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THE CHURCHMAN

September, 1916.

The Month.

**The Bishop's
Surrender.** WHILE we admire the spirit in which the Bishop of London has consented to reconsider the question of allowing Women Messengers of the National Mission to deliver their message to their own sex in church, we deeply regret that he has felt compelled to surrender to what we consider to be a most unreasonable and a most unworthy agitation. The Bishop has the cause of the Mission most deeply at heart. "Nothing," he says, "must be allowed to harm the Mission," and for fear lest this controversy should affect it—as undoubtedly it would do—he takes all the blame upon himself and asks for a truce until his return to town, when his clergy can confer with him about the matter. When writing on the subject last month we expressed a doubt whether the General Council of the Mission, whose resolution first provoked the storm, would stand firm. As far as we know, the members have not yet met to consider the new position, but whatever they may do now will hardly affect the question if the only two Bishops—London and Chelmsford—who have announced their intention of allowing women to speak in church, under certain very stringent conditions, withdraw their permission. At the time of writing last month the Bishops had not come upon the scene, but almost immediately afterwards their decisions were published, and the storm burst in full fury. It was an excellent chance for the newspapers, and much was made of women being "allowed to preach in church," a reference which the Bishop of London declares to be "an unconscious or deliberate perversion of the facts." Mr. Athelstan Riley led the attack: the English

Church Union came to his aid ; and there was every sign of a bitter and prolonged controversy. This has now been arrested by the Bishop's letter, but it may be renewed at any moment.¹

If the facts had been fairly stated we feel certain
A False Issue. that the opposition would not have lived a week.

But from the very first Mr. Athelstan Riley prejudiced the matter by raising a false issue, viz., the admission of women to the priesthood. He mentioned the existence of this feminist "conspiracy" in his protest to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, however, took no notice of it, but rebuked him for the tone and character of his letter. So few people had heard of this "conspiracy" that there was not a little interest felt in the prospect of seeing what evidence there was of its existence. At length Mr. Riley produced it. It consisted of a paper containing letters which had passed more than two years ago between a Mrs. — and a number of correspondents whose views on the subject were asked for. The circular, which emanated from — Rectory, was sent to Churchwomen believed to be favourable to the project, announcing that she was organizing an informal Conference "to discuss the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood," that she had written to about 150 people, and that she enclosed a summary of the answers received. Mrs. — received replies, of varying character, but 59 of those to whom the letter was sent returned no answer. Of those who did reply 17 are classified as "unfavourable"; 12 are "interested but not convinced"; 15 are "favourable, but will take no action"; 11 are "favourable, but not Churchwomen," and can, therefore, be left out of count; while 30 are favourable. It does seem to us most deplorable that an

¹ As we go to press the Bishop of Chelmsford's statement is also published. After stating what was proposed, he says:—"It seems incredible that such a course could have been opposed, but so it is. Party-passions have been aroused, controversy encouraged, and all this on the eve of the great movement which has been in our thoughts and prayers for months. Surely this has been the work of the devil. Yet what is to be done? The natural man would say, 'Resist the unfair agitation, largely begotten of ignorance and prejudice.' But such a spirit would surely wreck the Mission, for no blessing could rest upon it conducted on such lines. I have therefore decided that during the Mission I shall not sanction any woman telling her sisters of the Saviour's love, in any church in the diocese of Chelmsford."

attempt should have been made to bias public opinion on the very simple proposal of the Mission Council and of the two Bishops, by thus trailing across the path this very objectionable red-herring, and upon such very slender evidence.

But while for the moment the very reasonable proposals of the Mission Council and the Bishops of London and Chelmsford have been quashed, we hope the leaders of the Church will not be deterred from giving their serious attention, as soon as possible, to the whole question of the ministry of women. We believe the Church is depriving itself of an immense power for good, by not giving greater freedom to women to exercise the ministry with which they are specially and fundamentally endowed. We have no intention of arguing the matter out just now, but we venture to ask attention for the wise words of the foremost evangelist of the Church of England, the Rev. Prebendary Carlile, D.D., the Founder and Head of the Church Army :—

The Ministry
of Women.

