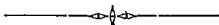


and appointed for the memorial day of the once-perplexed disciple :

Almighty and everliving God, who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer Thy holy Apostle Saint Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son's resurrection; Grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

H. C. G. MOULE.



ART. IV.—PROJECTS OF CHURCH REFORM,

1886-1892.

UNLESS any unforeseen crisis occurs before the close of the present decade, the years 1832 and 1885 will be known to future generations as the two great epochs in the constitutional history of this country during the nineteenth century. By the Reform Bill of 1832 the centre of gravity of political power was shifted from the aristocracy to the middle class; while in 1885 the revolution which had been commenced by Mr. Disraeli's measure of 1867 was completed, and what are popularly called the working classes were admitted to a preponderating share in the government of the country. On each occasion the Church, from its intimate connection with the State, necessarily felt the effects of the change. After the first Reform Bill had become law, the cry of "Down with the Church!" was loudly raised, and was answered by the counter-cry of "Reform the Church!" Happily, the latter prevailed. The national profession of Christianity was maintained, but the ecclesiastical organization was in many respects readjusted to suit the wants and ideas of modern times. Tithes in kind were commuted into an annual money payment. The Ecclesiastical Commission was established, and our bishoprics and cathedral chapters were docked of their excessive revenues, the surplus being devoted to parochial purposes. In 1840 the Church Discipline Act was passed for amending the method of proceeding against criminous clergymen. Two new sees, those of Ripon and Manchester, were created, and facilities were provided for forming new parishes and ecclesiastical districts.

History always repeats itself, and history never repeats itself. The course of events during the last seven years

has been similar and yet dissimilar. A fresh movement for the disestablishment has accompanied the last Reform Act, as it did that of 1832. On September 11, 1885, the *Record* newspaper startled the country by disclosing the fact that of the 579 Liberal candidates who were then intending to contest the 567 Parliamentary seats in Great Britain at the impending General Election, no fewer than 376 had pronounced themselves in favour of Disestablishment in respect of the whole Church of England, and twenty-four more had assented to it with regard to Wales alone. The Church was at once roused to action. Lectures and addresses and other measures of defence were organized throughout the length and breadth of the land. Many of those who had been parleying with her assailants made haste, when detected and exposed, to disclaim all complicity with them, and the attack was, for a time, staved off. Moreover, the attitude which had been adopted fifty years previously was resumed. The friends of the Church were not content with a mere negation. They took advantage of the revival of popular interest in her affairs to raise a demand for the removal of certain patent defects in her organization. The existence of these was universally admitted, but hitherto the apathy of Churchmen had permitted them to remain unassailed. It was now, however, hoped that the wave of newly-aroused public opinion would furnish sufficient impetus to effect their overthrow.

The prospects of Church reform were further brightened by the creation of the House of Laymen in connection with the Convocation of the Southern Province. The formation of this body was in no way owing to the discovery of the impending danger. It had been mooted many years previously, and after being under discussion in Convocation throughout the whole of 1885, the details had been finally agreed upon in the July session. The House met for the first time, concurrently with Convocation, on February 16, 1886. It was opened by an address from the Archbishop of Canterbury, in which allusion was made to the existing state of feeling on ecclesiastical subjects. The Primate noticed the urgent need of a reform of Convocation itself, and commended the matter to the consideration of the newly-formed House. But there were wider and greater questions, and there were encouragements both within and without the Church to believe that this was a time in which solutions might well be attempted with hope of success in removing hindrances, and in gaining new efficiency for the religious and spiritual ministrations of the Church. It would be ridiculous to accuse Churchmen of merely moving in a moment of alarm for improvements

which they had at no moment ceased to pray for and to press for. But no practical or friendly counsellor would divert attention from politics, and earnest Churchmen might view without misgiving any excitement which had directed some attention to the justice of their claims. The Archbishop then commended to the consideration of the House, in addition to the one already named, three other subjects: (1) Church patronage, on which he intended to submit to them immediately a proposed Bill; (2) the adjustment of clerical finance and the possible formation of a fund for the relief of poor livings by the taxation of the wealthier benefices and offices, in connection with the measure then projected for facilitating the sale of glebe lands; and (3) the position of the laity in the control of Church affairs, with special reference to the desirability of parochial councils on the one hand, and of a national body of bishops, clergy, and laity, representing the two provinces, on the other.

