

need only be mentioned. The classical story of Ganymede is graphically made use of in the ninth canto of the "Purgatorio." In the limbo of the unbaptized, Dante meets the great poets of antiquity; among them Homer—

The monarch of sublimest song,
That o'er the others like an eagle soars.

As our last picture—in Dean Plumptre's estimation perhaps the most beautiful in Dante's bird-gallery—we have reserved the exquisite description of the bird waiting for the dawn in the opening lines of the twenty-third canto of the "Paradiso." The following is Wright's translation:

E'en as the bird that resting in the nest
Of her sweet brood, the sheltering boughs among,
While all things are enwrapt in night's dark vest—
Now eager to behold the looks she loves,
And to find food for her impatient young
(Whence labour grateful to a mother proves)
Forestalls the time, high perch'd upon the spray,
And with impassion'd zeal the sun expecting,
Anxiously waiteth the first break of day.

It is quite possible that this picture may have been drawn from nature; but, as the Dean has pointed out, interesting parallels may be found in Dante's favourite poets, Virgil and Statius.

In concluding this brief notice of the birds of Dante, which we trust may not be without interest to students of the "Commedia," we desire to express our obligation to the article, already alluded to, on "The Birds of Virgil," to Dean Church's celebrated essay, and to the suggestive notes and studies by the late Dean Plumptre in his admirable volumes on "The Commedia and Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri."

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ART. V.—THE CHURCH IN WALES.

THE Welsh Church question is just now a burning question, and it behoves those who are called upon in any way to deal practically with it to survey the situation carefully, and with due regard to the important issues that are at stake. Those who are interested in maintaining the Church in her present position should spare no pains in discovering and removing whatever may be prejudicial to that position, and all those who place the moral and religious welfare of the people above party politics and mere sectarian interests, should pause well before committing themselves to a policy the aim of which

is to cripple the resources of the most important Christian community in Wales, at a time when religion is losing rather than gaining ground in the country.

It cannot be said that the administration of the Church in Wales has been free from grievous blunders in the past, or that it is incapable of improvement in the present. Those who are inclined to argue that the Anglicizing policy of the Hanoverian period is not mainly responsible for the depression of the Church in Wales, and those who assert that the troubles and oppressions of that period weighed equally on England, may be asked to account for this fact, amongst others, that the growth of Dissent was far more rapid in England than in Wales in the eighteenth century. In the year 1716, two years after the accession of the House of Hanover, there were about 1,150 Dissenting congregations in England and Wales, of which 43 only, or 3·7 per cent., were in Wales. In 1772, or fifty-six years later, there were 1,252 congregations in England and Wales, of which 160, or 12·4 per cent., belonged to Wales. In 1810 there were 2,002 congregations in England and Wales, of which 419, or nearly 21 per cent., were in Wales. We thus see that at the accession of the House of Hanover, the Welsh Dissenting congregations numbered only one in about 27 of those of the whole country, while in 1810 they had grown to nearly one in 5. The full significance of these figures will only be seen when we remember that, in the civil war which had thrown the country into confusion in the middle of the previous century, the Church and King had found their steadiest and sturdiest adherents in Wales. Poverty has often been alleged as the cause of the decline of the Welsh Church in the last century; but the Church was poor before the accession of the House of Hanover, and had, during the period of her decline, to compete with systems which were not only poorer, but absolutely penniless. To say, as has been often said of late, that the Church's system of government and liturgical form of worship are unsuited to the genius of the Welsh Celt, is to ignore past history. Though I cannot but express my emphatic disagreement with the political attitude of Mr. Gladstone in recent years towards the Welsh Church, I nevertheless gratefully avow my conviction that no living man has been more just or generous, in his estimate of both her past history and her present activity, than the late Premier. He has often found occasion to speak of her, and has always done so in highly sympathetic terms, and with due appreciation of her past services. Referring in 1888 to the current notion that the Welsh people began to be a religious people as late as 120 or 150 years ago, he said: "I do not believe a word of it. I believe that they were a religious people from the time when they harboured the old Christian

