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THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1921

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The
Outlook.

FOR most of us the holiday season is ended, and we have to face the work and responsibilities of the winter. It is impossible to do so without some measure of quite natural anxiety, for whichever way we look the situation is nowhere clear, and in some directions the clouds are black and heavy. Industrially the outlook is menacing, for if, during the summer months, unemployment and the distress arising therefrom have been disastrously and dangerously great, what, it may well be asked, will be the position during the coming winter? A Government Committee is sitting and some palliative may, and, we hope, will be found, but it is difficult to see how the position for those who, like the parochial clergy, come daily into touch with the lives of the people, can be otherwise than supremely difficult and anxious. In social and moral affairs it cannot be said that the atmosphere is at all clear. The summer season has revealed, perhaps more strongly than before, the passion for pleasure, amusement and gaiety which has taken possession of the masses of the people. The utter disregard of the religious obligations of the Lord's Day has been a marked feature of life at our seaside resorts; and in places where the good sense of the Municipal authorities has imposed certain reasonable restrictions, agitations are on foot for the removal of the limitations. More serious still is the extension of the drinking hours both on weekdays and on Sundays, which is bound to cause mischief and put fresh obstacles in the way of those who are working for the moral and spiritual uplift of the people. And when we turn to the religious life of the country there is much in the outlook to perplex and sadden. The attendance at Divine Service is not what it ought to be, and, we are afraid, not what it was even a few years ago. What

a jeremiad ! we seem to hear some readers say. But it is not so. We are not pessimistic ; we only desire to face facts, however unpleasant they may be, for so alone can the remedy be found ; and we believe there are signs, clear and unmistakable, that Christian people are coming to realize that the state of the country, in its industrial, social and religious aspects, places upon them a responsibility for larger, keener and more devoted service in the cause of their Divine Master than they have yet put forth. In this is our hope ; and we pray God that His people may face the future in His strength, knowing that the Lord reigneth, and determined to do all they can to bring men and women to the acknowledgment of Him in Whose hands are all their ways. When we find a popular novelist writing in trenchant terms, " England must find time for God " we may be sure there is a cause. And each sincere Christian is bound for himself and herself to face the challenge, " Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this ? " The greatness of our country's need is the measure of our opportunity and of our responsibility.

In this connexion we desire to give special prominence to the proposal of " A London Incumbent," who, we happen to know, is a particularly close observer of the signs of the times, that there should be " a great evangelistic campaign in every Evangelical parish." His proposal was launched in the columns of the *Record* as far back as July 28, and every week since that date letters have appeared in that journal witnessing to the widespread interest the proposal has aroused and to the growing feeling that the time has come for a great forward movement on the part of all sections of Evangelical Churchpeople. It has, however, been questioned in some quarters whether " our unhappy divisions " do not militate against unity of effort, but the objection was to some extent anticipated by " A London Incumbent," who in his first letter wrote that on the great fundamentals of the faith " there is no division among us."

" Is it beyond the power of those who stand for Evangelical truth," he continued, " to summon a preliminary conference of prominent clergy and laity to act as the initial body that will form a strong central committee, who will frame the programme for a larger Conference when a lead can be given after prayer

and consultation for a venture of faith and hope? I suggest that the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, the National Church League, and the Church Parochial Mission should combine and summon the preliminary gathering in London. All sections of Evangelicals should be represented, and I have not the slightest doubt as to the result of a few hours spent in prayer and friendly conference. We live in days of rapid change. Christianity is at the cross-roads, and unless Evangelicalism proves its fitness to do its Master's work and its readiness to take occasion by the helm, I fear its candlestick will be removed from the Church of England and be placed elsewhere. It has the truth, it has the faith that moves mountains. Is it going to be weighed in the balance and found wanting through lack of cohesive energy and sacrificial belief in its principles? "