The intrusion of Irish Home Rule into the sphere of practical politics caused the dissolution of Parliament, and with it of Convocation and the House of Laymen, after a brief existence of little over six months. In opening the new House of Laymen in the following year, the Archbishop mentioned two further desirable items of reform: the one in the mode of paying and recovering the Tithe Rent Charge, and the other in the administration of Clergy Discipline. These, together with the four topics referred to in his former address, and the subject of an increase of the home episcopate which has been under discussion concurrently with them, constitute the chief branches of Church reform which, six years ago, were regarded as pressing. Opinions, of course, differed widely as to the details of the remedial measures which were required, but the importance of making some advance under each of the different headings was almost universally admitted. To what extent has the programme which was then put forward been carried out in the interval? Very imperfectly, it must be sorrowfully confessed, and with halting steps. Out of the seven enumerated subjects, one, after several miscarriages, has been effectively dealt with; and while these remarks are being penned, there is a good prospect, though by no means a certainty, of a satisfactory measure being passed with reference to another. The remaining five stand almost in the same position as they did when the cry for Church reform was raised in the autumn of 1885. Almost—but not altogether. For it would be a mistake to set down the discussions which have taken place upon them in the interval as entirely wasted, or to ignore some slight progress which has been actually achieved, because the final goal has not been already reached. A separate

examination of the different points will show us the exact state of the case with respect to each.

I. To begin with a matter which has not loomed so large before the public eye as some of the others, but which those who are conversant with the actual work of the Church regard as of great practical importance—the increase of the episcopate. No additional diocese has been provided for by legislation since 1886. But the bishopric of Wakefield was established in 1888 under the arrangements made ten years previously by the Four Bishoprics Act; and the number of suffragan bishops, of whom six years ago there were only four, has been increased to seventeen. This last result has been mainly due to the Suffragans' Nomination Act, 1888, which removed the previous restriction as to the towns which might be selected for the sees of these subsidiary prelates. The blame, if blame there be, for the absence of further progress, does not lie with the Legislature. For though the creation of new bishoprics in Birmingham, Sheffield, Suffolk and Surrey, and within the existing diocese of St. David's, have been under consideration, the financial arrangements have not as yet been sufficiently completed with regard to any one of them to justify an application to Parliament for the necessary Act.

II. We have seen that the Archbishop, in his first address to the House of Laymen, assigned a prominent place to the question of the reform of Convocation. The subject was considered at some length in *THE CHURCHMAN* of May and June, 1890, and has been discussed by Archdeacon Sinclair in the *Newbery House Magazine* for last April. There has long been practical unanimity as to the need for this reform: and the only difficulty and difference of opinion is as to the way in which it is to be brought about. No definite step towards its accomplishment has been taken during the six years under review; but the conviction is gradually forcing itself upon the minds of both clergy and laity that it will be necessary and, from an ecclesiastical standpoint, will not be improper, to apply to Parliament for a declaration that, under the existing constitution in Church and State, Convocation has power, with the assent of the Crown, to reform itself. A resolution approving of such a course was passed in the London Diocesan Conference in 1891, and was reaffirmed on April 27th in the present year.

III. The idea of a united assembly of the bishops and representatives of the clergy and laity of both provinces has made no way, and the formation of Church parochial councils has not advanced; but a House of Laymen has just been created in the Northern Province, and in the Diocese of London effect was last year given to a resolution of the Upper

House of the Canterbury Convocation passed as long ago as 1884, in favour of according episcopal sanction to the conduct of extra services and the delivery of addresses by laymen in consecrated buildings.