religion, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, at a time when it was driven out of the great bulk of the English counties." During the long period referred to in this passage, the Welsh Church was virtually the sole spiritual guide of the Welsh people; the sole instrument used of God to evoke and foster their spiritual instincts, and to quicken their spiritual aspirations; and unless it can be proved that either the Welsh Church, or Welsh genius, has essentially altered during the last 150 years, the above testimony summarily disposes of the allegation that the Welsh Church is essentially unsuited to the genius of the Welsh Celt. The Welsh people have been often conspicuously zealous in their attachment to the Church, and occasionally under trying circumstances. It is, moreover, reasonable to presume that a service like ours, which is capable of being rendered in an artistic and æsthetic manner, would, if presented properly, possess a special attraction for an imaginative and musical race like the Welsh. And this only emphasizes the more both past misgovernment and the present imperfect adaptation of the Church to her surroundings.

One of the most important questions which the Church of the present day has to answer is, What attitude is she going to assume towards the national sentiment, which in Wales, as elsewhere, is a rapidly-growing force? To ignore it is impossible; to oppose it would be suicidal; to look at it as of little or no importance is to seriously miscalculate one of the most significant movements of modern times. The idea of nationality is the peculiar political lesson of the nineteenth century. As Professor Seeley has told us, it is "the new idea that took possession of the mind of Europe"; and Sir Benjamin Hall, afterwards Lord Llanover, observed forty years ago that "nationality is inherent in every portion of the Celtic race." This "new idea" of the nineteenth century has taken a strong hold of the Welsh people. Attempts have been made occasionally to reason or ridicule them out of it. It has been argued that, since the population of Wales is less than one-half of the population of Lancashire, the Welsh are therefore not a nation. If this argument is valid, then the English people were not a nation when William the Conqueror came over in the eleventh century, as the whole population of England and Wales at that time must have been less than two-thirds of the present inhabitants of Wales. It has been also said that the Welsh are not a nation because they are not one race, but a mixture of races, which is at least equally true of England. It has been further said that the nationality argument is dangerous because it is vague. It is certainly somewhat dangerous to oppose the movement with such irrelevant argu-

ments as these. It is a fact which Churchmen would do well to realize, that the national sentiment is a growing power in the political and religious life of Wales. It may be that place-hunters adopt it for personal purposes; it may be that enthusiasts seek to carry it out into absurd and mischievous conclusions; it may be in danger of becoming a destructive weapon in the hands of extremists. All this may be true; but even so, it would only emphasize all the more the duty of those who foresee the dangers, to throw themselves into the current of the national life, and, with genuine sympathy and wise counsel, seek to guard it from perilous issues. Wales needs the combined wisdom and strength of her best men at the present moment. Her immediate dangers arise from the spread of the English language, the secularization of our educational systems, and the absorbing influence which politics are acquiring over the minds of the people.

There may be some who would dispute this. There are those who think that the prevalence of the English language and the disappearance of the Welsh, so far from being attended with dangers, would be the greatest blessing to the Welsh people and the Welsh Church. That the universal prevalence of the English language would greatly increase the commercial and educational advantages, as well as the intellectual enjoyment of the Welsh people, is what no one disputes, as far as I know, and is certainly what no one opposes. But that it will necessarily result in great benefits to the Church, and the religious and moral welfare of the people, is open to serious doubts. All the evidence relevant to the question, as well as the opinions of not a few eminent Welsh Churchmen, are adverse to such a conclusion. Whilst discussing this subject a short time ago with an English clergyman, who has enjoyed exceptional opportunities of becoming acquainted with the needs and difficulties of the Welsh Church, as well as with the religious peculiarities of the Welsh people, I ventured to remark that it was the duty of the Church to provide in the best way possible for the religious needs of the Welsh-speaking population, apart entirely from the desirability or otherwise of prolonging the existence of the Welsh language. His answer struck me as remarkable: "I go further," he said, "and maintain that, when the Welsh language dies, a great deal of what is best in Welsh religion will die with it." The Arch-deacon of Llandaff, who knows Wales as well as any living man, is reported to have said in his Welsh sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, on the eve of St. David's Day this year, that "the monoglot condition of Wales had hitherto kept her from the contagion that had played such havoc elsewhere; but he feared that the day of trial for Cambria had arrived." This

