek to anticipate seriously. As the *Daily News* put it last April: "We are in the midst of the biggest shipwreck the world has ever seen. We are taking to the rafts and the lifeboats and everything we can lay our hands on. We are undergoing an experience which will leave none of us the same."

Turning now to the potential problems, they will be both national and international, some of them universal. All of them will demand a great deal of faith, of patience, of sacrifice. In a short paper we can but skim the surface of the horizon as we seem dimly to get a glimpse of it, hoping that sustained thought and closer investigation will reveal its clearer outlines to us.

I. The world as a whole will be facing a new life, a new relationship, which will give a different character to our missionary work. In the Laymen's "Message" this naturally looms very largely, and they say of it:

"Among the problems that will arise when the war is over, none will be more difficult than the race and 'colour' problem. It is not improbable that it may dwarf all others in importance. For the voluntary participation of Japan and India in a European war has greatly altered the whole aspect of the problem and given it a new urgency. Europe will be forced to find some other basis of relationship with Asiatic peoples than that of friendly and beneficent superiority. The complexity of the problem can hardly be exaggerated."

Every missionary student is feeling deeply the truth of this, and it is making missionary arrangements unusually perplexing, for much of the missionary programme may have to be reshaped. The Primate of all Ireland, in his opening address to the General Synod, touched on another aspect of the same problem, using language which merits quotation:

"The last report of the *International Review of Missions* tells us what is likely to be the effect of this great war on the nations amongst whom our devoted missionaries are at work. In Japan, for example, there is no doubt that the spectacle of great Christian nations engaged in a cruel conflict is making it much more difficult to commend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, on the other hand, in Japan our missionaries tell us there is a growing consciousness of the need of new spiritual forces in national life. They tell us

that they are brought face to face with an ever-increasing sense of want, and with a people stretching out their hands to try and find out God ; and they tell us, too, that amongst the various Christian denominations there is a growing sense of the need for unity and co-operation. In China the war is too remote to affect the people to any appreciable extent, and the chief disaster resulting from it has been the non-payment to the missionaries of their scanty salaries and the impossibility of making use of many opportunities for advance. In India the war has in many ways made ready a people prepared for the Lord. It has roused the social conscience, and is quickening a desire for social service. It has evoked the most wonderful spirit of affection for English rule, and it has bound together as never before Indian and Briton, Hindu and Moslem, Buddhist and Christian, into a common comradeship which must make it easier in the years to come to proclaim the Religion of the Cross" (*vide the Irish Times* for April 14).

These facts and features surely call for much reflection, not to say an examination of our Christian spirit. Well may the Church ask loudly : " Are we ready, are we willing, for these developments, for these changes? or how can we get ready?" The question is not so much one of forces, of men and women teachers and preachers, but rather, What is going to be our attitude to these races? Are we prepared to regard them as one with us, and to admit them cordially, welcome them, into our family circle? Is all contempt and disdain to be banished, and shall we readily give them the right hand of fellowship, and "love them as brethren"? We have much, very much, to learn on this point. We are verily guilty concerning these our brethren, to whom we give a poor apology for love. Happy shall we be if the war corrects us in this thing, and brings Christ more fully into our affections.

II. The *international problem* claims our attention next. The whole of Europe will emerge from a horrible melting-pot, and no one knows what the task of the geographers is going to be. But, important as territorial considerations are, there are other things more important.

The Bishop of London mentioned one of them in his address to his Diocesan Conference in May, saying : " We are looking forward, as Christians, one day to a great brotherhood of nations ; every Christian must pray from his heart, ' When comes the promised time that war shall be no more ?' for we must never

forget that God hath made of one blood every nation in the world." That means that we shall have to reckon with every kind of moral and commercial difficulty, for the fact that we have neighbours will be forced upon us with a fresh emphasis, in spite of our continued isolation in our island home. Who has carefully weighed the import of this? Who has tried to measure its inner meaning? The position has been partially sketched by Mr. J. Crowle-Smith in a notable article, in *Joyful News*, on "How shall we deal with the Drink Question?" In the course of it he says :

"Let it be remembered that Germany has reckoned upon the very difficulty arising in this country that we are now facing, and that our enemy is rejoicing to-day in the position in which we are finding ourselves through our drinking habits. Let it also be noted that when the war is over England will have to meet in her commercial life with a sober Russia, who, with her countless millions of population and great undeveloped national resources, aided by quick access to Western Europe through the Dardanelles, will prove a friendly rival of no mean order. Add to this a Germany freed of the military yoke, and so able to bend all her resources and abilities to the prosecution of her trade, and a France, clear of the terrible curse of absinthe, turning her attention more and more to developing her commerce, and you have a triple call on England to rouse herself at this time, and, no matter what the cost in money, to shake off the grip the trade has upon her."