The suggestion, as we have said, has been remarkably well received. The Church Parochial Mission Society, in the person of its revered Superintendent, Canon Hay Aitken, and its Secretary, the Rev. D. E. Davies, has heartily endorsed the appeal; the National Church League, in its official organ, *The Church Gazette*, has promised full support to such a movement; and it can hardly be doubted that the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, which, two years ago, organized and carried through a splendid series of Evangelistic Conferences, will, as soon as its Committee meets, be ready to take action. The prospect of such a Conference being called at an early date is, therefore, extremely hopeful, and we feel no manner of doubt that when once a number of good men get together and unitedly in prayer seek the inspiration, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, they will be led, whatever may be their surface differences, to hear the call and to make response. Bishop Ingham, with that wisdom and foresight which ever distinguish his actions, suggests that "it is not enough to convene a conference of our most trusted Societies to arrange for a General Mission in Evangelical parishes. We want a preliminary conference to ascertain where we stand." "Let us," he continued, "who belong to the old conservative school meet together somehow, somewhere, soon, to examine this apathy of which 'A London Incumbent,' justly complains, and find out the reason why. Let us wait upon God. Let us (both clergy and laity) take counsel with one another. Let us remember that our cause is God's cause, that we are His servants, that He has promised His guidance, and has, moreover, in His Word told us, beforehand, some of the features that are actually causing alarm at this time." In

thus insisting upon the necessity for clearness and definiteness in the message delivered, the Bishop has done good service, for "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"; and it is most encouraging to find in letter after letter the strongest possible insistence upon absolute loyalty to fundamental truth. Mr. Arthur W. Sutton, in another letter in the *Record* of September 15, put the whole matter in a nutshell when he wrote: "With the Word of God as our all-sufficient authority we have an Evangel to take to men, but if we presume to limit or to detract from the authority either of the Divine Christ, or of the Bible, which has proved itself to be the Word of God, we have nothing to offer but the imaginings of our own finite and fallible minds." We are perfectly sure that the heart's desire of those who are supporting this movement is that the message to be proclaimed shall be that and only that which the Lord Himself shall give. We shall watch, as we are sure our readers will watch, the development of the proposal for an evangelistic campaign with the utmost sympathy, and we ask that continuous prayer may be offered that every step taken, whether in a preliminary conference or in the larger assembly, may be according to the Divine will.

To turn now to other matters, the three months **Councils and their Powers.** which have elapsed since our last issue have been very full of events of interest and importance to Church-people. First may be noted the passing through Parliament of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure, to which has been given the Royal Assent. It is of the utmost importance that this Measure, which confers very large powers of self-government upon Parochial Church Councils, should be thoroughly understood and loyally and heartily worked in every parish in the country. In order to help clergy and other councillors in the right interpretation of the Measure the Church Book Room has published a handbook, written and compiled by Mr. Albert Mitchell, which we regard as practically indispensable to the successful working of the Councils. Points of difficulty and doubt under the Measure are bound to arise, and unless they are wisely and rightfully handled may easily cause friction. But with Mr. Albert Mitchell's handbook available the strangest problems will be easily solved. We strongly urge every Parochial Church Councillor to purchase a copy—it will

be money well spent. It has this further advantage that it is not merely a legal handbook, but is written with the religious and spiritual responsibilities of Parochial Church Councils fully in view and its tone is admirable. It may be obtained at the Church Book Room (6 Grosvenor Mansions, 82 Victoria Street, S.W.1), price 1s.

When a Benefice is Vacant. A "Further Powers" Measure was under discussion at the July session of the National Church Assembly and practically passed all its stages. This relates to two matters of great moment—the powers of the Council (1) on the appointment of a new Incumbent, and (2) in regard to changes in the conduct of Divine service. These "powers" were included in the original Measure, but being regarded as highly controversial were deferred and ordered to be embodied in a separate Measure, which was discussed in July. It was debated very fully, and all views were represented. In regard to the voice of the Council on the appointment of a new Incumbent there was an overwhelming feeling in favour of the clause more or less as it stood, although some weighty opinions were expressed against it, and these by no means from all of one school of thought. It can hardly be questioned that the clause does impose a new disability upon the clergy, but it was strongly felt that in practice it would cause no real hardship, while the advantage it would confer upon the parish of preventing an unfit appointment was very great. We all of us know parishes to which unfit men—not by reason of any defect in their moral character, but unsuitable to the particular position—have been appointed to the great detriment and hindrance of the Church's work. There is no power under the present law to stop the square man being jammed into the round hole, but under the new Measure it will be possible for the Parochial Church Council to make objection and for the Bishop to refuse to institute. Of course the powers thus conferred will have to be used with the greatest care in order to be sure that no injustice is done, but with that proviso it must be abundantly clear that the clause does effect a very real and much-needed improvement in the exercise of Church patronage. The clause was amended and amplified in several particulars and passed by the Assembly as follows:—

Every Council shall have power to make representations in writing to the patron of the benefice within twenty-eight days of

the voidance of such benefice, or of notice of the expected voidance sent by the patron to the Secretary of the Council, with regard to the exercise of his power of presentation thereto, and the patron shall not exercise his power of presentation thereto until such a period has elapsed, provided that in reckoning the date for lapse such period of twenty-eight days shall not be counted, but the Council shall not suggest the appointment of any individual by name.

