

—if they were required to wear not ecclesiastical but a lay dress, there would not be that evil which would follow the adoption of Mr. Mackenzie's amendment.

After a few words from the Rev. W. M. MAYOR in opposition to the amendment,

The Rev. H. MACKENZIE said he might claim a reply, but he felt how important it was not to occupy more of the time of the house. He thought he could answer many of the objections, but he bowed to the opinion of the majority. If, therefore, they would permit him—not as changing his sentiment, but as bowing to the opinion of the majority—he should be happy to withdraw his amendment.

The amendment was then by leave withdrawn, and the paragraph was agreed to.

The house then adjourned till Friday morning, when the discussion was resumed, the house proceeding with paragraph 5.

Canon WOODGATE said—I never rose to address the house with greater reluctance and pain than upon the present occasion. I feel deeply the importance of the question at issue, and the responsibility which attaches to every word which may influence the result to which the house may arrive. But I feel at the same time the importance of viewing the subject in all its bearings, and in relation to the various consequences which are more or less involved in it; and one of these bearings, and one class of possible, not to say probable, consequences, has not been as yet adverted to in the course of the debate. I feel how true is what has been said, yet, at the same time, how inapplicable much of it is; at least, so I cannot but fear, in the present circumstances of the Church. Mr. Massingberd and others who have advocated the establishment of these Readers (and the report itself does the same) have urged, as a ground for its adoption, the fact that such a system was in operation immediately after the Reformation, as well as at an earlier period antecedent to it. But it must be borne in mind that there existed in those times an active principle of subordination, a strong principle of deference to the authority of the Church, as well as the absence of any great religious body to which any one who repudiated that authority could join himself, which prevents the practice of those days, so shielded, from being a safe precedent to a similar practice in these days, when no such safeguard exists. I would ask, what security have we that we shall not, by creating this large class of Readers, be establishing the nuclei of future Dissenting bodies, and sowing broadcast throughout the country the seeds of future division? I have had no practical experience personally of the system of Scripture-readers, as at present in operation in some dioceses; but those who have had such experience tell me that such a result is not uncommon. That these men gradually acquire an influence and a position among the people where they minister, very tempting to the natural self-love of men and the desire of distinction which animates most people; and that whenever any breach occurs between them and their employers, they step permanently into the position thus prepared for them, and take with them those whom their ministrations have not unnaturally attached to them. This could not have occurred in those former periods which have been referred to as precedents, because there was throughout the country a strong Church feeling, and a principle of deference to authority which is unknown among the masses in these days, and therefore those precedents do not apply. What is to prevent a similar result in the case now contemplated? Upon the occasion of dismissal, or any mutual separation, not only would there be wanting the feeling which would represent it