I am far from saying that this gives us a complete idea of the European prospect, but it is enough to make any lover of England very jealous and very serious ; it is enough to compel the inquiry : "Are we, in the future, likely to be a redeeming, an elevating factor in European politics, or shall we be found ridiculing the moral programme of our neighbours and hindering their efforts to rise in the scale of civilization, and to adopt a new standard and new ways of living?" Out of this question there emerge two others :

First, can we, even now, begin to lay a foundation on which to build a European house, fortified on all sides against fighting and bloodshed? I am no dreamer (perhaps I do not dream enough), but it is reasonable to ask whether Christian people cannot make a supreme and widespread attempt to inculcate principles which will definitely check the merest suggestion of

any repetition of the present conflict? It may be beyond us, but shall we not be failing in our duty all round if we do not strenuously put forth such an ideal, and put it forth so persistently that not only will our own consciences be more than clear, but that the conscience of any aggressor-nation shall be unable to rest? I cannot help feeling that we shall be wholly right if, in season and out of season, we give war such a character that no honest, no self-respecting nation in Europe will be able to plunge into this kind of struggle without losing its honour and respect.

Secondly, have we any right to continue to be so careless and so lethargic, as a nation, on the Drink Question? Can we with safety, or even with peace of mind, let things be as they have been? Do not let us make too much of this, but for God's sake do not let us make too little, for it is no exaggeration to say that the drink has not only been slaying annually (according to much sober opinion) its hundred thousand in our midst, but has even in this crisis endangered the life of the whole nation. The two facts which rankle in my own mind more than others are:

(i.) The revelations of the White Paper. Take one example: The Director of Transport says that it takes three times as long to get ships fitted and ready to sail as it did before the war broke out. Twenty-two days, roughly, are needed instead of ten. "What this means we can easily fancy. It means, at the very least, the loss of a position. It may mean very much more: it may mean defeat."

(ii.) The control, the wrong control, which the Trade seems to have of some of the Press. I will not use strong, bitter words, but we must see that the situation in this respect is changed as soon as the war is over. It will be childish to a degree to take precautions against any revival of German militarism, if we calmly allow our working men to be the victims of a system which altogether checks their value to the State.

III. As the international problems do not stand alone, we have passed quite naturally into the national sphere, where

many great and perplexing difficulties will await us. Amongst them will be —

A. *Our brothers who return from the war.* They deserve special consideration; they will require special treatment, for two reasons at least.

(1) They have seen God, they have seen the Devil; and they will reappear in our midst mentally, physically, spiritually changed; not a few of them thoroughly unnerved, all of them serious and chastened. The bright, careless boy will be a man, thinking deeply, praying often, for he has had a vision of eternity. What a shock it will be if he find us trifling—indifferent to things that matter, giddy to a degree, keen on amusements, burning with lust and passions of a degrading nature, *our* characters undeepened, unspiritual! A recent remark of Dr. Clifford is much to the point: "It was said of Dante, as he moved among men, that he looked like one who had been in hell. The flower of our young manhood has looked into hell, and they will return with a fixed determination that the horrors of war shall end." Better still are the words of the Primate of Ireland in his address, already quoted:

"Is there not growing up amongst us a more serious realization of the spiritual meaning of life? Are we not learning as never before our need of God? Most certainly in the trenches; in the lonely hours of watching on our battleships, and in our hospitals, these our brethren are drawing nearer to God, in prayer and Bible-reading. As one very dear to me wrote me from the front a little while ago, 'When one is always within a few feet, or rather within a few inches, of eternity, you look at everything from an entirely different point of view.' And this we notice, not from fear or dread, but because the presence of God is felt in the still, small voice of God's Holy Spirit within; not in the thunder or in the roar of battle; not in the lightning flame of red artillery; but in the quiet hours of thought on the camp-bed or in the trenches. Oh that this spirit may inspire and infuse our lives at home, and leave us a nation bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, a people prepared for the Lord, so that all this awful sacrifice of our bravest and best may not be offered in vain!"

Verily it *is* our plain duty to make many honest efforts to beget this spirit; and we can all do something unto this end. We can use much influence to turn the thoughts and desires of men and women into deeper channels. We can make ready a

people prepared for these lads, possessed as they will be with realities and high ideals.