testimony is by no means new. It was repeatedly borne by the great Welsh Church educationist of the last century, the Rev. Griffith Jones, who wrote as follows in 1739: "It is no inconsiderable advantage that our language is so great a protection and defence to our common people, against the growing corruption of the times in the English tongue, by which means they are less prejudiced and better disposed to receive Divine instruction, when offered to them in their native tongue." The learned Editors of the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* say the same thing in their preface to that work: "There are not, and, we hope, never will be, in our language any such immoral and otherwise pernicious publications, as in most other countries are the bane of morality and social happiness." Malkin, in his excellent work on South Wales, published in 1807, wrote as follows: "It is very remarkable that great immoralities do not prevail in any part of Wales, not even in places contiguous to large manufactories, especially if the English language happens to be but little spoken. One reason for this probably is, that, though there are accounted to be about two thousand books in the Welsh language, there are none of immoral tendencies, none that propagate the principles of infidelity." Speaking at the great Abergavenny Eisteddfod in 1853, Chancellor Hugh Williams, Rector of Bassaleg, said: "Our object—we confess it, and are proud of it—is to maintain, to enjoy, and cultivate the Welsh language, because we love it, and because we believe it to have been, and still to be, a blessing to Wales. Wherever it is spoken alone and in its purity, it is a bulwark against the corruption of our faith, and a barrier against the inroads of vice, immorality, and crime. Why has it occurred in the interior of Wales, and where the Welsh language prevails, that on several occasions within our memory there have been what are termed maiden assizes—that is, empty gaols, and not a single prisoner for trial? I maintain that it is because the inhabitants of those districts are Welsh spoken, purely Welsh people, and are religious, and therefore industrious and moral; for the genuine native aboriginal Welsh are a most religious people." These are competent witnesses, and their testimony is corroborated by judicial statistics. We take the report of the Blue Books, published in 1893, on Criminal Proceedings in Wales for the previous ten years. The "Comparative Table of the number of persons committed or bailed for trial," on page 54, gives us the following results: The number of such persons from the six western and more Welsh-speaking counties for those years is 1,095 out of a population of 546,235, or about 2 per thousand. On the other hand, the number of such persons from the six eastern and more English-speaking counties is 4,018 out of a

population of 954,928, or 4·2 per thousand, which is double the proportion in the western counties. It cannot be said that the high percentage of criminals in the more English-speaking counties is attributable to the condensed population of those counties, as the following figures will show. The criminals are 5·8 per thousand in Flintshire, 4·9 in Breconsbire, 4·4 in Glamorganshire, 4 in Anglesey, one of the western counties, and 3·4 in Radnor; whilst they are below 1 per thousand in Cardiganshire, 1·9 in Carnarvon and Carmarthen, 2 in Merioneth, 2·3 in Denbighshire, 2·8 in Montgomery, and 1·6 in Pembrokeshire. These last two are reckoned among the more English-speaking counties.

It is sometimes averred that the extinction of the Welsh language would be followed in Wales by considerable advantage to the Church, and what are called constitutional politics. This can also be tested to some extent by statistics. I take the elections of 1892, and where there were no contests in that year, I take the figures of the next previous election in each case. Of the total of 75,123 votes polled in the six western and more Welsh-speaking counties, the Radical candidates received a clear majority of 16,899, or 22·4 per cent. Of the total of 115,988 votes polled in the eastern and more English-speaking counties, the Radical candidates received a clear majority of 29,720, which is 25·6 per cent., or 3·2 higher than in the six Welsh-speaking counties. We take, again, the official returns of Church communicants for the four Welsh dioceses, as given in the Church Year Book for 1893, and allowing their due proportion for those parishes which made no returns, we have the following results: The total communicants for the dioceses of Llandaff and St. Asaph, which, generally speaking, cover the eastern counties (including Monmouthshire) form 5·3 of the population; whereas the total communicants of the dioceses of St. David's and Bangor, which include the western counties, form 7·5 of the population. The Bishop of St. David's says in his Charge for 1883, that the proportion of communicants to the population in his diocese reached its highest mark in the purely Welsh county of Cardigan, where it stood at nearly 10 per cent., while it reached its lowest in that part of Glamorganshire which is in his diocese, where it was slightly below 4 per cent. It is interesting to observe that the Welsh county in which crime is lowest contains also the highest proportion of Church communicants; whilst, according to the last census, it has the highest percentage of persons able to speak Welsh. This does not look as if the Church was unsuitable to the genius of the Welsh people, or as if the Welsh language was a hindrance to the progress of the Church. I fully grant, however, that it

would be very easy to exaggerate the importance of the figures given above; but they will serve the purpose of effectually refuting the silly nonsense that is sometimes uttered about the Welsh language being the foe of the Church, of constitutional principles, and of morality.

