

stood required no amendment. It might be that the terms of the existing statute were too stringent, and required amendment; it might be that it was desirable to provide for cases in which laymen might usefully co-operate with the clergyman in the discharge of his parochial duties; but he thought their lordships ought to pause and hesitate before upon the mere statement of the noble earl (Shaftesbury) of theoretical difficulties and theoretical inconveniences interfering with the preaching of the Word of God, they removed all restrictions upon the unlicensed performance by the laity of duties which belonged to the clergy, and thus broke in upon the whole parochial system of the country.

It was for these reasons he had ventured to intrude himself upon their lordships' attention on a subject on which he felt that he had but little to speak; not for the purpose of preventing the amendment of the law and the extension of religious liberty; not, God knew, for the purpose of throwing difficulties in the way of reaching the irreligion, ignorance, and vice, which prevailed to so great an extent in our large towns, and which called for the best exertions of both Churchmen and Dissenters, but for the purpose of entreating their lordships before they provided a remedy to consider the nature and extent of the disease, in order that they might provide a remedy for grievances, without superseding or abrogating altogether the functions of that valuable and important body, the Parochial Clergy. The noble earl concluded by moving that the bill be referred to the select committee.

Earl Granville said in the speech of the noble earl, which was much more like a speech against the bill than one in favour of referring it to a select committee, the complaint was made that the bill passed through the House of Commons almost without discussion. He thought that fact was in itself more in favor of than against the bill, as if there had been anything very objectionable it was not likely to have escaped attention. Looking at the bill generally, he thought almost too high a tone had been given to the debate from the beginning. On the one hand, it could hardly be essential to religious liberty that an act which really appeared to have no operation should be repealed; and on the other hand, an exaggerated impression was conveyed by the speakers in opposition, that by repealing this act, which was admitted to be inoperative, except in some few cases turning chiefly upon personal questions, the Church of England, with her Liturgy and Prayer Book, would be put in danger. He thought the noble earl (Derby) was very much mistaken in the effects which he anticipated from the passing of the bill. It was quite clear that under the existing law any member of the Church of England could, on paying half a crown, open a room for religious worship. He should be very glad if his noble friend (the Earl of Shaftesbury) would consent that the bill should be referred to a select committee, it being understood that such a reference was not to be made the means of obstructing or delaying the bill, but was to be *bona fide* for a short examination of it. If on the other hand, his noble friend thought it would be more judicious to persevere with his motion, he should support him, on the ground that a law which some of the most respectable and religious persons in the community were daily violating ought to be repealed.

Lord Congleton supported the bill, and expressed his surprise that the Bench of Bishops had not come forward long ago to hail the efforts of laymen.

Lord Berners said the noble earl who intro-

duced the bill had told him that he could have no idea of the amount of obliquity which their lordships would call down upon their heads by rejecting this measure. He felt that they had a higher duty to perform than that of pleasing the people; and having heard that the Right Rev. Bench had considered the measure, and were unanimously agreed that in its present form they must oppose it, as it would interfere with Church discipline and with parochial arrangements, he felt bound to join them in their opposition.

The Bishop of Oxford said he, for one, did not entertain the least idea of defeating the whole measure, and he pledged himself that, if it went to a select committee, he would give it the fairest and most candid consideration. All he wished was, that if there was to be regular public worship under the bill, those who conducted it should be obliged to say whether they conducted it in opposition to, or in communion with, the established Church.