If the war calls forth women's aid, why not the Church? While the Greek and Roman Churches use their devotion so freely, why should the Anglican drive their zeal to the Salvationists, Quakers, and other Nonconformist bodies, or banish them to schoolrooms or the open air, tending in the same direction?

Such holy persons as the Blessed Virgin Mary, Miriam, St. Philip's four daughters at Samaria, or St. Hilda (who, like Origen the layman, gave lectures on theology in Church to clergymen), would be gagged to-day by many Anglicans, while their help is so needed for purity of life and home. Must to-day's Maids of Orleans be burnt or beatified?

The carefully selected and modest women of the Flying Squadrons of the Church Army and of the Pilgrimages of Prayer are not women preachers and don't want to preach sermons. We have already a million a year, and yet not a tenth of the people are even communicants, much less workers, as all should be.

"Pulpits, prayer-desks, and chancel steps" are not desired by these devout souls, but they are willing for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake to be catechized in the Church by the clergyman in charge (as per Rubrics), that they may humbly pour forth from full hearts their timid witness for their Blessed Lord, feeling that thus they can best do their bit to bring this righteous war to a victorious end.

With Joel's prophecy (Chron. ii. 28) and St. Peter's words (Acts ii. 17) dare any modern Canute (misunderstanding St. Paul's hints for some troublesome women in Corinth) try to stem this tidal wave that bears upon its crest the promise of a Pentecost of Catholic and Apostolic days?

Let the Bishops, therefore, as soon as the National Mission is over, take their courage in both hands and, defying Mr. Athelstan

Riley and the English Church Union, prepare a scheme by which the ministry of women to their own sex can be more fully and more profitably exercised "in Church or elsewhere."

We have received from the Rev. W. L. J. Sheppard, Rector of St. Thomas', Birmingham, the following letter:—

"The Consultational."

I am very glad that you drew attention to my suggestion of the Consultational in "The Churchman," and thank you for the very full summary of the plan which you gave. Perhaps you will allow me to point out, in answer to your friendly criticism, that a long Mission experience has clearly proved to me, as to many others, that however plainly and faithfully the Gospel is preached, there are always many hearers who do not understand the plan of salvation, and who need personal dealing to bring them to Christ. One of our grave mistakes, as ministers of Christ, has been to preach the Gospel, and stop at that. There is nothing in the plan I proposed to prevent an anxious soul coming to the clergy for help "immediately after the Gospel message has been delivered"; there is no necessity for anyone to wait for the next Consultational, as you seem to imply. Nor is the use of the Consultational by any means limited to those seeking salvation; it provides a way by which people, who otherwise would never do so, can consult their clergy on all kinds of spiritual matters. After all, a method must be largely tested by its results, and after nine months' experience of the Consultational I can bear personal testimony to the blessing and help which have been brought by its means to many souls. For the sake of any of your readers who are interested in the matter, may I add that a full account of the method is given in a little pamphlet, "How to See Conversions," price 1d., published by the National Church League, 82, Victoria Street, S.W. ?

Mr. Sheppard's explanation removes one of the difficulties to which we called attention, but he has not convinced us of the wisdom or the necessity of setting up "The Consultational." In the experienced hands of Mr. Sheppard, no doubt, the scheme works well, but all have not his experience, and the setting apart of a special time and place—this we understand to be the essence of his proposal—for people to come and consult their clergy "on all kinds of spiritual matters," is liable to degenerate into something akin to the Confessional, and may give rise to abuses which all spiritually minded men would deplore. Our view is that a clergyman should be accessible at all times to his people, and that the best place for these private interviews is the incumbent's own house, or, better still, where it is practicable, the house of the inquirer. But we would not willingly say a word to discourage any means that may be found useful for bringing men and women into personal relationship with Christ.