IV. On the other hand, the Tithes Question, or, at any rate, one phase of it, has been definitely grappled with, and has been set at rest for the time. The dishonest agitation of the Welsh tenant farmers against the payment of the tithe rent-charge which reduced some of the clergy in the Principality to the verge of starvation, suggested the expediency of reverting to the principle as to the incidence of the rent-charge on the owners of the land, which had been embodied in the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. In spite of the enunciation of this principle in the measure which created the rent-charge, payment by the occupying tenant had in practice become almost, if not quite, universal. As a remedy for the local Welsh difficulty it was proposed to prohibit, throughout the country, this deviation from the intended working of the tithe commutation system, and at the same time to provide a mode for recovering unpaid rent-charge through the machinery of the county courts. Attempts at legislation were made during the sessions of 1887, 1888, and 1889, and the first session of 1890; but they all failed, partly through factious opposition and partly through the difficulty experienced by the Government in framing a measure satisfactory to themselves and to their followers, and capable of resisting the fire of hostile criticism. At length, in the autumn of 1890, a Bill which answered these requirements was introduced, and it became law early in last year. The incidence and recovery of the tithe rent-charge have thus been finally settled. A larger and more difficult question, however, in the shape of its redemption, looms in the distance. During the passage of the recent Bill through Parliament the Government appointed a commission to investigate the subject, and their report was presented early in last March. Legislation upon its lines may be anticipated at no distant period.

V. Cognate to the subject of tithe as affecting clerical finance, is the question of an equalization of the incomes of livings. It will be remembered that the Archbishop, in 1886, associated this question with that of the sale of glebe lands, with respect to which a Bill was then in contemplation. This Bill was passed in 1888, but up to the present time it has not produced any widespread effects, and certainly has not as yet promoted by one hair's breadth the equalization of the revenues of benefices. This latter is a thorny subject, and is complicated by the property rights of the patrons as well as by the claims of the parishioners for whose benefit the benefices have been

endowed. There is much to be said against, as well as in favour of, a wholesale equalization of clerical incomes. The number of livings with excessive revenues is at the present time very small, and an augmentation of the poorer benefices is rather to be sought from private beneficence than by mulcting those clergy who are in the enjoyment of means befitting their vocation. In reviewing the history of Church finance during the last six years, it would not be right to omit all mention of the Clergy Pensions Institution and Ecclesiastical Buildings Fire Office (Limited), which were founded by private enterprise, the one in the beginning of 1886 and the other in the following year. The first of these institutions enables the clergy to purchase for themselves deferred annuities, and invites benefactions from the laity in order to supplement these annuities by substantial pensions. Its invested funds now amount to upwards of £70,000. The design of the second is to enable the Church to reap for herself, in respect of her own buildings, the large profits which accrue from fire insurance. After paying a dividend of £5 per cent. to the shareholders on their paid-up capital, the surplus profits are devoted to augmenting the funds of the Clergy Pensions Institution and to other Church objects. As the result of the working of the year ending last March, the office has been able to distribute £2,000 among objects of this class, and the greater the number of insurances which are effected with it, the larger will be the amount available for this beneficial purpose.

VI. and VII. We come, in the last place, to two items of Church reform which have occupied, and deservedly occupied, a large share of public attention. They are needed in order to meet evils which not only occasion grave scandal, and furnish the enemies of the Church with legitimate handles against her, but also inflict most serious spiritual injury in the parishes affected by them. It is difficult to estimate whether greater practical injury is inflicted by the abuse of the rights of patronage and the promotion of unworthy and incompetent incumbents to benefices, or by the retention of guilty clergymen in their cure of souls through the inadequacy of the means for their removal which are provided by our existing ecclesiastical law. The latter abuse is, however, clearly the more glaring, and brings the greater amount of scandal upon the Church. It is also, or ought to be, the more simple to remedy. We are not, therefore, surprised that, although two Church Patronage Bills were introduced into Parliament in 1886, it has been ultimately decided to give priority to the subject of Clergy Discipline, which was not brought forward until two years later, and to use every effort to carry a measure upon it before the dissolution of the present Parliament.

