

# THE CHURCHMAN

December, 1915.

## The Month.

WE cannot understand what is the hindrance to the adoption of a Day of National Humiliation. It is quite clear that something—or somebody—blocks the way. The refusal last year to act upon the suggestion, which had behind it a large body of public opinion, was to a certain degree explainable, but no such excuses, as were then launched, are available now. It was said that the use of the term “humiliation” would be misunderstood abroad; and that, while it would make our Allies anxious and uneasy, it would cause the enemy to rejoice over our apparent admission of wrong-doing. But the objection lacks substance. We did not think it had any real weight when it was first advanced, and we attach still less importance to it now. So far from it being misunderstood, we believe it would have been a splendid object-lesson to our Allies, and Germany might well have trembled when she saw our nation upon its knees. But above and beyond all that it can be urged that it does not matter one iota what Germany thinks or does not think. The only thing that matters is what God thinks. We are therefore profoundly distressed and disappointed that another opportunity has been thrown away. The Call to observe the first Sunday in the New Year as a Day of Solemn Intercession is good as far as it goes, and we hope it will be widely responded to; but, as the last occasion showed,

there is nothing, or very little, in the setting apart of a Sunday for a special purpose to strike the popular imagination or to arrest the attention of the vast mass of the careless and indifferent. People have short memories, and it seems to be forgotten how little effect was produced upon the irreligious section of the community by the observance of the first Sunday in this year as a Day of Prayer in connection with the War. As a matter of fact, while Christian people were gathered in their churches and chapels for this solemn purpose, the public-houses were open at the usual afternoon and evening hours, tens of thousands of small retail shops carried on their business, there was no reduction in the railway, tube, tramcar, or motor-bus traffic, and the whole of the Sunday amusement shows—some of them very discreditable—were open as usual. Is there to be a repetition of this scandal on the first Sunday in the New Year? We gravely fear that everything will go on as usual, and that the Day will again be observed only by the church-going and chapel-going sections of the community—a very small percentage, unfortunately, of the whole. It might so easily have been otherwise. The appointment by Order in Council of a week-day as a Day of National Humiliation would have made people think, and that, after all, is one of the greatest needs of the moment. There are ample precedents for such an appointment, and it would have come as a call to the country which only the few dare resist. Moreover, it would have paved the way for the National Mission, which we are now assured is really to be held.

**The National Mission.** From the very first we have expressed our sympathy with the idea of holding a National Mission. We confess, however, we did not feel very confident about it ever becoming a reality. We are thankful, therefore, to know that our misgivings have proved groundless, and we rejoice in the Archbishop of Canterbury's announcement that he begins to see "the way becoming clear to an organised movement of the nature of a National Mission for the deepening and strengthening of spiritual life." Details are wanting, and

it may be some time yet before even a general scheme is available. The Archbishop has appointed a Committee to work out a plan, and we have every reason to believe that the Committee will give themselves to the task with quite unusual earnestness and devotion. The fact is that our ecclesiastical leaders have at last grasped the idea that all is not well with our country, and that it is high time a pause was called that shall compel men and women to consider their ways, amend their lives, and return to God. Whilst we are extremely anxious that the National Mission should be held as soon as possible, we are not the least in favour of unduly hurrying matters. For so solemn and so momentous an event time must be allowed for preparation; for if on the smallest scale an unprepared-for Mission is generally an unsuccessful Mission, how great would be the failure if a movement which is designed to be as wide as the country itself were to be begun before either ministers or people were ready for it! It is sincerely to be hoped that the Church may have in this effort the fullest and the most cordial co-operation of Nonconformists. It must not be a Church Mission or a Chapel Mission, but an Evangelistic Mission. Its object should be to win men and women to God, and in view of the greatness of such a purpose all denominational differences sink into the most utter insignificance. In many places there might well be a union of forces; or, if that is not possible—and the difficulties in the way are many—there might at least be mutual consultation as to arrangements, so as to reduce to a minimum all danger of a sense of rivalry and all overlapping. But we want to see the Mission conducted on orderly lines, and, above all, it is important that its main influence should be parochial or sectional rather than general. Its object should be to reach every individual soul in the particular parish or district of which the church or the chapel is the acknowledged centre. For this reason we are rather inclined to regret the proposal that there should be a Chapman-Alexander Mission on general lines in the early spring. No doubt it was made before the announcement of the National Mission became public property,

but we hope it will be dropped. How far general Missions of that character really fulfil their purpose is a question which is not easily answered. Undoubtedly the Moody and Sankey Missions stirred the country deeply, but since their time similar efforts have not met with like success. We feel more confidence in a Mission which appeals to particular persons in a particular locality, and this, we believe, the National Mission will do, not for one parish or one district only, but for every parish and every district of the country.

