

THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1917.

The Month.

“*Sursum
Corda.*”

IN what spirit shall we who believe in God, and in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, step out to face the hidden events of the New Year 1917? It is impossible to ignore the fact that every sign of the times that is open to us seems to show that it will be a year of stress and strain unparalleled in our nation's story. The war, which has already made heavy toll upon the young life of the nation and has saddened many thousands of hearts and homes, is to be prosecuted still more vigorously until victory crowns the efforts of Great Britain and her Allies, and this will mean much further sacrifice on the battlefields abroad and in the homes of England—alike in the stately homes of the aristocracy, and in the humble dwelling-places of the poor. The people, we believe, are fully prepared for all this, and are ready to bear whatever is demanded of them with the same heroic fortitude which has characterized them hitherto. Nor would they, or we, have it otherwise. Not for one moment can peace talk be listened to until, by God's good help, the forces of the King and his Allies have crushed the infamy of German militarism and secured reparation for the woes it has inflicted upon the world. But, whatever the future may have in store for us, there is every reason for thankfulness and hope. The splendid spontaneity of the response which has been made to the call of the war, witnesses to the existence of a spirit of patriotism—noble in its outlook, self-sacrificing in its expression—which in due time may be moulded to serve the highest interests of the nation. Then, as a result of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope, we see, in all parts of the country, the birth in many

hearts and homes of a new spirit towards [religion. The Mission may not have accomplished all that was expected of it, but do let us be thankful for what has been effected, remembering that the special effort made during the last few months was not an end in itself, but only the starting-point of a spiritual movement which, it may well be believed, will gather strength and depth as the months go by. We see, therefore, no reason for pessimism, but every ground for confidence and cheerfulness. There may be dark clouds on the horizon, but we know enough to believe that each one of them has a silver lining. The Lord rules and the Lord reigneth, and His purposes cannot be changed by any of the machinations of man. And then, always shining out in lustrous fullness amid the darkest gloom, is "that blessed hope," which was the inspiration of the Church in the earliest age, has been the strength and comfort of believers in all time, and is to-day the surest and most steadying factor in the Christian's life—the hope of the Lord's return. The events of our time surely indicate that there are special reasons why we should now take more diligent heed than we have ever done to the Lord's own exhortation, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!" Let us then, as we enter 1917, lift up our heads, yea lift up our hearts, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

We use the phrase "after the Mission" for convenience' sake, although we know that it is desired that the National Mission shall be a continuing process ever seeking to make the fact of God and the claims of God more real to human life. But the special services and meetings which were generally regarded as constituting the National Mission are practically over, and the Church has to prepare for the next step. The Archbishops have not left us long in doubt, and their Joint Letter issued towards the end of November gave the Church a lead for which we are thankful. The introductory paragraph is noteworthy :—

There is already evidence from all parts of the country that the Church has been really moved by the call of an inexpressibly solemn time, and that the heart of the people is open to receive the Message which is being spoken in Christ's Name. These signs of a deep desire, both in Church and nation, to rise to the height of a great occasion bid us thank God and take courage.

But there is a danger lest it should be thought that the Mission will be

over when its Message has been delivered. The truth is that only then will the main work of the Mission begin. Were it to end in December, 1916, it would be a failure. It will fulfil its purpose only if January, 1917, finds us girding up the loins of our mind for a new start. Therefore, even before the Message has been fully delivered, we feel bound to guard against the dangers of any time of reaction, listlessness, or uncertainty. The work of the National Mission will not have been accomplished until the National Church stands as the living witness that the leaven of Christianity has indeed penetrated every department of our national life. We look forward to a time when the Kingdom of God shall be in actual truth the goal of all effort and desire, and the thought of the Kingdom of God the controlling thought in our minds. We look forward to a time when the particular interests of the various sections of the community shall be harmonized in service for the good of all, and the Christian law of fellowship and mutual help shall visibly govern the whole operation of our social system, whether it be viewed in its moral, political, or economic aspect. The vision is yet for many days, yet we dare believe that its fulfilment is not unattainable if we seize the opportunity of the present to start afresh. And if we would assure our progress towards our goal we must, even as we continue to pass on from stage to stage, constantly find guidance for our next advance in securing and surveying the gains which are already ours. Even now the lessons which the Mission has taught us with new clearness and force seem to indicate some of the lines along which our immediate move forward must be directed.