The notice required to be served on the churchwardens of a parish by Section 2 (2) of the Benefices Act, 1898, shall be served also on the Secretary of the Council, and within fourteen days from the service of any such notice the Council shall have power to petition the Bishop to refuse to collate, institute, or admit any person proposed to be collated, instituted, or admitted by him. Upon receiving any such petition the Bishop shall be entitled, after consulting a permanent Board of Assessors to be constituted for that purpose by the Diocesan Conference, to refuse to collate, institute, or admit such person if he thinks fit, irrespective of any other power of refusal which he may possess by statute or otherwise. Provided that, when objection has been made on grounds affecting the moral character of a clerk, the Bishop shall take no action until an opportunity has been afforded the clerk of making such answer as he may think fit to the accusations made against him. In reckoning the date for lapse no account shall be taken of the period between the first presentation by the patron and any refusal by the Bishop to collate, institute, or admit a presentee of the patron under the powers conferred by this section.

The underlying principle of the clause is that the interests of the parish are the first consideration, and from this point of view it will be received, especially by the laity, with warm approval.

The result of the discussion on the other clause **Changes in the Services.** in the Further Powers Measure—that relating to changes in the services—was much less satisfactory. As originally drawn the clause ran as follows:—“Nothing in this measure or in the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure, 1921, shall affect the rights, liabilities or duties of the Incumbent in respect of the Church or the services or public worship therein or of the churchyard or of any property belonging to the benefice. Provided that the Incumbent shall from time to time consult with the Council concerning the services of the Church, and particularly concerning any important changes which he may propose to make in such services. And if, after such consultation, the Council shall be opposed to any such change, they shall have the right to make

representations to the Bishop in respect thereof." We thought at the time, and we still think, that if the clause had been passed in that form it would have effected a very real reform. The first part of it was passed practically without debate, but when the second part was reached there was a storm of opposition from those who hold—quite wrongly as we think—that the laity have nothing to do with the conduct of Divine Service. The opposition was, in our view, both unreasoning and unreasonable. Sufficient attention was not paid to the importance of the word "consult," which was inserted, we understand, by the Committee responsible for the Measure, after a long and anxious discussion, in order to emphasize the principle of "co-operation" which was made a cardinal principle in the first Powers Measure. The final decision of the Assembly was taken hurriedly, and if the discussion could have been deferred to the following day, it is possible the result might have been different. An amendment, moved by Lord Hugh Cecil, which to the amazement of many was accepted by Lord Parmoor and the members in charge of the Measure, was finally adopted by the Assembly not unanimously, but by a considerable majority. The whole of the words of the second part of the clause as drafted were cut out and the following words substituted:—"Provided that nothing in this measure shall hinder the Council from making representations to the Bishop in respect to the services in church by exercising the power conferred upon the Council by subsection 5 of Section 6 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure of 1921." We regard the rejection of the original proposal as disastrous. The amendment gives to the laity no more power than they at present possess—the power of writing a letter to the Bishop. The Assembly has, in fact, ruled that they have no right to a voice in the conduct of Divine Service, but the Incumbent who asks for the "co-operation" of the laity in the extension of church work both within and without the parish will be a very foolish person if he neglect to take them into consultation in regard to any changes he may desire to make in the conduct of Divine Service.

The Anglo-Catholic Position. It may fairly be questioned whether the Anglo-Catholics have improved their position by the Priests' Convention which was held recently at Oxford. The discussions showed the existence of a deep cleavage between the

