

## The Dearth of Curates.

BY THE REV. CANON RANSFORD, M.A.

IF it be still "evident" (as it once appeared to us clerics) "unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors that from the Apostle's time there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, priests, and deacons," it is at least quite as evident that the status and functions of these Orders are very different from what they were in the days of the Apostles, and that there is a very pressing need either for a rearrangement of them, or for a fourth to supplement them.

Of the difference between the Bishop, priest, and deacon of to-day and those of the Primitive Church we need not be ashamed. Most of it is the result of a beneficial evolution. The saying that was in my youth attributed to Bishop Wilberforce, then of Oxford, when challenged as to what St. Paul would say were he to see him (the Bishop) riding in a carriage and pair, "He would say, my friend, that things were much improved since his day," is not without its force and application even here. Things have changed, and in many ways improved. And with this change has come the development of the status and functions of Bishop, priest, and deacon. But things do not cease to change; they are changing always, and just now very rapidly indeed.

I was ordained by Bishop Sumner of Winchester, the "last of our old Prince-Bishops." For over thirty years he was said to have drawn an income of over £30,000 per annum from the See, and he maintained a princely state at Farnham Castle. I remember his Ordinations and his Confirmations. They were very different from those of to-day, but they were most solemn and impressive. "We have changed all that." Yes; but may it not be that the change shall go further, and be much, ever so much, more drastic?

If once the election of Bishops become popular in the true

sense of the word, *i.e.*, by clergy and laity voting by orders, as in the Canadian and other Colonial Churches, the nominee of the Crown, as such, the son or the son-in-law of some noble family, or the friend of some member of the Cabinet, as such, will disappear from the Bench. A very different sort of man will take his place, and the large episcopal income (yes, still large, in spite of its being much less than it was forty years back) will disappear too. Some believe that we are within measurable distance of the pooling of all ecclesiastical funds, and of a redistribution of those funds on such lines as will enable one of the most urgently needed reforms to be effected. I mean the establishment of a general pension scheme, and the enforced retirement at a certain age of all clergy, even Bishops and Deans, from posts which the average man of that age cannot be expected properly to fill. In some directions we shall lose, doubtless; but the gain all round will be immense.

It is the custom to congratulate dignitaries of the Church, who have been spared by Providence to an extreme old age, on the ground of their having continued in palace, or stall, or rectory long after the strength (mental and physical) to work has left them. The plain truth very often is that they have been an incubus on the Church, and ought to have resigned long years ago. In that particular part of the Church's system circulation has ceased and mortification has set in. The sooner some very drastic change is inaugurated the better; but I do not see how it can be without a pension scheme, and I do not see how that can be without a general pooling and redistribution of the Church revenues.

But to come to the priest and deacon, as such. There is a widespread complaint that the supply of these is inadequate to the need, and it is out of this complaint that the demand for this paper arose. Well, in the suggestions, daring and radical as they may appear, which I have already offered, one remedy for the need will be found. For it is undoubted that the poor pay of the clergy stops the supply. At the outset, indeed, the clergy are not badly paid nowadays. When I was ordained

deacon, I was offered but £90 a year. When I want a curate now, I cannot get one under double that sum, and the expenses of living are less than they were. After a while, when the curate is past middle age, such an income as £180, or even £200, is far too small; but my experience tells me that a man in full Orders, of unblemished fame, and anything like preaching power, does not remain a curate. I have had fourteen curates, and of them all not one is now unbeneficed, save by his own act and deed. I grant that in some cases the benefice is poor and the work very trying. Once beneficed, many and many a man, and a good man, too, is shelved. Patrons, episcopal and others (Evangelical trustees are as great sinners in this respect as anybody else), appear to think that, once beneficed, a man and his parish may be left without further thought. There is no such revision of cures and incumbents as circumstances demand. Many a man is fit for a certain parish to-day who will be quite unfit for it in ten or fifteen years. My point is that, generally speaking, curates who are fit for promotion get it. There are exceptions, of course; but the neglect of patrons to promote suitable and deserving men weighs at least as heavily on the beneficed as on the unbeneficed clergy. And the poverty of livings is so great as to make many of them starvings, and to prevent the entry into the ministry of suitable men.

One difficulty in the way of supply has not yet attracted the attention it deserves. The clergy of the Church of England are generally supposed to be "gentlemen" and "University" men. Some of the very best and ablest have, it must be gladly acknowledged, been, originally, neither. I use the word "gentlemen" in a limited sense, in a sense which Thackeray would call snobbish, and I apologize for using it; but it expresses what I mean.

Now this sort of man springs from the upper and middle classes, from the classes which fill our great schools and our Universities; and these classes are threatened with extinction. The birth-rate in Great Britain has fallen in the quarter of a

century 1876 to 1901 from 37 to 26 per 1,000, and since 1901 the rate of declension has become accelerated. Now these figures relate to just those classes from which the clergy used to be most largely recruited. The lower classes are still fairly fruitful, a fact which intensifies the force of the figures I give.