While these pages are passing through the press, the issue of the endeavour cannot be regarded as finally assured, but there are good grounds for confidence that the third endeavour to pass the Clergy Discipline Bill will prove successful. It first saw the light in 1888, when it was read a second time in the House of Lords. It was reintroduced in the following session, but did not advance beyond a first reading. In 1891 it was again brought in, and passed through the Upper House in a modified form; and this year, with further alterations, it has again been passed by the Lords, and has been read a second time by the overwhelming majority of 230 to 17 in the House of Commons. It has been freely criticised by both friends and foes, and during the last six or eight months an agitation against it has been fomented on the ground that it proposes to deal by civil enactment with matters upon which the Church alone is competent to legislate. It is to be hoped that this newly-started objection will be got over by the passing of a concurrent ecclesiastical canon, and that no unforeseen mishap will hinder the further progress of the Bill. We shall then secure (*a*) that if an incumbent is convicted of a grave misdemeanour, or is found guilty in divorce or bastardy proceedings, his living will be vacated, as a matter of course, just as it is at present on a conviction for treason or felony; (*b*) that the procedure in the ecclesiastical courts with regard to other evil acts or habits will be simplified and cheapened; and (*c*) that those courts will be able to pronounce sentence of deprivation in cases where at present they can only inflict temporary suspension from the benefice.

While, however, the Clergy Discipline Bill appears to be on the eve of passing, the fate of the kindred subject of Church Patronage reform is, so far as respects the present Parliament, sealed. As already mentioned, the subject was taken up earlier than that of Church Discipline; and, in the Radical Parliament of 1886, not only did the Bill on the subject, introduced by the Archbishop into the House of Lords, pass through the stage of a Select Committee in that House, but another Bill, brought in by Mr. Leatham, M.P., and proceeding upon rather different lines, was read a second time in the House of Commons without a division. In 1887, in the first working session of the Unionist Parliament, the Archbishop reintroduced his Bill in the House of Lords, and, after undergoing some important amendments, it was read a third time and passed. But the congestion of public business in the Lower House, owing to the obstructive resistance offered to the Irish Crimes Bill, prevented any further progress being made with it during that year; and no subsequent attempt has been made to reopen the question. This is much to be lamented; for the Bill,

as it left the Lords in 1887, was a useful and practical measure. It proposed to prohibit for the future the severance of the next right of presentation from the rest of the advowson, and to render illegal the mortgage of an advowson and its sale by public auction. An intending purchaser was to be obliged to obtain a certificate of his fitness to hold the right of patronage from a commission consisting of the diocesan chancellor, the archdeacon, rural dean, and two laymen appointed by the Lord Chancellor. Donatives were to be turned into presentative benefices; and the bishop was to have power to refuse institution to a nominee of the patron on the ground of physical infirmity, pecuniary embarrassment, or notorious or reputed evil life, or where less than two years had elapsed since his admission into deacon's orders. The parishioners were to have one month's notice of an intended presentation, and might submit to the bishop written objections to the proposed nominee.

Such is a brief record of the attempts at Church reform during the last six years. It is a mingled story of success and failure, in which the impetuous amongst us will, no doubt, pronounce that the latter predominates. In view, however, of this slow progress in the past, are we to give way to despair or despondency for the future? Are we to admit that the Church has no prospect of satisfactory reform except in the severance of her connection with the State? Surely not. The legislative stove may burn slow, and the chimney may smoke, but we believe that it is still possible to cook the ecclesiastical meal without setting fire to the constitutional fabric. All that is necessary is the exercise of patience and perseverance. Let the reforming friends of the Church doggedly practise these two old-fashioned virtues with the same determination as do her would-be destroyers. We shall then wring from a reluctant House of Commons, if we cannot obtain from a willing Parliament, those measures which are necessary to keep the Church abreast of the times, and to ensure her increased efficiency in the discharge of the high and holy work to which she has been called by her Heavenly Master.

PHILIP VERNON SMITH.

ART. V.—THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

NO. VI.—COMPREHENSIVENESS.

IN the fabled times of Greece the beautiful hills of Attica were infested by a robber whose gruesome deeds have made his name proverbial even to this day. Unhappy was