

ART. XII.—THE SESSION.

THE Parliamentary Session of 1879 was, in many respects, disappointing, and it was unusually barren of results. Much time was consumed in debates on Turkey, Afghanistan, and South Africa; and Indian affairs, happily, had a large share of attention. Lord Shaftesbury's appeal in the House of Lords for the protection of women and children in the cotton factories of India was not made in vain. The Ministerial majority remains unimpaired; and the divisions on the Liberal side of the House of Commons have been patent. That several useful measures were sacrificed is due, in no small degree, to the obstructive tactics of the Home Rulers. The Army Discipline Bill occupied the attention of the Lower House for two hundred hours. At the close of the Session, the Irish University Bill was passed, almost without opposition. Mr. Gladstone, and several ex-Ministers, had voted with Mr. Shaw, the Home Rule leader, on his denominational amendment, but "a strong contingent of the independent members of the Opposition" supported the Government. Another "grievance" was redressed. For the teachers of the Irish National Schools aid was provided in the way of pensions from the surplus funds of the Church of Ireland. Mr. Marten's Burials Act is, at all events, a step in the right direction. It proceeds on the lines of Mr. Home Secretary Cross's practical speech, and it is not unlikely to become widely useful. The circular of the Local Government Board, explaining the provisions of the Act, with other information, is published as a pamphlet by the Church Defence Institution. The chief official of the so-called "Liberation Society" has displayed a concern for the fees of the clergy which is rather amusing.

The proceedings in the Convocation of Canterbury, in the Upper House, at least, were both interesting and important. The Ornaments Rubric was the main point of debate. On June 25th the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol brought before the House a new rubric, as follows:—

The minister at all times of his ministration shall wear a surplice with a stole or scarf, and the hood of his degree, until it shall be otherwise ordered by a canon of the Church, lawfully enacted, promulgated, and executed; provided always that this rubric shall not be understood to repeal the 24th and 58th of the canons of the year 1604.

This rubric, the Archbishop stated, had been carried in the Committee by the majority of from 10 to 5. Priests and deacons are by it expressly precluded from any other vesture than the surplice in their ministrations. Preaching, obviously, was not

understood to be included. After considerable discussion this rubric, slightly changed, was carried *nem. dis.* The Lower House, however, by "a triumphant majority," 68 to 13, rejected it. After further discussion, there was a Conference of the two Houses; and finally another rubric was agreed upon, allowing surplice, stole or scarf, hood, and gown, but providing that "no other ornament" shall be used *contrary to the monition of the Bishop*. The Lower House phrase had been, "*without the consent of the Bishop.*" Practically, between the two phrases, there is little difference. The compromise unquestionably sanctions the introduction and use of Eucharistic vestments when the Bishop does not interpose a veto. The new rubric is objectionable also in regard to the existing "Ornaments Rubric." Letters from Canons Ryle and Clayton, Professor Birks, Dean Close, and other representative Churchmen, were published at the time protesting against the new rubric. The venerable Dean wrote (*Record*, July 28th) in the following terms:—

Aiming at an apparent reconciliation of contending parties, it not only misses its mark, but if carried into law would intensify every existing dissension. With Canon Ryle I believe that such an act of frivolous and mischievous legislation never could pass successfully through those "convocations" of English common sense and British independence, the noble Houses of Lords and Commons. My hope for the Established Church, as far as human support is concerned, has long rested only on its lay element, and the experience of each recurring act from other quarters confirms the truth of my impressions.

So far as concerns the Convocation of the Northern Province the matter is left in *statu quo*. The speeches of the Bishop of Durham on Ritual and on the Athanasian Creed were worthy of the reputation of that profound scholar. In the York Convocation, the importance of which is increasing yearly, Dr. Lightfoot will do good service.

The anti-Intemperance Movement is evidently making progress. Many signs, here and there, throughout the country, show clearly that the Church of England Temperance Society has been gaining influence. The Coffee House movement has been aided by the speeches of the Lord Chancellor and other distinguished personages.

To Sunday Schools attention has been recently drawn, in several ways; and their importance is becoming more and more recognised. The action of the Birmingham School Board concerning the teaching of morality has tended in no small degree to show the necessity of religious teaching in day-schools.