The Archbishops then indicated that they propose to appoint five separate Committees of Enquiry to report upon the following Terms of Reference :—1. " A Committee to consider and report upon methods by which the teaching office of the Church can be more effectively exercised. 2. A Committee to consider and report upon ways in which the public worship of the Church can be more directly related to the felt needs of actual life at the present time. It is desired that this Committee should pay special attention : (a) To recent Reports of Convocation and its Committees on the Revision of the Prayer Book ; (b) to opinions and desires expressed by chaplains in the Navy and in the Army. 3. A Committee to consider and report upon the facts and lessons which the experience of the National Mission has brought to light as to the evangelistic work of the Church at home, and the best methods of improving and extending it. 4. A Committee to consider and report upon the following questions : (i.) What matters in the existing administrative system of the Church, including patronage and endowments, seem to them to hinder the spiritual work of the Church ; and (ii.) How can the reform or the removal of such hindrances be most effectively promoted ? 5. A Committee to consider and report upon the ways in which the Church may best commend the teaching of Christ to those who are seeking to solve the problems of industrial life." We

recognize the grave importance of the issues thus raised, and shall await with the deepest interest and the fullest hope the reports of these various bodies which are already in process of formation. But, important as these questions are in connection with the successful development of the Church's work, it is important to remember that they do not cover the whole ground, nor are they related in any other than an indirect way to the definitely spiritual appeal of the National Mission.

We hardly like to talk of "failure" in connection with an effort which in many directions was so manifestly blessed of God as the National Mission, but the fact remains that, in too many cases, while Bishops, clergy, church-workers, communicants and, to a large extent, ordinary churchgoers have received definite help and blessing, the Mission failed to reach in any appreciable degree the outsiders. They remain where they were—outside, careless and indifferent to the claims of God. Now, this is a position with which the Church cannot and must not remain satisfied. If in the past the Church has forgotten or neglected its commission to go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in it can be indifferent no longer. As a result of the Mission the Church, using the phrase quite broadly, has received a wonderful uplift in its spiritual life. Spiritual claims and spiritual responsibilities have been brought home to individual consciences with a power rarely felt before. The outcome of this renewed life must be greater service, and we trust that the call to service will be pressed home with the deepest possible earnestness. Our one fear about the Archbishops' Committees is, that they may so engross the attention of Churchpeople, that the definitely evangelistic work which is waiting to be done may again be overlooked. It would be a calamity of the first magnitude if the idea were to gain currency, that the first stage of the National Mission being over, all that is now required is to reform the Church's machinery with a view to more effective administration. Such reform is needed—greatly needed, but it is only one phase—and, if we may say so, by no means the most important phase—of the Church's work which needs attention. The pressing need, as it seems to us, is that the Church should recover its sense of the importance of the call to evangelize the nations, and, not least our own nation. We rejoice that a Missionary Week will

be held this month to press the claims of Foreign Missions, but we do most earnestly hope that the claims of Home Missions will not be overlooked. In the revived life of the Church let it be remembered that the Divine order of service is "beginning at Jerusalem" and no amount of zeal for Foreign Missions can atone for the neglect of Home needs. It is no answer to say that the unconverted masses at home have only themselves to blame, that there are clergy and churches and chapels within their reach and that they can profit by them if they will. We know they can, but they don't and they won't, until the Church changes its attitude towards them. The fact that so many thousands of our people are outside and remain outside all religious influence is largely due to the Church's failure to grasp the Home Mission problem with determination and zeal. The National Mission, as it seems to us, calls most assuredly for a new appreciation of the importance of this question and a new departure in methods of service. We are greatly pleased to find that the Bishop of Chelmsford, at any rate, is alive to the seriousness of the position. In a letter to his diocese he writes:—"The Church as yet has not left the upper room with converting power. There are few signs, if any, that the Mission has reached the outsider—there are few indications that what is known as the 'man in the street' has been moved at all by the Mission. No matter whether the Church has been known as High, Evangelical, or Broad—all alike seem to have failed to bring in the outsider. That clergy and communicants have received a blessing there can be no doubt, but equally is it true that the 'ingathering' has yet to come. That is the next phase of the Mission. How is this to be obtained? By going forthwith into the street or by 'tarrying' yet a while longer in the upper room. The Lord of the vineyard alone can direct us. We must preserve the listening ear. 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth,' must still be our cry."

This is not the place in which to indulge in any political references to the New Government, either in regard to the manner in which it was brought into existence, or to its *personnel*, but there are other aspects of the situation which call for a word of comment. It will be, for example, something of a novelty for a pronounced Nonconformist such as Mr. Lloyd George

The New
Government.

