

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1919.

THE MONTH.

OUR own words this month must be very few, as we **Cheltenham Conference.** are anxious to include in this number as many as possible of the very important papers read at the Cheltenham Conference held June 24-26. Owing to war conditions the Conference met last year in London, but this year under happier conditions a return is made to "the Garden Town," and, as we write, there is every prospect of a large attendance and a successful Conference. It is by the courtesy of the readers of the papers that we are able to publish those that appear this month within a few days, if not hours, of their delivery. "The Cheltenham Conference is," as the programme says, "definitely associated with the subject of Reunion"; and assuredly there never was a time when a courageous and frank treatment of the question was more called for than to-day. But it is not only of Reunion that this year's Conference speaks to us. Three other subjects of absolutely vital interest to the Church receive consideration, viz., Self-Government, Evangelistic Work, and Labour Problems, and we are thankful that they appeared on the Cheltenham programme, if only as a witness to the fact that Evangelical Churchmen are abreast of the times in which we live. The Conference opened on Tuesday evening, June 24, with a Public Meeting on Christian Unity, at which the speakers were the Bishop of Sodor and Man and two Free Churchmen, Dr. Guttery and Professor Vernon Bartlet. On Wednesday morning, June 25, after the Address by the President, the Rev. H. A. Wilson, papers on "The Basis of Reunion"

were read by the Bishop of Warrington, the Rev. J. R. Cohu and the Rev. T. J. Pulvertaft. At the evening session, when Self-Government was under discussion, papers were read by the Rev. Alfred Fawkes and the Rev. C. H. K. Boughton. On Thursday, June 26, at the morning session, papers on Evangelistic Work were read by the Rev. C. W. Wilson and Canon Price Devereux; and at the afternoon session, when Labour was the subject, papers were read by the Rev. G. E. Ford and the Rev. Henry Edwards. The evening session was devoted to framing and adopting the Findings. We print this month the papers of Mr. Cohu, Mr. Pulvertaft, Mr. Fawkes, Mr. Boughton, and Mr. Ford. The rest of the papers, together with the Findings, we hope to print in the August number.

Dr. Forsyth, one of the most cultured and independent of thinkers in the Free Churches, has written a

Dr. Forsyth's
Views.

letter to *The Times* which shows very clearly the real seat of the difficulty in regard to Reunion :—

. . . . Our rank and file, lay and ministerial, have been hardened against reunion by the insistence, in the interim report of the Archbishops' Committee, on the historic episcopate as an essential condition. They think that the chief reason for making a mere polity vital to Church unity is the belief that that polity alone validates a kind of Sacrament which it is a part of their call in the service of the Gospel to reject. They do not forget, either, that we at home, with all that English life and liberty owe to us, are repudiated, in order not to close the door for union with the Greek and Roman episcopates. . . . Meantime, I thought we might let things ripen in a semi-public way, and in a warm and peaceful atmosphere.

Then—alas, poor Falkland "ingeminating peace" and thrust on war!—the whole situation was altered by the launching of the Enabling Bill, which thrust between the two great parties to reunion another fundamental issue, and thrust it also into the full blaze of Parliamentary publicity and passion. It raised the whole question of our common State's relation to a particular Church which refused to recognize the other Churches and their ministry by any inter-communion. What was the effect of that likely to be on reunion? And the question of the State is one that we are willing to let slumber for the time in the interest and hope of a better understanding.

Then, to crown the disaster, out came the deliberate, honest, and uncompromising memorial of a number of influential High Churchmen, who were understood to be much interested in the Bill, and rigid on the Catholic conditions. The two things made a challenge to the Free and Evangelical Churches which, by translating reunion into absorption, has postponed it indefinitely. But whose fault is that? Meantime, let us turn to Federation with the more light and zeal. . . .

