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The Month.

THE issue of the *Year-Book of the Church* has enabled Churchmen to take stock once more of their Church's affairs. It can hardly be said, however, that they have shown any conspicuous eagerness to do it. The returns are not satisfactory, and so they have had very little said about them. Perhaps, however, the comments have suggested more than those of any previous year a conviction that all is not well; and, in truth, the figures lend only too much support to such apprehensions. Let us take finance first, and consider the statement of the voluntary contributions of Churchmen for the year 1900, or from Easter, 1900, to Easter, 1901. The contributions reach a grand total of £7,778,134, which shows a slight increase of £8,000 on the total for Easter, 1900. The totals contributed to central or diocesan agencies and administered by them exhibit a slight advance of £10,000 under the general head of Home Missions. Here the advance is due to increased receipts for General Home Mission Societies, Missions to Soldiers and Sailors, and temperance work. Bishops' Funds, Church Extension Societies, and Universities and Public School Missions have all received less than last year. Bishops' Funds fall from £106,836 to £89,601. The advance in the contributions for Home Missions is not accompanied by progress in the receipts for Foreign Missions; their total is £824,037, as against £831,093 for the preceding year. Under educational work, we find that the sum spent on the diocesan inspection and support of training colleges is £50,080, which is exactly £8,000 more than that for the preceding year; but Societies for the Circulation of Literature and other agencies have only received £78,296, as against £90,672. Under the head of "the clergy, educational, and charitable assistance," the total this year is £168,797; last year it was £180,515, and the year before it was £197,195. The total for philanthropic work, which last year rose from £428,273 to £522,829, stands this year at £505,040. Coming to funds locally raised and administered by the clergy for parochial purposes, the total for the parochial clergy is higher; but whilst there is a slight drop in the local contributions for the maintenance of assistant clergy, there is an advance of about £6,000 in Church collections and Easter offerings to subsidize clerical incomes. Annual contributions towards the maintenance of elementary schools this year go up, and amount to £624,156. Last year they were £576,186, but the year before they were £578,877; whilst the two preceding totals were £684,364 and £715,463. The sum spent on school buildings is only £264,582; last year it was £282,542, and that showed a loss on the year preceding. The total shows that, whereas last year we raised parochially £1,119,760 for the schools, we have given in the year now accounted for £1,170,390. There is a rise in the sum obtained locally for the maintenance of Church services, etc.; a fall in the total amount given for the support of the poor; a drop under the miscellaneous heading "for any other purpose, religious or secular";

another serious drop in the contributions for the endowment of benefices, and a smaller loss on the contributions for parsonage houses. This, it will be agreed, is not a satisfactory return.

Nor is there much comfort in the figures which provide some test of the work of the Church. The Rev. Paul Petit has called attention in the press to the ordination statistics. He says: "The recent appearance of the 1902 edition of *The Official Year-Book of the Church of England* enables me to complete the following statement for the years 1896-98, and the three years 1899-1901:

1886-88 COMPARED WITH 1896-98.

Showing a Decline of 330 in the Three Years.

1886	...	...	814	1896	...	...	704
1887	...	...	771	1897	...	...	652
1888	...	...	739	1898	...	...	638
			2,324				1,994

THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

Showing a Decline of 388.

1889	...	...	777	1899	...	...	661
1890	...	...	746	1900	...	...	650
1891	...	...	745	1901	...	...	569
			2,268				1,880

It will be seen that, whereas in the years 1896-98 the annual admissions were on an average 110 less than in the three years 1886-88, the average admissions in the three years 1899-1901 were 129 below those of the three years 1889-91."

The Confirmations have a depressing story to tell. The totals for the ten years ending that now under consideration are as follows: 214,730, 219,671, 223,115, 214,484, 217,228, 228,348, 219,658, 217,045, 214,191, 195,673. Thus we have not only a serious loss on the total of ten years ago, but also a steady decline for the last five years. On the other hand, the total of communicants still grows, but it is only an "estimated" total. There has been a serious fall in the number of baptisms both of infants and adults. The total for infants, 572,962, is less than that of five years ago; the adults were 11,507, but they were 12,244 in the preceding year, and 11,605 ten years ago. Male and female communicants' classes show an advance for the year. The membership of guilds for the two sexes continues also to exhibit an advance. Male Bible-classes are nearly at the level of 1898-99; but the female membership, though above that of the preceding year, has thrice been exceeded in the last five years. The Sunday-school statistics give renewed cause for anxiety. The boys numbered 805,331. We must go back seven years to find so low a total. The girls also are fewer than last year by 10,030, but the infant scholars have increased. The decline in the number of male Sunday-school teachers is not serious, and female teachers show a very slight gain.