to have the nomination of bishops for the Church of England. But we gladly acknowledge that we have no fears on this score. We believe Mr. Lloyd George to be a man of strong religious spirit, and whatever his views may be upon questions of Establishment, we are quite confident that he will fulfil his new responsibility towards the Church wisely and well. We may be permitted, however, to express the earnest hope, that in the matter of the choice of Bishops, what we may call the Asquith tradition may be continued. If we except the nomination of Bishop Gore to the See of Oxford—which, be it remembered, was a translation and not an original appointment—Mr. Asquith's bishops have, for the most part, been men of essentially moderate views. When we recall the names of the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Birmingham, the Bishop of Bristol, the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Bishop of Lichfield, the Bishop of Newcastle, the Bishop of Norwich, the Bishop of Peterborough, the Bishop of Ripon, the Bishop of Salisbury, the Bishop of Sheffield, the Bishop of Sodor and Man, and the Bishop of Southwark—all of whom were nominated by the late Prime Minister—we have reason to be thankful for the wisdom and foresight of Mr. Asquith's choice. We hope that Mr. Lloyd George may be equally successful in his nominations. Another matter which interests us is to know what will be the attitude of the new Government towards the Drink Traffic. The restrictions and regulations now in force are believed to have been due very largely to Mr. Lloyd George's influence. Will he now go further and suppress the sale of drink altogether, at least for the period of the war? We believe he would have a large section of the country with him if he did. There are other social reforms which need to be taken in hand, but these will probably have to wait until after the war. The Drink Traffic, however, stands on a different footing; its relationship to the waging of war and the production of munitions is so close and intimate that it cannot safely be neglected.

But the question of all others, upon which Church-
The Welsh Church. men will watch with anxious interest the attitude of the new Government is the position of the Welsh Church. It may be pointed out that while both the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill were literally forced on to the Statute Book under the pressure of the war, the two issues did not receive the same equality of treatment. The operation of the Home Rule

Act was wholly suspended : the Welsh Church Act was, in respect of some of its important provisions, brought into operation at once, the date of disestablishment alone being suspended till the close of the war ; and the day on which peace is declared will witness the spoliation of the ancient endowments of the Church in Wales, involving a loss in income of about £157,000 per annum. Now this, as the *National Church*, the organ of the Central Church Committee for Defence and Instruction, points out, is a very grave matter indeed, and it is impossible to ignore the fact that large sections of the country feel deeply that a cruel wrong has been done to the Church, and are smarting under a sense of the injustice, which has been inflicted. It is not for the good of the nation that this feeling of bitter resentment, suppressed though it be in deference to the claims of the war, should be allowed to continue, and it is believed that the new Government would be well advised to give the matter their immediate attention with a view to the removal, if possible, of this deep-seated indignation. It would not be practicable, of course, to re-open the question at this juncture, but there is no reason why the new Government should not at once pass a short measure postponing absolutely the operation of the Welsh Church Act until after the war. This could be done without injury to a single interest of any kind, and it would give unalloyed satisfaction to the great majority of the British people. But, says some one, Mr. Lloyd George would never consent. We are not so sure. Although in his Radical days—he is not a party politician now—he was a vehement supporter of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales, his more recent utterances have at least raised the hope that the exigencies of the war have caused him to look at such questions from a wider and more enlightened point of view. His speech at the Eisteddfod last August may well be recalled at this juncture. He was speaking of the danger of materialism. “ There is,” he said, “ nothing more fatal to a people than that it should narrow its vision to the material needs of the hour.” We should need at the end of the war better workshops ; “ but we shall also need more than ever,” he added, “ every institution that will exalt the vision of the people above and beyond the workshop and the counting-house.” And in another passage he said, “ You do not improve the *moral* of a people by snubbing their shrines.” The significance of these words when applied to the Welsh Church Act can

hardly be mistaken, and it would be not only a gracious but a righteous thing if the Prime Minister should himself take the initiative in getting the operation of the Welsh Church Act postponed.

Another Split. Will the Temperance party never learn the wisdom of unity? The General Council of the Church of England Temperance Society lately passed, not unanimously but by a substantial majority, a resolution in favour of the State Purchase and State Control of the Liquor Traffic. Whereupon the Bishop of Croydon, Chairman of the Society, has resigned, and other resignations are expected. In a letter to the *Guardian* the Bishop explains why he and his friends dislike State Purchase :—

“ Because it is our conviction that the Trade will always be a dangerous and harmful vice by whomsoever it may be administered and carried on. We believe that State Purchase would make every citizen a partner in the business, a sharer in its profits, and a partaker in the evils which we believe would still be inseparable from it. We believe that facilities to obtain drink result in more drinking, and that the establishment by the State of the places where it is sold would put the seal of its approval upon them, and induce many who now would not think of entering a public-house to do so. As believers in the wisdom and advisability of total abstinence, we are convinced that the new policy would militate strongly against it. For us, therefore, who hold these views it would be impossible to hold office in a Society which advocates and supports the policy of State Purchase.”

We do not deny there is force in the Bishop's contention, but there is much more to be said on the other side. It is only necessary to name one point : if the Drink Traffic were owned by the State, it would be more easy for temperance folk to press for drastic reform. At present vested interests block the way. But, however that may be, we deeply regret that a man in the position of the Bishop of Croydon should abandon the Chairmanship of a Society where he was doing much useful work, on a mere difference of opinion. So long as divided counsels prevail in temperance ranks, anything like real temperance reform becomes almost an impossibility.

