

THE CHURCHMAN

May, 1917.

The Month.

The Easter Services.

ALTHOUGH there is much in the general religious condition of the country that causes anxiety, it ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed that this year the observance of Easter was marked by features of very distinct encouragement. The services were more largely attended than usual ; no doubt there were some exceptions, but testimony received from different parts of the country seems to show that this was the general rule. Then again in very many cases the number of communicants was greater than last year ; and, lastly, there seemed to be a deeper note of religious reality in the worship of the people. How is this welcome advance to be accounted for ? It is possible that the almost daily growth in the number of homes from which loved ones have gone to the war, with the consequent increase of anxiety and bereavement, may to some extent explain it, for in no other place do people experience so deep a fellowship with the absent one, or gain so true a consolation in sorrow and bereavement, as in the House of God. But this is not the whole explanation. We believe that the chief factor is to be found in the work of the National Mission. It may be that that great effort failed to reach "outsiders" to the extent desired, but assuredly it did a solid and abiding work in very many congregations, deepening their spiritual life and giving them a new realization of the things of Christ. The Apostle's great ambition, "that I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection," has become the fresh aspiration of multitudes everywhere ; and it will manifest itself not only in increased attendance at divine service, but also in Christian life and service. A new start has been made, and it will now be for clergy to do everything possible to help their people to press forward. There must be no turning back.

**Reunion
Hopes.** The Dean of Durham has set the clergy a noble example. In responding to the invitation of the authorities of the City Temple to preach in that well-known centre of Nonconformity, he gave a practical turn to the many professions made of a desire for closer fellowship with Christian brethren now separated from us, and in so doing he has invested the cause of Home Reunion with a new hope. It is practically certain that large numbers of clergy would like to manifest their sympathy with Nonconformists in a similar way, but in the present state of ecclesiastical opinion they have not the courage to do so. They cannot altogether be blamed for their hesitancy. But is it not time that this question was fairly faced by the Bishops? There is a growing feeling in favour of the cultivation of closer relationship, but at present it has not, speaking generally, got beyond the stage of co-operation among Christians of various denominations in social enterprises. This is not creditable to our common Christianity, and Bishops would be well advised, as it seems to us, to let it be known that they, at any rate, will interpose no barrier in the path of clergy who desire, when invited, to make the journey from the Church to the Chapel pulpit. By all means let the Bishops regulate the practice as much as they like, but let them give frank and cordial recognition to the right of the clergy in this supremely important matter.

**Reservation
Controversy.** There are no signs of any solution of the Reservation controversy; indeed it seems as if it were calculated to involve the Church of England in very serious difficulty. It is clouding the early days of the Bishop of Exeter's episcopate by reason of the attitude taken up by a section of his clergy towards his most reasonable representations, and other Bishops are known to be in a state of real anxiety and perplexity regarding it. One of them—and he one of the most notable on the episcopal bench—is even credited with a desire, if not a determination, to resign! Undoubtedly the position is very serious, and it will need the most careful handling. We hope, however, that before very long several Bishops may see their way to take action similar to that of the Bishop of Exeter, if only to mark their sympathy with him. It will be a great pity if he is allowed to stand alone in his protest against reservation for adoration, as Bishop Straton was

left, when in the early days of his episcopate at Newcastle he took a determined stand against Vestments. We sympathize, as all loyal Churchmen must sympathize, with the Bishops in their troubles, but they will make a deplorable mistake if they fail to deal with this matter with the fullest strength of determination and resolution. The responsibility is theirs; they must accept the burden and fulfil their duty without fear or favour. A timid or a trimming policy will not do. We are not sure that the presentation of petitions or memorials, counter to the protest of the rebellious thousand, will do much good. One such memorial, if influentially signed, might strengthen the hands of the Bishops, but, as usual, the Evangelicals are by no means agreed among themselves, and we understand that three petitions are being circulated for signature, and each one takes a different line. Reservation in any form and for any purpose is clearly contrary to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, but the Bishops (or a majority of them) claim the right, by virtue of their much-vaunted *jus liturgicum*, to override the present rubrics and to allow Reservation for the Sick. If it were not for the belief, amounting almost to a positive certainty, that the episcopal veto would be interposed, this right would be—as it ought to be—challenged in the law courts. But if they persist in their determination to allow Reservation for the Sick, they are bound to protect the Church from the scandal of the reserved elements being made an object of adoration and devotion. This can only be done by insisting that the elements when reserved shall be kept in a place to which congregations have no access.

The War Outlook. The War outlook is distinctly brighter. The entry into the conflict of the United States of America is an event of tremendous importance, both from the moral and the military point of view. The American people have realized that Prussian militarism is a menace not to the freedom of Europe only but to the freedom of the world, and the great Republic has felt bound to lend its aid in vindication of the cause of equity, truth and righteousness. Meanwhile the forces of Britain's Empire are striking blow after blow on the Western Front, compelling the German hordes to fall back; and in Egypt and Mesopotamia, under the splendid leadership of Generals Murray and Maude, respectively, the Turkish power is tottering to its fall. The mili-

tary outlook has never been so good. We wish we could write with equal confidence about the outlook at home. But as a nation we are still ignoring the Majesty of God. The Government has once again refused to appoint a National Day of Penitence and Prayer, yet it is, as so many believe, the one thing needful to ensure an early victory and an enduring and righteous peace. We do not doubt that God is waiting to be inquired of that He may be gracious to our land, but the nation as such shows no sign that its trust is in the Lord. It is very sad, but the saddest feature of all is the revelation it affords of the impotence of the Churches to influence our national leaders.

The debate in the House of Commons on April 17
 The Church
 in Wales. was not only interesting but extremely useful as showing that there is a considerable body of public opinion sincerely desirous of ameliorating something of the injustice done to the Church in Wales. The position may be briefly stated. The Welsh Church Act is already in operation except as regards the date of disestablishment, and, as matters now stand, disendowment will take place the moment the war ceases. The anomaly of the position is apparent to all. The country is at war, and the minds of those whose duty it would be to prepare for disestablishment are preoccupied with this one absorbing topic. Yet the Commissioners appointed under the Act are pursuing their inquiries at enormous expense; life interests for which commutation will be payable are steadily diminishing; and the growth of war taxation makes difficult, if not impossible, the task of raising by voluntary subscription the necessary funds for the disestablished Church. It is not much to ask that, in these circumstances, the date of disestablishment shall be postponed till at least a year after the conclusion of peace. This was in effect the object of the discussion in the House of Commons on April 17, raised on the Bill for prolonging the life of the present Parliament. No definite pledge was expected from the Government, but when a statesman of Mr. Bonar Law's calibre expresses the view that something must be done to ease the position, it is at least hopeful that a way out will be found.