The Earl of Shaftesbury, in replying to the objections urged against the measure, said,—I will first answer the question put to me as to how I know that these 25,000 meetings I spoke of were illegal. I found those meetings to be all of one and the same character, and, with regard to the London City Mission meetings, I know the character of them to be devotional from beginning to end. My lords, till I brought this question forward, I was not aware of the extent to which the present law is used for purposes of intimidation. I have been quite astonished at the extent to which this intimidation is applied, and to find that it had extended even to some of our parochial Clergy. I have received a letter from one of the best of our Parochial Clergy in London, telling me what he had been doing, and that he has been doing it daily with fear and trembling. I must appeal to the common justice of those peers who heard my speech the other evening, or who have read the bill, whether they think the noble earl is justified in the declaration he has made to-night, that my object is to persuade the Parochial Clergy to give power to laymen to administer the sacraments, and to take upon them the discharge of any of the sacerdotal duties? (Hear, hear.) How does my bill in any way affect the Parochial Clergy, or give to any laymen the power of administering the sacraments, either of baptism or the Lord's supper, or set up any kind of rivalry whatever to the Clergy of the Church of England? (Hear, hear.) The sole object of my bill is to repeal the section of a particular Act which prohibits more than twenty persons above the inmates of a household from assembling for purposes of public worship. Nothing in the Bill will enable laymen to do that which they are not fully able to do now, nor will it give them an atom more of power to trespass on the Ecclesiastical functions of the Clergy than they possess at this moment. I must say, my noble friend really pushed his argument so far when he declared that nothing could be said or done in the way of worship but by an ordained Clergyman of the Church of England, that I should expect his next step would be to call for the revival of the Conventicle Act. (Hear, hear.) I desire to see everything connected with the worship of God "done in decency and in order." My whole life has been spent in obedience to that Apostolical injunction. I have labored, with God's blessing to advance to the utmost of my power the interests of the Church of England; and I believe that in no way can you better advance the interests of that Church than by enabling her laymen to labor for the enlightenment of the masses of the people, for the more you evangelize the

people the greater will be their attachment to the Church of England. From the highest to the lowest of the people of this country there is the strongest attachment to what they call their "Mother Church"; and it will be the fault of that Church if she act the part of a stepmother, instead of feeding the people with her life-blood, and so alienate the people from her affections. (Hear.) I feel it my duty to resist this Committee. This is a subject which your lordships are fully competent to discuss in Committee in the ordinary way. As I have said, the Bill promotes liberty of worship, but it raises no sort of rivalry to the Clergymen of the Church of England, nor have I the least apprehension that preaching places will be established in opposition to them. If such a result take place in any one instance, that will arise, probably, because the minister of the district has not given the support which he ought to give to the efforts made for feeding the people with that instruction which is thought essential to their welfare.

The Earl of Derby said the noble earl had stated that the Bill would not give to any layman power which he did not now possess. But if he was not mistaken, the noble earl on a former evening mentioned the case of a gentleman who was accustomed to read a chapter of the Bible to his neighbors, and who only gave up the practice when told it was illegal. This Bill would remove such illegality, and it clearly showed that there was a desire that the services of the Church should be conducted in the absence of a clergyman.

The Earl of Shaftesbury said, the gentleman referred to was accustomed to read a chapter, or perhaps a lecture of some clergyman of the Church of England; but was that taking to himself the functions of a clergyman of the Church of England? He hoped his noble friend would be candid enough to say that he had been mistaken in this instance.

The House then divided, when the numbers were—

For Lord Derby's motion .....47

Against it .....30

Majority .....17

The Bill was accordingly ordered to be referred to a Select Committee.

#### CONVOCATION OF THE PROVINCE OF CANTERBURY.

On Thursday, June 28th, the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury assembled at Westminster, in pursuance of adjournment from last session.

##### UPPER HOUSE—Thursday.

The Upper House met in Queen Ann's Bounty Office, the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding. There were present the Bishops of London, Winchester, Oxford, Exeter, Salisbury, Gloucester and Bristol, Bath and Wells, Lincoln, and St. Asaph.

The Bishop of London brought up the following report from a committee appointed last session:—

The committee of the Upper House of Convocation appointed to consider and report on an address to Her Majesty on the subject of Church extension, as already reported on by a committee of both Houses, report—That they have met and taken into consideration the subject committed to them. That there has been laid before them an opinion, signed by Her Majesty's Solicitor-General and Dr. Robert Phillimore, M.P., pointing out a mode which, with the sanction of the Crown, would be both safe and easy for removing the anomalies at present existing in the representation of the Clergy in the Lower House of Convocation. That it ap-