If it be true, as undoubtedly it is, that judgment  
 What of the  
 Shepherds? must first begin with the House of God, it seems a matter of increasingly solemn moment that clergy and ministers—shepherds of the flock—should themselves be able, from their own spiritual experience, to be in a very real sense the spiritual leaders of the people. In this connection it is not without significance that the Bishops seem to be more insistent than they have ever been upon the importance of the clergyman's own spiritual life. We have, for example, been greatly impressed by the high spiritual standard of the Bishop of Winchester's Charge.<sup>1</sup> In a closing passage devoted to "our own lives" he acknowledged that his clergy had readily and promptly answered a question which he freely allowed them to treat as intrusive, and had told him what they did to get help for themselves in the things of the Spirit :

"Is it, dear brothers," he asked, "enough? I know how very much temperaments vary, and how this is a matter in which there should be the largest liberty of individual method. No fear as to that! There is nothing but liberty. Therefore I will give, and in speaking to my younger brethren, my sons by ordination, and others, will give with some accent of authority, the advice that far more of us should use the help of a Retreat than thirty-four, with another seventy-five who go occasionally! Your life, as I remember with tender sympathy, is spiritually a very hard life. It is so for many of you by the exacting strain and bustle of town work; but it is so, also, for many by the isolation and slow routine of quiet places, where it is so easy to slumber and to forget, or, for want of contact and stimulus, to let the standard of effort sink. It is not good for man to be alone; yet there is

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<sup>1</sup> Macmillan and Co., Ltd. 1s. net.

among the clergy, whether in town or country, not a little spiritual loneliness. We are meant to be sustained and helped on by the spiritual life of the whole body, and by the special gifts of understanding and holiness which God gives to some of our brethren ; yet many clergy seldom hear any voice but their own, or have opportunities of listening, with time to ponder them, to words of counsel or stimulus. . . . I am sure that the honoured brother—for such he is—who tells me that a ‘Retreat would incapacitate him for practical work,’ is saying what experience would not confirm ; and that the veteran who reports that he needs no quietness, since for half a century all his days have been quiet . . . forgets that ‘quiet’ has various synonyms, and that it was in the quiet wilderness that the prophet encountered the earthquake and the fire, and, even more to the point, heard the ‘still, small voice.’ ”

These are wise and helpful words. The Bishop acknowledges the help a Quiet Day may be, but remarks that “the experience of many of our best men justifies me in saying that a Retreat is altogether and out of proportion more helpful than a Quiet Day, and often makes a deep and quiet impression where the latter creates a flurried sense of failure to appropriate, or (as one of you says) ‘gets on the nerves.’ ” In this connection readers of the *CHURCHMAN* will like to be reminded once again of the extremely valuable book “Retreats,” lately published by Mr. Robert Scott (2s. 6d. net). It is a book to be read and pondered over by all who are seeking the strengthening and renewal of their spiritual life.

The Priest  
in himself.

Equally moving are the words of the Bishop of Worcester, who during the last few months has been using many efforts to bring home to his diocese the call the war is making upon us all to truer repentance, renewed faith, and more devoted service. The Diocesan Convention at Malvern was wonderfully impressive, and as a result the Bishop has now sent a Message, addressed to the whole diocese, on “The Great War’s Recall to the Majesty and Mastership of God.” In a Message full of intense conviction and power he deals with “the need of a strong religion” and “the need of conviction of sin.” From these points he enlarges upon the need of seeing, worshipping, and obeying God ; and, after an uplifting passage on the Majesty of God, he closes with

a consideration of the question, "Are ye able?" and shows "We are able." His words to the clergy are particularly solemn and heart-searching. The passage is long, but it will repay careful perusal :

"There is no profession in which the person counts for so much as that of the Parish Priest. His ministry will tell more because of what he is than what he says. We have often seen what a failure, as a Pastor, a brilliant man can be, and how discontented he can become; or, again, what a soul-winner a man 'far from gifted,' as the world calls him, may prove to be. It may be said, no doubt, that such a man should, above all things, have a sense of duty, and that is true, but that sense of duty must rise from having seen a Vision of God. Yes, you will say, I saw that Vision once, at my ordination: when I left the Bishop's hands I knew that I was sent, and I thought I saw God; but now it has gone like a mirage—I see nothing but myself. Thus you lament, and ask what has hindered the Vision. My brother, are there not two hindrances which stand between you and what you saw in those days? One is the entanglement of this world—ambition, ease, popularity, and the other entanglements of sin.

"One of the tasks, then, which we have now to undertake in leading our people, is to recover the Vision by recollecting the Power of God over us, especially in enabling us to be rid of sin.

"Let us first reflect that God is true, and with Him there is no change. He is the same as when He sent us forth; it is we who have changed, not He. He meant us then to do great things. He means it still, and unless we thwart Him we can do them. Therefore let each of us say, 'I will arise and return; make me, O God, one of Thy servants, if I am not worthy to be a son.'

"I am convinced that every one of us can become a maker of Saints by prayer and faith, for God is true and we are His Priests. All we have to do is to go on claiming the Holy Spirit, in spite of dulness and failures: 'Renew a right spirit within me; stablish me with Thy free Spirit.'