According to the last census, the Welsh language is spoken by 910,289 out of 1,669,705 of the population of Wales. If the census returns are correct, over five-ninths of that number have practically no alternative but either to worship in Welsh or not at all; while it is acknowledged that Welshmen, though well able to converse and do business in English, have a strong preference for religious ministrations in their native language. I have two parishes under my charge, with full services in each in both languages. Of the Welsh congregations in those parishes, 70 or 80 per cent. are more or less bilinguals, while of the English congregations not more than 5 per cent. are so in any sense. As a sign of the vitality of the Welsh language, I would refer to what was said in the Report of Lord Aberdare's Committee on Welsh Education, issued in 1881, namely, that "twelve newspapers, with a weekly circulation of 74,500; eighteen magazines, with a circulation of 90,300; and two quarterly publications of 3,000, are published in Welsh." Archdeacon Howell, in his interesting lecture on Welsh Nationality, tells us that the twelve weekly Welsh newspapers of 1881 had, in 1891, increased to seventeen, "with a circulation of fully 120,000 a week." This hardly points to a speedy disappearance of the Welsh language, and the conclusion of Lord Aberdare's Committee seems the only one consistent with facts: "There is every appearance that the Welsh language will be long cherished by the large majority of the Welsh people."

It should never be forgotten that it was by a succession of patriotic Welsh prelates and divines, who sympathized with their countrymen, cherished their language, enriched their literature, and revived their national life, that Wales was rescued in the sixteenth century from a state of almost barbaric lawlessness, ignorance, and immorality. They were nobly supported and often led by the old Welsh aristocracy, who prided themselves on nothing more than on their knowledge of the Welsh language and their promotion of Welsh letters.

The people of Wales are taking a new turn in the development of their educational and religious life. This new turn is beset with perils. Novel ideas are rushing in like a flood. The masses are awakening to the realization of their newly-acquired privileges. The implicit belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and the profound reverence for the ordinances of Christianity, which characterized the Welsh people of a

generation ago, show some signs of giving way to a spirit of scepticism. The adoption of the principles of secularism in politics and popular education by the leaders of the Nonconformist denominations in Wales has unquestionably damaged the prestige of religion in the eyes of the people, and is already beginning to produce its natural effects on the minds and convictions of the rising generations. A leading Nonconformist divine, the Rev. Principal Edwards, said of his countrymen some time ago, that "the sense of sin is not there," and that the rising generation is "in danger of drifting away altogether from theological truth." The same high authority is reported to have said in 1892 that "scepticism was spreading in Wales—in the small towns, in the quarries, in the coal mines, and even among the farmers." The late Mr. Henry Richard, writing to a friend in 1887, used the following words: "I have of late been greatly exercised on two points connected with the future of Wales; one is the danger which I think I foresee of the people of Wales ceasing to be the earnestly religious people they once were. What with violent political excitement, and the Eisteddfodau, with the choral and literary competitions, and even the great enthusiasm about education, the minds and hearts of our countrymen are in danger of being diverted from the one thing needful." Testimonies to the same effect might be easily multiplied. In a leading article in the *Goleuad*, an ably-conducted weekly newspaper of the Calvinistic Methodists, it was asserted a few weeks ago that there are half a million of people in Wales—not far from a third of the whole population—who neglect all means of grace, and are morally in a worse condition than the inhabitants of the Principality were in the beginning of the last century. This testimony is true, and offers a magnificent opportunity for the Church to vindicate her position, and at the same time to render it impregnable. To deal successfully with the problem of reclaiming half a million of lost souls should be her instant reply to her political assailants. This seems to me to be an unanswerable argument against her disendowment. It is clear that Wales needs all, and more than all, the religious forces at her disposal, to counteract the growing indifference, unbelief, and immorality that are spreading among her people. No one pretends to say that the Nonconformists are doing more than holding their own in Wales, and none of them seem to have thought of the proposal of reducing their own material resources as a means of increasing their spiritual efficiency. When forces antagonistic to religion are on the increase, it would seem to be an act of disloyalty to our common Christianity, for those who profess it to seek to weaken the organization of any religious community. It