Temperance work, so far as it is witnessed to by the membership of societies, falls lower and lower. The adult abstaining members are 110,901; ten years ago they were 155,252. The non-abstaining section has 40,053 members, as against 46,137 ten years ago. The juveniles are 439,456, but in this case the high-water mark of 456,224 was reached in 1897-98. In lay help there is a slight advance in the male district visitors and a fall in the female district visitors. Lay readers, licensed and unlicensed, are lower. There is an increase in the number of paid deaconesses, and a loss in the unpaid deaconesses; the paid sisters are as many as last year, but the voluntary sisters are fewer. Paid mission-women show a decided advance, and unpaid mission-women a decided fall. Such is the position, and there is little comfort to be drawn from it.

Eccelesiastical attention during the month has been very largely centred on the new Education Bill. Apart from all details of its character and provisions stands the anxious question—whether it is or is not to be passed this year. Some words spoken by Mr. Balfour have raised in many quarters a belief that the Government, sensible of the difficulties before them, have made up their minds that an autumn Session has already become inevitable. The resort to such an expedient is, of course, unpopular in many circles. Ministers do not like it, for their labours are in any case severe enough without an autumn Session. Private Members do not like it, for it diminishes not only their holiday, but the time they can give to their own private affairs. Workers in municipal politics do not like it, for it means that Parliament may be sitting when the local elections are in full swing. But necessity knows no law, and unless the Government are to resign many of their chief projects the unpopular thing may have to be done. Now, education has been shelved too many times for it to be one of the subjects which can upon this occasion most readily be left over; no one, therefore, will be surprised if it should be announced that Parliament will be summoned in the autumn in order to pass the Education Bill. If, moreover, peace should ensue in South Africa, so many circumstances are likely to arise that there would be a great advantage in having Parliament at Westminster.

The opposition to the Bill took almost at once a curious turn. It did not give its attention very much to detail, but was content to argue that the Bill was an attack upon the religious liberty of the subject. This was set out in terms of such vigour that Nonconformists were urged to refuse payment of the education rate if the Bill were carried. At first Churchmen were disposed to regard this movement with no other feeling than charity—a simple confidence that the anger which prompted it would presently calm down, and give way to some show of argument. But this has been in no hurry to occur. The plea that Churchmen who violently dissented from the School Board system had, nevertheless, quietly paid the rate and supported their own schools at the same time had no effect, unless it was to increase the violence of the attack. It was urged that the principle of religious freedom would be destroyed if the secular instruction in the Church, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, British, and other Voluntary schools were at all paid for by the ratepayer. It was pointed out by a Churchman in the columns of the *Daily Mail* that religious freedom hardly lay in forbidding other people to have religious teaching if they wished it: “How can the name of religious freedom be invoked in favour of a policy which would deny to the majority of

children in our elementary schools some measure of instruction in the faith of their parents? Can you hope to persuade the average working man, who is a keen Churchman, or Roman Catholic, or Jew, that such a denial is consistent with religious freedom? A Methodist, a Baptist, a Plymouth Brother may be willing to resign his right. Very good; but is that a reason why the Churchman should do so also? Suppose that, for the sake of the minority of parents whose children are in Board schools, you forbid definite religious instruction to the children of the majority, would that entail peace?" But argument of any kind seemed only so much more fuel for the blaze. The real provisions of the Bill amidst all this hubbub have received comparatively little attention.