"Then gradually, perhaps, but with the certain increasing light of dawn, will come back the earlier Vision, all the more beautiful because time and experience have mellowed it. Only there is no Vision for the man whose eyes are fixed on self, on success, or on reputation. The eyes which see are those which look bravely outward and upward."

No words are needed to emphasize the solemnity of the Bishop's appeal.

We have designedly and deliberately devoted  
 much space to all these matters, because we are  
 profoundly convinced that there is no question to  
 which the Church can more profitably devote its whole attention

than the uplifting of the spiritual life of the nation. The war has many aspects: in these pages it is enough for us to emphasize the fact that in and through it God Himself is speaking to the nation in a way, be it reverently said, He has never done before, and it is terrible to think that His Voice is still so largely unheeded. A special responsibility rests upon the Church, as the National Church, to see to it that God's call is brought home to every individual man, woman, and child. Much has been done; much—very much—is still being done; but there remains the solemnizing fact that the great mass of the people seem to be still untouched. Cannot the Church gird up itself afresh for this mighty work? We do not underestimate the importance, the grave importance, of many of those questions of controversy upon which Churchmen—and we ourselves among the number—often expend so much energy; but what are they worth, when weighed in the scale against the alienation from God of large sections of our people? Will it be an adequate answer to the charge of failing to make the proclamation of the Evangel of God our chief concern, that we were most careful to exert ourselves against the use of Vestments, or the Burning of Incense, or the Reservation of the Sacrament? We think not. The fact is, some of us are losing our sense of perspective and proportion. We are pledged to contend earnestly for the Faith; we are bound to resist the reintroduction of semi-Roman practices, but the old warning is unalterably true: "This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

So much controversy has arisen over the **Kikuyu; An Important Step.** Kikuyu business, that many people seem to have forgotten that some very practical issues are involved in the Archbishop's statement. These issues—or some of them—have now passed from the realm of debate into that of decision. The Bishop of Mombasa has announced his determination to act upon the Archbishop's findings, and, although his method of making known this important step—by

a letter to Prebendary F. L. Boyd, a strong opponent of everything that Kikuyu stands for—strikes us as at least unusual, the Bishop is to be commended for the courage with which he has faced the position. He quotes the passages from the Report of the Consultative Body, in which they say: (1) That they “see no essential difficulty in inviting a minister or a lay person not of our communion to address our people”; and (2) that “the lack of Confirmation cannot be held, as the lack of Baptism must be held, to render a person incapable, so far as man can judge, of Sacramental Communion”; and then goes on to point out that the Archbishop, having these opinions before him, definitely said: (1) That he saw “no reason to restrict the freedom of a Bishop in the mission-field as to those whom he may invite to address his people”; and (2) that in his opinion “a diocesan Bishop acts rightly in sanctioning, when circumstances seem to call for it, the admission to Holy Communion of a devout Christian man to whom the ministrations of his own Church are for the time inaccessible.” In these circumstances, therefore, the Bishop of Mombasa has “decided to take action within the defined limits of the Pronouncement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which is based on the opinion of the present chief leaders of the Church of England.” The Bishop is, of course, quite within his rights in so doing, and is acting, as it seems to us, within the intention of the Archbishop’s statement. The wider issues are reserved for the Lambeth Conference.

We may be quite sure that when the next Lam-  
The Lambeth Conference. beth Conference meets it will not find the Bishop of Oxford and his friends unprepared to meet any contingency which may then arise. It is understood that they are already marshalling their forces, and every effort will be made to compel the Conference “to refuse adhesion either to the general scheme of federation or to the particular details of the compromise which the Archbishop suggests.” To be forewarned is to be forearmed; and those who know what

happened at the last Lambeth Conference in connection with the question of Reunion have every reason to realize the importance of being prepared against surprises. Great issues will be at stake, and it will be for the Lambeth Conference to face them with courage and resolution, not in the interests of a party, however influential, but for the highest welfare of Anglican Christianity.

Although for comparative purposes the statistics  
 "Again Discouraging," compiled by the various religious bodies must not be overrated, taken from year to year these do supply some indication as to the progress or otherwise of each. A review of these appears annually in the *Westminster Gazette*. In a recent issue the writer of this review cited figures showing a year's increase for the Church of England of 116,407 Easter communicants, and a decrease in Free Church membership to the number of 11,237. He says: "The statistics of the Free Churches are again discouraging. Out of the thirteen denominations whose figures are here recorded, only four return an increase of members, and the total decline amounts to 11,237. From the same Churches ten report decreases in their Sunday Schools amounting to 61,607 scholars. Three have gained an increase; but, all told, this is only 491, leaving a net loss of 61,116 scholars. This is bad in itself; but if the figures are compared, say, with 1907, it will be seen that the loss of Sunday scholars by comparison with that date is over 324,000. Judged by these figures, the Free Churches are steadily losing ground. As compared with 1907, their membership has shrunk to the extent of over 205,000. Yet at the same time the population of the country has during that period been augmented to the extent of over 3,000,000, according to the basis of the last census."