would be to strike a blow at an ally in the most sacred cause. Looked at in this light, the consuming desire for the disendowment of the Church which possesses many good Nonconformists seems to me to be inexplicable. It cannot be that they think themselves able to take up the work that may have to be dropped by the Church. It will probably be conceded that the Calvinistic Methodists have displayed at least as great a vitality as any of the religious denominations in Wales during this century; and yet they have barely succeeded in keeping pace with the increase in the population of Wales and Monmouthshire during the last thirty years. The average of their hearers in 1862 was very nearly as high in proportion to the population as their total adherents were in 1892; and while the population of the country has increased 39·5 per cent. between 1861 and 1891, the increase in their members between 1862 and 1892 has been only 32·6. I have no means of testing the comparative statistics of the other Nonconformist bodies, but there is no reason to believe that they have been more prosperous. The growth of the Calvinistic Methodists, both in number and influence, was remarkably rapid during the first half of this century. The above figures indicate that there has been at least no proportionate growth in their numbers during the last thirty years; and many even of their own adherents will admit that they have lost much of the spiritual influence which they once wielded. The period of their decline has been said to have dated from the year 1868, when they commenced to throw themselves into the vortex of politics. The Rev. John Elias, the greatest Welsh preacher of this century, seems to have foreseen this danger in 1835, when he wrote the following words in a letter to a correspondent: "Our Connexion [the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists] is kept wonderfully free from the political mania that is too general in the country, and also among some professors in Wales. The vitals of religion are eaten up by that demon wherever it prevails. I hope the Lord will keep our Connexion in the same peaceable and loyal paths our fathers trod before us." Mr. J. R. Davies, a cultured and influential Nonconformist of the same persuasion, referring to the effects of politics on the religious life of Welsh Nonconformity, used the following words in 1892 before a Congress of Nonconformists: "Sectarianism as it exists to-day, carried as it is to extremes little short of ridiculous, is getting into contempt with much of the young life of Wales. I sometimes doubt whether its work is not done as an instrument in aid of Christianity. One thing that makes me incline to that opinion is, that the one great central idea of all the sects at this moment is the disestablishment and disendowment of the

Church of England in Wales, a purely political aspiration. It is a low aim for any part of the Church of the living God; and the very fact that we are so absorbed in so temporal an object is itself our condemnation, and the explanation of our spiritual poverty."

If the Church in Wales realizes her position as the spiritual guide of the people, she has a stupendous task before her. Her opportunities—the spiritual needs and perils of the nation—are the measure of her responsibilities. There are powerful forces at work which call for the most strenuous efforts on her part, as the guardian of the faith and the herald of salvation. Education has been now brought within easy reach of the masses, and the hopes of the rising generation seem to be largely centred in the benefits that are expected to accrue therefrom. But our educational systems are built on what is virtually a secular basis. The increase of knowledge; the prevalence of the English language, which furnishes the key to the vast and varied treasures of English literature; the absorbing influence of politics; the broad fringe of what is practically a non-religious population, forming, as we have seen, nearly a third of the whole population of the Principality—these are some of the conditions that bring new trials to the faith and morals of our countrymen, and new demands on the resources and self-sacrifice of the Church. The eyes of many are just now turned on the old Church of Wales. She will soon be subjected to merciless criticisms; her claims to her own will be disputed and denied; her failings and failures will be exposed and flaunted in her face. What answer is she preparing for her assailants? Will her leaders lead forth the army of the living God in a holy crusade against the destructive forces that are undermining our Christianity? If she takes advantage of the present awakening of the national life, and becomes, as often before, the chief instrument for the fulfilment of the highest hopes and aspirations of the people; above all, if she speedily realizes the stupendous responsibilities that lie at her door, and relies upon the wisdom and power of God for their due discharge, then, indeed, she will be recognised and preserved as the most essential institution in the land for promoting the welfare of man and the glory of God.