I have been investigating the history of certain families known to myself, and taken quite haphazard. I give them :

A, let us call him, born in 1804, had 11 children ; those 11 have had 52 ; those 52, 32.

B, born in 1804, had 10 children ; those 10 have had 32 ; those 32, 25.

C, born in 1815, had 11 children ; those 11 had 6.

D, born in 1840, had 8 children ; those 8 have none.

C, born in 1840, had 7 children ; those 7 have none.

Now, it is small wonder that the supply of clergy should be lessening when the class from which they were drawn some thirty or forty years ago is lessening at such an appalling rate.

There are, of course, other and very serious causes of the shortage of men. One is the great divergence between the various schools of thought. A thoughtful graduate upon whom is urged the grandeur and loftiness of the ministerial calling will be justified in asking, What Gospel do you expect me to preach ? And until that question can be answered he is justified in hesitating. If he go into one diocese, he will be given books with a strongly Roman bias upon which to be examined ; if into another, he may satisfy his examiners although he deny the Fall and the Atonement and the Virgin Birth. I am perfectly sure that, had I answered the questions put to me at my ordination as at least half a dozen Bishops on the Bench to-day would have me answer them, I should have been refused ordination. And I could not urge any son of mine to take Orders if I thought that he would come under such influence as might lead him to adopt the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or to deny the Resurrection of our Lord.

Another, and a very serious, cause of the shortage of men is the decay of vital religion, as evidenced by the neglect of Church

ordinances and of Sunday observance. I spoke just now of drastic and speedy change ; but the change that has come over England, and Scotland too, and all the world for that matter, in the matter of Sunday observance and Church-going beats anything that I have ever seen for depth and for speed. And when our young men are accustomed, as they are already accustomed, to seeing Sunday spent in games and dissipation, and Churches empty, they must, in the nature of things, soon lose all reverence for a ministry so generally neglected, and all desire to enter a profession so widely discredited.

I would here again refer to the question of class, and ask whether we are to recruit our clerical ranks from what may roughly be called the lower class? I have no hesitation in saying that, provided you get a man taught of God, and with mental equipment to understand and to preach the truth of the Gospel, you ought to welcome him, no matter what his origin.

There are Bishops, Canons, Rectors, Vicars, curates to-day who come from very humble homes, and who do such work as to stop the mouths of all objectors against their elevation. In the Church of God, and in its ministry, the question of class ought really never to be raised. What you do with men of the "lower" class, and how you train them, is a question of vital importance. The younger they are when caught and put into training, the more you will get ; and, to judge by experience, the poorer the material you will turn out. To begin a ministerial training, *ad hoc*, under the age of twenty or twenty-one will be I feel convinced, to make a huge mistake. I would sooner have a man fresh from the plough-tail or the smith's forge, or the shop, than from a seminary.

The location of men ought also, of course, to be fixed with due regard to their fitness for the special work to be done. A. may do splendid work in one parish, who would certainly be utterly unfit for another. There are whole districts, *e.g.*, where it would be no bar to a man's usefulness that he should be bothered with his "h's," or should have a strong local accent or brogue ; whereas in other places such peculiarities would prove

an insuperable obstacle to his acceptance. Yet in the case of a true heaven-born evangelist all such disqualifications seem to vanish. I have heard it said of the greatest preacher of our generation that education would have spoiled him. And listening on one occasion to three men speaking from the same pulpit one after the other, Dr. Parker, Mr. Gladstone, and Ned Wright—I was really moved only by the last-named.

I come now to the use of the laity. It is evident to all men diligently observing the signs of the times that the Church of England has not used her lay members to anything like the extent that the Free Churches have used theirs. I can never forget the racy retort of Bishop Thorold to an appeal made to him that he should license more laymen to preach. "You must not forget," said he, "that if there be one class of men who preach worse than do the clergy, it is the laity." But there are plenty of laymen who can speak well, as there are certainly plenty of us clergymen who cannot preach at all. Well, let the Church spread her net to catch every layman in whom the Spirit of God is who evinces any power of utterance. I am not prepared to say that all who may preach should necessarily have the Bishop's licence. Bishops do not license our day-school and Sunday-school teachers, nor even our superintendents; and yet to these is entrusted the solemn responsibility of teaching the young and feeding the lambs of the flock. Why should not I, to whom is entrusted the cure of souls, be authorized to invite my Sunday-school superintendent, or my warden, to address my people? In many and many a station in India, in many and many a settlement in the Bush and on the prairie, a layman gathers his own family and a few neighbours, and reads to them the Service and the Lessons, and even a sermon, and all to their great profit. Why should this be fitting and proper in India, Canada, Australia, South Africa, on board ship, and not in England? If you can induce laymen to seek and accept a lay-reader's licence, well and good, nay, very good. In that case I would not necessarily hang any glittering badge round his neck, but I would fain see him used for other

