

EDITORIAL

A HAPPY NEW YEAR'—Those people whose words are not just sounds made with the lips will utter the well-worn wish this year with perhaps a tinge of misgiving about its fulfilment, at least in those departments of life where happiness depends upon material prosperity. 'A Bright and Prosperous New Year' does somehow sound a little forced in the present state of things when all our prophets, major and minor, are foretelling a wholesale financial collapse; and our wise men are hinting at some undefined but inevitable crash which is to affect very seriously and perhaps break up our civilization. Before scorning the prophets as pessimists, let the would-be optimist look around and see exactly how serious are our ills and how much truth is to be found in these Jeremiads. (Greater men than we have been unalive to coming calamity. Our Wolsey had his blind spots and could not see that the biggest revolution in his country's history was imminent.) Well, what do we see? Since the end of the war unemployment has increased until at present the country has two millions out of work. The general and increasing depression of trade means that England is no longer the workshop of the world, and even countries which used to come to England for her manufactures have now over-developed their own industries to the point of producing more goods than they themselves require. The hopes of a revival of trade are vain. Successive governments have been able to do no more than offer the palliative of the dole, which they dare not withdraw. The unemployed are being paid for being idle and at the same time millions of acres of fertile land run waste for want of tilling. It is an exceedingly black outlook.

Blackfriars

Well and good if you like to paint black pictures; sorry enough comfort to harp on the impending doom of the condemned man! Where is the remedy? you will ask; and what are we ordinary folk to do about it?

In his Advent Pastoral the Bishop of Southwark has given some sound advice, which most of us can follow. He says: 'Cut down expenses. The standard of living has become a standard of luxury.' The standard of living is one of those phrases frequently used without very much reflection. The Bishop bids us give it thought. Does your standard of living depend on your income? Or do you exact an income according to some standard of your own fixing? Have you no obligation to reduce your present standard of living? Standards will of course vary. Married folk who cannot afford another baby will yet venture to invest in an expensive wireless set or a small motor-car. The poor are said to go on short rations and to scrape what they can out of the dole in order to go to the cinema. How they manage to do it is a mystery unexplained by their critics. And the wastefulness of the poor is practised only on a larger scale by the rich, whose opportunities and temptations are greater and more numerous.

'Cut down expenses. See what you can do without. Avoid idleness and wastefulness.' Such is the burden of the Bishop's exhortation. Apart from the not inconsiderable number of those who are on the verge of destitution and whose standard of living could be better described as a standard of dying, the Bishop's advice is for everyone. If all were to take it quite seriously and strive to adopt it, there would be more likelihood of our cheating the prophets who foresee such dire misfortunes, and more hope of making 1931 a happy new year.

EDITOR.