(2) They will want employment, and large numbers will find ordinary civilian life very irksome, to begin with. But they will have given of their best for us, and we must arrange to give them of our best. We must see to it that, at any price, the authorities provide situations, good situations, for those who have saved our land. Never let them have cause to regret the noble part they will have played.

B. *Then what of the women at home?* (a) The married ones: they are now receiving good money, according to the size of the family, some as much as thirty shillings a week. What, when the man returns and the money stops? He may make twenty or twenty-five shillings a week, or he may not. I do not like to think of the effect of this on thousands throughout Great Britain. (b) The unmarried ones: the never-to-be-married ones of every class of society. The number of men lost or hopelessly crippled may reach hundreds of thousands; the majority of them would have married, had homes and families. Can the young women face the inevitable? Can we prepare them for it? Can we foster their faith and trust? (c) The women now doing men's work: making ammunition at Armstrong's, sweeping the streets at Gateshead, conducting the trams in Newcastle, acting as commissionaires at Harrod's. Is it likely that they will meekly retire again into private life and amiably abandon their wages? Surely the impetus that is being given to the Women's Movement is very great, and we shall want something more than human wisdom to avert disaster and to keep the peace.

C. *There is also the problem of the commercial world generally, and the labour market specially.* Who that thinks fails to see a troubled or a surging vision in which he can detect such threatening terms as "reduced incomes," "severe taxation," "lack of employment," "restricted developments," "restrained building," "uncertain wages," "high cost of living" etc.? "I view," said a great authority in Trades Union circles, "the

future with real apprehension and alarm." Can we now so go to work that we create everywhere a happy faith, a real spirit of patience and content, which will protect us from strikes, riots, revolution?

D. *What of the relations between different classes?* If the war lasts another year, this will certainly be a great feature after the war. We are all being thrown together, sometimes in a very beautiful way. The constant intercessions together in church or in room; the closer and frequent association into which pastors and people are drawn, because so many homes and hearts are crying out for human sympathy and for the comfort of Jesus Christ. That is the best side of the situation to-day.

There is another way, a less religious way, of picturing it—viz.: (a) The working classes, who have been inclined to view with suspicion, perhaps with envy, classes above them, are learning that their own feelings, and attitude, and actions, have not been altogether justified. They are rapidly being inspired with a new respect for, and confidence in, those who occupy more responsible positions than themselves. This may call for a definite reconstruction in the programme of Trades Unionism. The agitator who has lived on class warfare will not have the hearing and the influence that he has already enjoyed, for good or ill. (b) On the other hand, will there not be a desirable, an encouraging, change in the attitude of the "better" classes towards the masses? All are meeting now a common foe, are cheering one another up and on, are co-operating in many ways, are feeling the warmth and strength of their common humanity. Shall we not soon hear the high in our land exclaiming to all others with great reality, "You are as good as I am," and the masses hesitating to exclaim, as of old, "I am as good as you are"? At any rate, surely the time is getting fully ripe for fostering and establishing a spirit of brotherhood which has a hitherto unknown reality about it, which, in fact, we can conscientiously term "Christian."

[These are mere samples of the problems that lie ahead of us. Well may they cause anxiety—and something more than

anxiety. Let us set our minds to work on them, lest they take us unawares. Let us be strong and quit us like men, for as our days, so will our strength be. The demands on us, on our faith, our service, our devotion, our sacrifice, our wisdom, our prayers, will be immense ; but God means it for good, so let us be of good courage.

I am conscious that this very incomplete sketch and forecast will not be endorsed by all, but granted that I am mistaken in part, sure I am that life will have an altogether new meaning : it will possess an absolutely new character ; it will be entirely transformed ; we shall be forced on to new platforms, and our minds will of necessity have different work, and sometimes very difficult work, to do.

Our present duty, therefore, seems to be to strive after for ourselves, and to seek to plant or produce all around us, a new spirit, a new purpose, new thoughts, feelings and desires, with our eyes on Him who "is rising majestically in the centre of world history, the Light of life, the Lord and Leader of mankind." In short, the Church has a great opportunity. This country can be remade, if men and women are true. God grant that we do not fail as we did after the Boer War! We made great professions then, but what was their value? Ere this war ends the nation's heart will be plastic. The people will have renounced their regard for materialism. Christian workers will have a vast influence. May we have grace given us to win the people, and to wed them to that which is spiritual, eternal, and of God!

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