as a sin, but many things might occur to a Reader's conscience to make it appear a duty to continue his position as an independent teacher, and to retain his followers or flock around him. I earnestly pray that such may not be the case; but, reasoning from the known principles of human nature, it may be not unreasonably asked, what is to prevent it? You must consider the strong temptation to which such men are exposed. You propose to employ them in offices which, though they may satisfy the yearnings of many devoted minds anxious to promote the spiritual welfare of others, will not meet the natural desire of notoriety which must exist largely among the class which it is proposed to employ. You allow them to teach and catechise, and to perform the more unobtrusive and less conspicuous parts of the ministerial office; but you stop short at that point to which whatever ambition they possessed would naturally point. You would not allow them to preach. At this many minds in that class of life would chafe, and would be too glad to seize any opportunity which offered itself of throwing off that restraint. It is at this point that we should feel the loss of that old Church feeling and deference to ecclesiastical authority which existed when this plan of Readers was adopted with benefit to the Church, and without any corresponding danger. The case is widely different now. People in general little think how largely consideration of social position and personal importance enter into the question of Dissent. In the Church all men are equal; and those distinctions which the old pew system once created are fast dying out. There is little room for social distinctions in the Church. Not so in Dissenting bodies. There the wealthier members of the congregation are made much of. They have high places assigned them—a deference exacted from the Sunday-scholars—a presumed authority over the minister himself. I believe that in no one denomination or dissenters will it be found that more than one large social class exists at the same time. One class of tradesmen will be found to belong to the Wesleyan body, another to the Independents. Those of a higher grade who are found among them are there as individuals, taking a personal lead, but not clashing with the prejudices of classes. Those who form the denomination called Ranters are lower in the social scale, finding in their own sect the social position which would be denied them among the Wesleyans and Independents. And if even that large body who, it is now to be feared, seldom enter a place of worship—I mean our highly paid operatives—if even those should be brought to an active sense of religion without being won to the Church, it will be found that they will develop some new form of Dissent, deriving its characteristics in a great degree from from circumstances connected with their presumed social claims. With these secondary motives in such powerful and extensive operation, how great must be the temptation to one who has been acting in a subordinate position, influential, but far below what he considers that his qualifications entitle him to, to make some dispute or imaginary slight the occasion of separating himself from the Church, with a set of followers ready to accompany him. I feel most grievously the want, in the English Church, of that which a measure of this kind is intended to supply. I see the advantage possessed by the Roman Church in having those numerous shades and degrees in the ministry which enables it to hold the strings in the hand, and to feel the pulse, as it were, of the Church to its very extremities; and I hope that the time may yet come when the English Church may realise a machinery of a similar kind. But I do not believe that the time is yet come. I believe the Church principles are

gradually extending and taking root, creating an atmosphere on which these projected institutions may hereafter safely float. But if we adopt them prematurely, we shall eventually retard them, and take a step in the dark from which we may find it difficult to retreat. Meanwhile there is nothing to prevent the experiment from being tried on a limited scale in individual parishes, where the comparatively small number employed admits of a personal acquaintance on the part of the incumbent, calculated to obviate the fears which would be entertained where great numbers were employed. And I further think that this question is materially affected by the resolution to which the house has arrived on the subject of sisterhoods. I see in these contemplated bodies a fertile source of supplying the want which this present measure is designed to supply. As readers or visitors of the sick and afflicted, I see no reason why these devoted women should not be of essential use and assistance in this department of ministerial labour, without the danger to be apprehended from the other plan. It is not my intention to offer any opposition to the measure before the house. It is one on which, I honestly confess, I do not see my way clearly at this time. But as only one side of the question has been brought forward by previous speakers, I have felt it my duty to make these few remarks on the other side, in order to enable us to view the subject in its various aspects and in all its bearings; and I earnestly pray that we may be guided to a right conclusion on this most important subject.

Archdeacon DENISON said he believed that the difficulty which existed in Canon Woodgate's mind arose out of the absence of that church authority among them which would keep things steady in case such results were to happen as he contemplated. People would not submit to the authority which under a better state of things would prevent those unhappy results which Canon Woodgate had put before them. They must be quite content, however, for many years to come, perhaps for ever, in this country—for he hardly looked for a revival of church authority in this country, at any rate for a long time to come—he thought they must be content to supplement church authority by moral authority, and when they came to look at the matter in that way, he thought that the objections to supplying a great want considerably decreased and almost vanished. And there was this also, that if the clergy in the absence of church authority, which they could not have, were to consider how they might best increase their moral authority, the carrying out the proposition in this report would act as a great check and stimulus—a great check on the incumbents in point of temper and management, obliging them to look more narrowly than perhaps they did at this moment, before they committed themselves to anything which might give cause of offence. It would also act as a great stimulus to the clergy to keep up their learning. He did not think that any stimulus was more wanted. Something was said in the house yesterday about lowering the qualification for admission into orders. He did not wish to say anything offensive, but he could not conceive a lower qualification for taking holy orders than that which now existed in this country. He therefore thought that they all of them should and would be glad to welcome any stimulus which, to use a common expression, would put the screw on the incumbent, and he thought that the presence of a person of this kind in the parish would put the screw on very strongly. It would also operate as a great stimulus in respect of energy. It seemed to him that the proposition in the report was a very happy proposition, and therefore he