

THE CHURCHMAN

February, 1917.

The Month.

WE are glad that attention should be called to the religious teaching in Public Schools, but we think it ought to be done in a very different spirit from that which characterized the meeting held in the schoolroom of All Saints', Margaret Street, on Sunday, January 7. There was strong criticism of defective teaching, which where it was *ad rem* at all seemed to relate to experiences long since passed away. No doubt there are still defects—very serious defects—but it is more to the point to say that within the last few years there has been a marked improvement in nearly all Public Schools, and that now religious teaching occupies a much more important place than it did fifty years ago. But if we read the report of the All Saints' meeting aright, the speakers were not so much concerned about religious teaching in the abstract as they were to promote the teaching of a particular kind of religion and that of the most advanced type. Thus the Rev. J. W. Greenstreet, Chaplain of Denstone College, said that "nearly all the boys who were confirmed at the school had been taught the full Catholic Faith, and 90 per cent. of these had made their confession and received absolution." He pleaded for the appointment of School Chaplains and held that "there should be a daily Mass, voluntary of course, and a sung Mass every Sunday. Lastly, there should be ample opportunity for boys to make their confessions. The times should be stated on a board in black and white, so that the boys were not put to the difficulty and bother of making an appointment." Mr. Athelstan Riley spoke much on the same lines. He said that "as to

the Public Schools, as a statement of the definite object to aim at, he did not think there could be anything better on paper than the provision made for religion in the statutes of the Woodard Schools. It was provided that the Holy Eucharist should be the chief service on Sunday and celebrated at such a time as would enable everybody to attend and to remain throughout the service ; every school was to have a chaplain, and opportunity must be given for all connected with the school—masters, boys, and servants—to make their confessions when they wished to a priest not a member of the tutorial staff.” We are glad to have such a clear statement about the aim and objects of the Woodard Schools and hope that it will be carefully noted. Some of the speakers recognized the difficulties such a scheme of “ reform ” would have to face, Canon Arthur Lucas saying that they must first concentrate on the parents, for “ if an agitation was to be started, he thought it would be unwise to base it on a demand for a daily Mass or the teaching of Confession, considering that so many of the parents were strongly Protestant.” Canon Lucas is right ; and we hope it may be long before the strong Protestantism of British parents gives way in this matter. If the Neo-Anglicans are entering upon a campaign for “ reforming the Public Schools ” in the direction they wish, it behoves parents to be more careful than ever to inquire about the nature of the religious teaching given before settling upon any school for their boys. Those who are seeking Public Schools, with a good educational record, where the religious teaching is all that could be desired, may be glad to be reminded of St. Lawrence College, just removed from Ramsgate to Chester ; Dean Close School, Cheltenham ; Trent College, Derbyshire ; Weymouth College, Weymouth ; Monkton Combe School, near Bath ; and Clarence School, Weston-super-Mare. At each of these schools definite Church of England teaching is given, without mediæval errors.

A remarkable article appeared in the *Evening* “The Church and the War,” *Standard* of January 17, which claims that “ few facts were more patent, fewer more sad, than the failure of the Church of England to rise to its position, opportunities and privileges in the great national crisis we have been going through for well on three years now.” The writer pointed specially to the failure of the Church to lead, to inspire, to enthuse, and declared

that it was left to the Y.M.C.A. to provide huts, etc. This, however, is not quite accurate, as the Church of England Men's Society—after the failure of the first few months—rose splendidly to the occasion, and the Church Army has done and is doing a magnificent work at the various fronts and among the men at home. There is much else in the article with which we do not agree; for instance, the sneer at the appointment of "pinchbeck" bishops is unworthy. But in his main contention the writer is undoubtedly right. "In our greatest year of peril—1915—the two great Convocations of the Church," he says, "met and debated—what? The *one*, alterations in the Prayer Book; the *other*, the dress of the clergy at Holy Communion!" and his comment is: "When the nation is in the throes of a life and death struggle, a truly national Church would not wrangle over its Prayer Book or discuss 'Priest millinery.'" We confess we think the writer's argument on this head is unanswerable. It was in the early days of the war that the initial blunder was made, and from it there has been no recovery. If the Archbishops and Bishops had accurately gauged the situation they would have told their Convocations that the discussion of all controversial questions affecting the Church must be laid aside until after the war, and that the whole energies of the Church must be devoted to helping the nation in this terrible crisis. The old excuse "it is easy to be wise after the event" will not hold in this case, for again and again the Convocations were warned in the public press of the grave risk they were running in thus sticking to their old controversies, when even politicians had laid theirs aside. It was this, we believe, more than anything else that bred the suspicion that the Church is out of touch with National life. The ground thus lost has, we repeat, never been recovered. But it would be unfair not to recognize that, in countless ways, the Church has done much to strengthen the religious life of the nation. The National Mission was a great effort wisely conceived and admirably carried through, and we believe its work will tell for many years to come.

The abandonment of the Islington Clerical Conference, and the promised curtailment of some of the anniversary meetings of societies usually held in May has been widely and properly approved. But a word of caution is necessary. It is well to restrict as far as may be possible and neces-

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sary at this time public gatherings involving considerable expenditure in their arrangement and causing much travelling to and from all parts of the country. But it will not be well if the friends of the excellent objects which the societies were formed to promote and maintain allow their enthusiasm and their pecuniary support to diminish, much less to cease altogether. All Church organizations have wisely reduced to the uttermost all administration and establishment expenses since the war began, but their actual work must be maintained and their organization kept together, otherwise we may be faced at the conclusion of the war with a more materialistic outlook than was the case before the outbreak of the present conflict. Germany has shown us what this means nationally and individually: let us take warning and not diminish but increase our support of and belief in the various spiritual agencies by which the Church is trying to carry out the charge laid upon her by her Divine Master.

A Plea for Reality. The *Scottish Chronicle*, a newspaper for members of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, writes in warm praise of the "Call to Evangelical Churchmen" which the Bishop of Chelmsford, in connexion with the Islington Clerical Meeting, has issued through the *Record*. It says: "His article is thoroughly characteristic. It reflects the mind of a strong personality; it is the work of one who is pre-eminently a leader, with the seer's vision, and the power of the practical man to encompass in some way his visions and his dreams." The *Scottish Chronicle* is right. A more impressive appeal to Evangelical clergy has seldom, if ever before, been made. The Bishop presents the Call which is made to them as a threefold Call, yet really one—a Call to Reality in Belief, Reality in Life, and Reality in Purpose. Such a Call might, of course, with equal propriety, be pressed upon clergy of all Schools of Thought. "Reality" is among the greatest needs of the Church at the present time. For want of it our congregations are diminishing, and the Church is making very little impression upon outsiders. What is the cause of this defect? Religion is concerned with the greatest of all realities, and its ministers should so preach and live that all may know that it has to do with the deepest affairs of life.

