

ART. VIII.—THE MONTH.

THE state of affairs in the Church does not become less difficult, and even critical. One of the most dangerous symptoms is afforded by an article on "The Crisis in the Church" which is contributed by Lord Halifax to the April number of the *Nineteenth Century*. The article is marked by the utmost candour and plain speaking, and it will be inexcusable in the authorities of our Church if they attempt to disguise from themselves the purpose aimed at by Lord Halifax, and by the large and active party of whom he is the spokesman and representative. It is nothing less than to eliminate Protestantism from the Church of England. We are not putting any gloss or interpretation upon his words; we simply accept them in their plain meaning. He says (p. 550) that "since the sixteenth century Protestantism has effected a *de facto* lodgment within the borders of the Church; an anomaly in itself hardly tolerable, which hampers the Church in her office of proclaiming the truth at every turn, and which makes any really consistent action on the part of her Bishops as Catholic Prelates—and they will not deny that they profess to be such—to be at the present moment almost impossible. . . . It is possible to minimize the conflicting elements and the points of divergence within the Church of England; but minimize them as you will . . . it remains true that within the Church of England there are practically something very like *two* religions, and that it is only possible to tolerate a condition of things so contradictory of the nature and office of the Church on condition that nothing is done by the rulers of the Church to make the recovery of Catholic doctrine and practice more difficult, or to consolidate the position of those within the Church who, from a Catholic point of view, ought never to have been allowed to occupy the position they now hold."

In other words, as Lord Halifax expresses it elsewhere in the same article (p. 544), Protestant Churchmen "have to be shown that they are in the position of the lodger who is trying to turn the rightful owner of the house out of doors."

If anything could be more audacious than this claim it would be the grounds on which Lord Halifax asserts it. We cannot adequately describe his attitude except by saying that he endeavours to "bluff" the situation, by assuming that the practices and doctrines for which he and his friends are contending are those of the Catholic Church of the first five centuries, and that Protestant views involve a repudiation of those primitive models. "No one," he says (p. 542), "pretends

that by the time of the fourth General Council the doctrines and practices for which the clergy are now being attacked were not everywhere recognised by the Church." We gave Lord Halifax credit for more knowledge of this controversy than to make so astonishing an assertion. We might refer him to two recent volumes by Canon Meyrick, published by Messrs. Skeffington, which afford direct proof to the contrary. The contention of any such learned opponent of the present Ritualistic school in the Church of England is that their doctrines and practices in such subjects as the Mass and the Confessional, to which Lord Halifax expressly refers, are as inconsistent with the doctrines and practices of the Church of the first four Councils as with those of the Church of England. Can Lord Halifax be ignorant that the leading Protestant divines of the Church of England have been unanimous in claiming the authority of the primitive Church on their side? He imagines that Dr. Wace, in saying not long ago that he would not have any clergyman prosecuted for any practice which could appeal to the sanction of the first five centuries, was remembering that "it is precisely to the teaching and practice of the church of the first four Ecumenical Councils that the Church of England makes her most explicit appeal" (p. 541). Dr. Wace, we apprehend, is sufficiently instructed to be aware that the Church of England explicitly refuses to defer to the mere authority of General Councils unless their decisions may be proved by Holy Writ. He is more likely to have remembered, what Lord Halifax would seem to have forgotten, that the chief apologist of the Church of England, in the days when its doctrines and practices were mainly determined, Bishop Jewel, challenged the Roman divines of his day to show that any of the Roman doctrines which he and his Church repudiated could be shown to have been held in the Church of the first few centuries, and declared himself ready to relinquish his cause if this could be shown.

Dr. Wace no doubt meant that that challenge went far to bind English Churchmen for the future, and that men might not unfairly claim Jewel's authority for the toleration of views and practices which could appeal to the sort of authority he had in view. Of course, Jewel could not have meant that any view or practice which could be shown to have been held or adopted by anybody in the first few centuries was admissible, and could only have referred to such views and practices as had adequate sanction. Taken with that limitation, the principle might, perhaps, be admitted as a fair working rule; and we venture to say that no competent historical scholar can doubt that it would cut off at once the great mass of views and practices by which the Ritualistic clergy have pro-

voked the present crisis. It would cut off at once the distinctively Romanizing practices and doctrines; and though it might allow some things which we should dislike, it would at least bring back the Church of England within the general limits of old High Churchmanship. It is strange indeed that Lord Halifax should yet have to learn that what Protestant Churchmen maintain is that Protestantism is true and primitive Catholicism, and that the Catholicism which Lord Halifax and his friends profess is spurious and medieval. As Archbishop Benson said when in Ireland in the last few weeks of his life, the Church of England is "Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed, and Protestant," and cannot dispense with any one of those designations. It is Protestant Churchmen who are the true owners of the house, because they are the true Catholic Churchmen. It is the maintainers of Lord Halifax's contentions who are the lodgers, and whose true home lies elsewhere.

We earnestly trust that the situation may not be embittered by an action which is imminently threatened by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's. Under the impulse of a guild in the army, they have consented to allow a celebration of the Holy Communion to be held in the Cathedral this month which would be, to all intents and purposes—and those purposes hardly disguised—a Requiem Mass. Passages and forms are to be introduced into the service which are not to be found in the Prayer-Book, and some of which are taken from Roman usage on similar occasions. It is at all events to be hoped that the Bishop will not allow such a service. As involving unauthorized additions to the Prayer-Book, it would, of course, as a mere matter of fact, be illegal, whether he sanctioned it or not. There are, indeed, deviations from strict law on special occasions which are both excusable and desirable. But deviations from law which would set the example, in the Cathedral of the Metropolis, of prayers and practices unheard in our Church since the Reformation, and deeply opposed to the convictions of large numbers of English Churchmen—these are illegalities which it would be a scandal of the gravest character for a Dean and Chapter to introduce, and for a Bishop to allow. If such a service should be performed, it would, in our opinion, become an imperative duty to prosecute those who would be responsible for it, in the maintenance of the broad right of English Churchmen to have the services in their Prayer-Book, "and none other." If the Bishop should veto such a prosecution, the question of the maintenance of the Veto would assume a new and far more pressing character. It would then be shown by a conspicuous example that the Veto gives Bishops the power of allowing

services and doctrines, which are repugnant to large numbers of English Churchmen, to be introduced into our Cathedrals and Churches in defiance of the law. That is a power which, as it seems to us, could not possibly be tolerated. A Veto which is used to hinder trivial or unreasonable prosecutions is no doubt desirable. But a Veto which was actually used, in a conspicuous instance, to bring back into the Church of England doctrines and practices excluded from her Prayer-Book, and protested against by a large and historic school of thought and belief within her pale, would involve a complete unsettlement of her foundations, and would leave her members without security against the most dangerous innovations. If the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, with the support of the Bishop, allow the service in question, they will have done more to destroy confidence in the position of the Church, and to provoke drastic legislation, than anything which has occurred within the present generation.