ministries, say, for help in the administration at Holy Communion. There is a demand nowadays for the words of administration to be said to each communicant (a demand often quite unreasonable, to my mind, productive not seldom of irreverence, and opposed to the spirit of those *verba institutionis* of the Master's, "Drink ye all of this"); if this demand is to be met, with the inadequate supply of ordained men, why, in the name of all that is reverent and holy and sensible, should not a layman be allowed to assist the ordained minister, and to hand the cup and to speak the words to the communicants? Could the Bishops be induced to allow this, and I have no manner of doubt that in doing so they would be acting in accordance with the use of the Primitive Church, a relief would be afforded us which would be nothing short of immense. The difficulties experienced by many of us at Easter, and Whitsun, and Christmas, and other times, when the number of our communicants goes into the hundreds, are now greater than we can bear.

This paper has already gone to quite an inordinate length, but to one point more I must refer, and that is to the use to be made of the immense stores of pulpit wealth to be found in printed sermons. These I reckon as a most valuable ministerial agency, and to these I would direct the attention of clergy and laity alike, and urge them to use them without hesitation and without shame. Such use will not dull, but rather quicken, the expository and didactic powers. It will encourage thought and effort, rather than laziness and neglect. It makes me angry to hear, as I frequently do, of a young man, lately ordained, having to preach once, twice, and even three times a week (it is a cruelty, and nothing less, to set him such a task), and to hear him refuse to preach anything but sermons of his "own composition," when all around him, in every book-shop, and on every bookstall, there are hundreds of excellent discourses to be had for a few pence, and to be made his own by diligent study and careful preparation. What is his duty? Is it not to give his flock the best spiritual food possible? Let him candidly tell his vicar, and all whom it may concern, what he does; let him be ready

to tell anyone who thanks him for his sermon and its help the source whence he drew. Let him thank God for the instruction and help given himself in such use of another man's words, but let him not be ashamed of his conduct. If to use another's thought is plagiarism, who is not a plagiarist? I have been forty-five years in the ministry, and I have no hesitation in preaching a sermon of Dr. Vaughan's, or James Vaughan's (of Brighton), or of Adolphe Monod's, or of Eugène Bersier's, or of Phillips Brooks's, or of McLaren's, or of Samuel Cox's, or of Bushnell's, or of Liddon's, or of my old vicar's (N. A. Garland), nor in telling my people that I do so. All these ministers of the Gospel are "mine," even as Paul, Apollos, and Cephas are mine; and I claim it as at once my right, my privilege, and my duty to use them. My aim is not to get nor to keep my reputation as a preacher of original sermons, but to preach the everlasting Gospel and to save and edify souls.

Emerson, in one of his essays, deals with the charge brought against Shakespeare that many of his plots are not original. So much credit to Shakespeare, he argues, that he knew a good thing when he saw it; so much the better for the original writer that Shakespeare has made his work immortal. Few people care for reading sermons, and many profound sermons are, as printed, not very readable. But let a man with wits and spiritual apprehension take those very sermons, and make them his own by diligent preparation, reading them over and over again until he gets the swing of the sentences, and appropriate the very marrow of the thing, and is able to *preach*, not merely read them, without "keeping his nose in the nosebag," and hundreds will listen with delight and profit to what, but for the preacher's effort, had remained dead and buried within the coffin of the binding and the sepulchre of the bookshelf.

Let my last word be an earnest appeal to all to remember that no mistake has done more harm to the Church of Christ than the erection of the ministry into a priestly caste, nor has any robbery been more audacious than the claim of the priestly caste to a monopoly of prophesying. When I read in Blunt's

“ Duties of a Parish Priest ” that it is the clergy alone that are meant by the “ spiritual ” persons of Gal. vi. 1, or when I read in the proper preface for Whit Sunday that the Holy Ghost came down from heaven and lighted on the Apostles, I like to read again the most true promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask ; and the declaration of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, that the prophecy of Joel is fulfilled in the Church of this dispensation : “ Behold I send my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” We cannot afford to give up that blessed inheritance to the clergy.

Some time ago some stained-glass windows were put up in the church of which I am incumbent. The artist designed one for “ The Day of Pentecost,” and managed to introduce twelve Apostles, each with his nimbus. I asked him to introduce others, not Apostles ; he declared there was no room for more. I insisted on my point : “ Let some of the Apostles go. No one doubts their being endowed with the Spirit. But a layman I must have ; a woman I must have ; children I must have.” And there they are, in a storied window which proclaims the truth, and the whole truth.



## Hints on the Use of the Voice.

BY THE REV. CANON GIRDLESTONE, M.A.

### II. ARTICULATION AND READING.

**I**T is evident that the tongue, the lips, the teeth, and the palate, are the main factors of articulate speech. All of them are under the control of muscles which work almost automatically, but which constantly need training and correction, owing to our tendency to mumble and slur over our consonants,