“A Consecrated Book of Devotion.” We congratulate the Committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to prepare proposals for the revision of the Prayer Book Psalter upon the reasonableness of their Report (S.P.C.K., 1s. net). Any drastic changes in the text of what the Committee themselves declare to be “at once a consecrated book of devotion and a great English classic” would be widely and justly deprecated, and we note with much satisfaction that the revisions and emendations they propose are of the slenderest character, and will not appreciably detract from the spiritual pleasure and profit which the devotional use of the Psalter affords to the reader. The Committee consisted of the Bishops of Chester and Ely, the Deans of Ely, Norwich and Wells, the Master of Magdalen College, Cambridge (Dr. A. C. Benson), Dr. Mackail and Dr. Navine, and it is a pleasure to be assured that they conducted their revision “on strictly conservative lines.”

We have taken into account (they say) the original Hebrew as interpreted by the best modern scholarship, the Greek of the Septuagint and the Latin of the Vulgate, the successive English versions from the Great Bible of 1539 down to the Revised Version of 1885; and we have not overlooked the numerous minor alterations—insignificant individually but considerable in the aggregate—introduced into successive editions of the Psalter, whether deliberately or by the carelessness or caprice of the printers, both before and after the enactment in 1662 of a fixed text of verbal and literal accuracy in the manuscript “Annexed Book” of the Act of Uniformity and the printed “Sealed Books” copied from that MS. But we have proposed no change in the text which did not present itself to us as necessary towards intelligent devotional use of the verse or passage in question.

The Committee point out that, from the generation in which it was first issued down to the present time, the Prayer Book Psalter has been accepted, to the exclusion of any other version, by the practically unanimous feeling of the Church of England as satisfying the requirements of a book of public devotion. Moreover, the strength of this feeling has increased as the lapse of successive generations has rooted that Psalter more deeply in memory, tradition, and association, and has accumulated sanctity round the very forms of its language. “For,” they add, “words are not dead, but alive.” On the other hand the Committee reminds us that in the Psalter, as in all translations executed by the imperfect scholarship of the sixteenth century, there are a certain number of demonstrable errors. To these they have given their attention, and a very interesting list of suggested changes is the result. These are indicated in an Appendix, but, as the Committee says, the amount and scope of the changes can only be fully gathered from perusal of the Psalter as a whole, and we prefer, therefore, before

commenting upon them, to wait for the text of the Revised Psalter, embodying the alterations which will be issued shortly by the S.P.C.K. Meanwhile we congratulate the Committee upon the completion of a very useful piece of work.

“A Curse and Not a Blessing.” The Bishop of Oxford is proving himself a thorn in the side of the English Church Union. The President lately made certain proposals regarding the rearrangement of the service of Holy Communion, including changes which the Bishop himself would welcome, but his sense of loyalty compels him to hold his hand. The following passages from his August letter are of remarkable significance:—

So far as this movement is a movement to restore the free action of the Church in regulating our common worship, and so far as it is a movement to educate the opinion of the Church as to the direction in which changes should be made, there is everything to be said for it, and nothing against it.

But it is in fact rather a movement to encourage the clergy to make these changes on their own responsibility, without any change in the law of Church or State, it being hoped that the Bishops, or some of us, will be persuaded at least to connive by silence. Such a procedure will, I cannot doubt, bring a curse and not a blessing. The Church, by a lamentable failure of loyalty to its Master, has submitted, and continues to submit, to a quite excessive tyranny of the State in matters which do not fall properly within its province. But it is not only a matter of State control. Every clergyman, on every occasion of undertaking a spiritual charge, makes and signs before the Bishop a solemn and quite explicit promise, “In public prayer and administration of the sacraments I will use the form in the said Book prescribed and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.” It is quite one thing for a priest to insist on obeying the Book, or even on using his liberty where the Book is silent, even against the will of the Bishop. It is quite another thing to claim to disobey the order which we have pledged ourselves to follow. To violate a solemn undertaking constantly renewed is to subscribe to the “scrap of paper” doctrine which we are fighting Germany in order to repudiate. And I feel sure that no individual Bishop has the power to substitute any other order of service for that provided in the Prayer Book.