newer and the older members of the School. It is now obvious that there is a powerful and representative section of the party which is frankly Roman, and it will not have escaped notice that it was at the *official* service that the Mass of the Holy Spirit was sung, and the Roman rite followed. The existence in our midst of a party with avowedly Roman aims is a source of weakness to the Church, and the question must soon be faced whether it is right that they should be allowed to pursue their way unchecked. It is all too obvious that there is a growing tendency to disregard the plain intentions of the Book of Common Prayer, and to substitute for it the Roman rite, or at least to supplement it by the use of large sections of the Roman Missal. Now this is a practice which is fundamentally disloyal to the Church of England, whose priests they are, and whose bread they eat. It cannot be defended, and the best men in the party do not attempt to defend it, or excuse it. Indeed, one of the speakers at the Convention expressed a doubt whether the practice of celebrating without the minimum number of communicants to communicate with the priest could be squared with their "pledged word." Of course it cannot be; and yet there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of priests who thus violate their ordination vows. The real fact is that there is no room in the Church of England for these semi-Romanists, and we hope the time is not far distant when they, or a large proportion of them, will realize the fact, and act accordingly. We do not question the religious sincerity of these men; indeed there was a tone, an atmosphere, about some of the proceedings of the Convention which showed that there is a deep longing in the hearts of many for a deeper realization of the things of the Spirit. But spirituality of heart and mind affects conduct and character; does it not, therefore, involve the strict observance of vows, and the honest, whole-hearted fulfilment of the obligations of the "pledged word"? This is an aspect of the matter to which Anglo-Catholic priests might well give serious attention. We note, also, that the Convention engaged to undertake "a great evangelistic campaign"; and in so far as it is intended to be as described, an effort to seek "the conversion of men, women and children to a living faith in, and devotion to, the Person of our Lord," Evangelical Churchmen will watch its development with sympathy and interest. But what is to be the relation of this effort to the Catholic position? We

dissent absolutely from the view of the *Church Times* that "if any one became a Catholic he is necessarily a Christian"; we are much more in agreement with the delegate from America who, speaking at the Convention, said that "some priests were so eager to make Catholics that they overlooked the need of making Christians." The terms "Catholic" and "Christian" are not interchangeable, any more than are the words "Protestant" and "Christian." The man who possesses "a living faith in and devotion to the Person of our Lord" is a Christian whatever label he bears; and there is a great necessity laid upon the Churches at this time to endeavour to make men, women and children "Christian" in this sense. God give us all the grace and the power to go forth in His name and strength thus to evangelize our own people and the peoples overseas.

The number of the *Modern Churchman* containing the full text of the papers read at the Conference of Modern Churchmen at Cambridge reaches us too late for detailed criticism, but a hasty glance at its contents convinces us that many of the anxieties and fears which were engendered by the newspaper reports of the Conference are entirely without foundation. There is much in the Dean of Carlisle's paper with which we do not agree, but there is no reason to believe that in the argument he used there was any intentional derogation from the Deity of our Lord. Indeed, the Dean himself has told us through the columns of the *Guardian* that he sees no distinction between "Divinity" and "Deity." This is a great gain, for there are some "Modernists" who use the term "Divinity" in a sense differing little, if at all, from the way in which Socinians use it. There were some papers read at the Conference which by no stretch of charity could be regarded as Christian in the commonly accepted meaning of the word, but these were excrescences and were as stoutly resisted by other members of the Conference as they would be by the most orthodox believers outside its borders. Nor must we omit to notice the reverent devotional tone which pervaded the Conference. There was unquestionably a desire to come into personal spiritual touch with the things of God; and for ourselves we see in this fact solid ground for hope. But we feel bound to say that Conferences such as this should not be open to ordinary reporters of the secular

press. They have not the training to enable them to know the true bearing of deep theological discussions ; they seize upon one point and give it prominence, without reference to the other part of the paper, whereas a proper understanding of the context would probably put a totally different interpretation upon it. These incomplete or garbled reports work much mischief ; and the discussions which followed the accounts the daily papers gave of the Cambridge Conference showed that the simple Christian faith of some weak souls was seriously disturbed by what was reported to have been said there. It is a very grave matter to cause offence to, or to put a stumbling-block in the way of, any of " those little ones who believe " in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and, if these speculative theological problems must be discussed, we beg those who are responsible to take the utmost care that no word of their own doubts, difficulties and disputations shall reach those who rest their souls upon the simple faith of Christ. And the same word may be passed on to parochial clergy. These problems raised by Modernists should, as far as possible, be left out of the pulpit. Our congregations are composed of men and women who are hungering for the Bread of Life, and if, instead, they are given the stones of Criticism, their souls are not merely unsatisfied, but receive positive harm. The message from the pew to the pulpit is, " Sir, we would see Jesus," and the preacher who can present Him in all the glory of His redeeming love is the one who is best fulfilling the purpose of his ministry, which is to win souls.