When the late Prebendary Tucker was secretary of the S.P.G., his references to the work of the C.M.S. were not always conceived in the most generous spirit, no doubt because he dissented seriously from some of the Society's methods. Bishop Montgomery, his successor, is full of the most cordial recognition of the C.M.S. and its work. But the change of tone has had a most curious result. It seems to have created in some anxious minds a fear that this cordiality may conceal Jesuitical designs upon the independence of the C.M.S.; indeed, there has been talk of the C.M.S. being "captured" by the S.P.G. We are quite sure that no such designs exist, and it is strange that suspicion should assume such an acute form just when, to the unconcealed dissatisfaction of extreme Anglicans, a far more moderate Churchman than Prebendary Tucker has been installed secretary of the S.P.G. We are equally sure that if such designs were anywhere cherished they would be unsuccessful. The revival of Protestant feeling amongst Evangelical and Moderate Churchmen has not left untouched so large a body of clergy and laity as those who, officially and unofficially, direct the policy of the C.M.S. from Salisbury Square. The Society's friends at large may be sure that its principles were never more carefully guarded than they are at present. We are unable to see any transgression of those principles in courteous relations either with the S.P.G. on one side, or the Nonconformist agencies on the other; nor do we think that participation by representatives of the C.M.S. in a diocesan missionary festival or in a missionary exhibition at which other societies are represented can be harmful to its position.

That the suspicions in question have not prevailed against a quiet and candid consideration of the facts may be inferred from the financial position of the Society. The expected deficit of £80,000 had been reduced when March 31 came to about £27,600. The latest figures available were as follows: The general income has been £254,603, and the appropriated contributions £62,747, to which must be added donations towards adverse balance of year 1900-01 £9,553. The total is £326,903, the largest ordinary annual income ever reached. Special funds have yielded £15,716, so that the grand total receipts are £342,619. The general payments have been £363,721 and the special fund payments £8,302, making the grand total payments £372,023. In order to show the actual position another set of figures must be added. The general income of the year has been £254,603, the expenditure £363,721. Of this there has been borne by appropriated receipts £82,722, and by contingency and centenary funds £1,721, reducing the charge on the general income to £279,278. Adding the adverse balance of year 1901-02, £24,675, and the remainder of the adverse balance of 1900-01 not wiped out by the special gifts for the purpose, viz., £2,928, we have a total adverse balance at March 31, 1902, of £27,603. These figures are subject

to audit, so that the position reported to the annual meeting may vary, although not greatly.

Canon Henson's proposals in regard to reunion or mutual recognition have received little encouragement from Nonconformists and scarcely more from Churchmen. But there are some signs that we are moving. Amongst them is the publication of the Murtle Lecture, delivered in the Mitchell Hall of Marischal College, Aberdeen, by the Bishop of Salisbury in February last.¹ The Bishop believes that the time is come for something more than words. He is not prepared to formulate practical proposals for reunion, but he thinks that a beginning might be made by some public declaration of agreement on certain fundamentals. In addition, he suggests that a book of instruction in Bible and Church history, with the elements of Christian doctrine, might be drawn up for common use in primary schools. Upon the crucial question of episcopacy the Bishop says :

"Could we not, then, many of us agree to acknowledge that some form of episcopacy is the normal constitution of the Christian ministry, but that the relation of the Bishop to the presbyterate is a matter of secondary importance, and one which each Church may regulate for itself? The only point I think absolutely necessarily involved in any recognition of the episcopate is that a Bishop, where there is one, must take the leading part in every ordination as the mouthpiece of the Church, though he need not act autocratically in the choice of the persons to be ordained. The Episcopal Church in the United States of America has a different rule from our own in this matter. As regards the general position, I do not say that it is clear that there never was a presbytery which did not ordain in collegiate fashion; but if there was so, it must have usually been, in my opinion, before the office of Bishop was developed in that place, and when Apostles or Apostolic men were still giving a general direction to the Church, or while the Holy Spirit still spake by the mouths of prophets to show whom He had chosen, as in the cases of Barnabas and Saul. There may also have been a later exception in the case of Alexandria, but if so, there the presbyters of the city were *ex hypothesi* ordained for the purpose of setting up one of their number as Bishop when a vacancy arose. The power was understood to be inherent in their commission, but we cannot argue from it that *all* presbyters have inherent power of ordination in the present day."

We are heartily glad to see a Bishop facing the really serious difficulties of the question, and we hope that Dr. Wordsworth will continue to keep the subject before the minds and consciences of English people.

¹ "The Murtle Lecture: The Bearing of the Study of Church History on some Problems of Home Reunion." London: Longmans and Co.

