

weakest and most failing old man, would, if the charges were equally divided, be responsible, on the average, for more than 2,000 souls, and the average annual income of each parochial clergyman, on which to maintain himself and his family, and purchase such assistance as interruption of health may render indispensable, is at the most £110.

INDEPENDENT POSITION OF THE CLERGY.

It is well that hitherto the clergy are not generally entirely dependent on their professional income, but, in so many instances, bring with them of their private means far more than they receive, to enable them to meet the demands which the many calls of their parochial position make upon them. The answers to our Visitation queries have brought this remarkably before us. Those who legislate for the Church will do well, by resisting all attempts to lower the social position of the clergy, to secure, so far as they can, that this peculiarity may still continue to be a characteristic of our clerical system. I am not aware of any other country in which it is to be found. On the laity generally let us trust that the effect of the disclosures recently made known to them through the report of the House of Lord's Committee, may be to stir up that zeal which, it must be owned, they are not slow to exhibit when rightly appealed to, that the numbers of the clergy may be multiplied, and the overpowering burden of their duties lightened. Not trusting too much to such assistance, though feeling perfectly warranted in expecting it from experience of the past, I must point out to you in this Charge, my reverend brethren, how I think you will best be able to meet your responsibilities in the actual position in which you now find yourselves.

SUPPORT OF CHURCH FABRICS.

But before I proceed, I must allude to the other secular point to which my queries have been directed—the means available for the maintenance of the buildings of our churches and their worship. So far as I can gather from your answers to my queries there are sixty-one of your churches fortunate enough to have, in lieu of rates, some endowments in money, land, or houses, from which they are partially if not adequately supported; there are 113 parishes in which church-rates are raised in the legal way; that in all the rest the fabrics and worship are maintained more or less from voluntary sources; either from an allocation of the seat-rents, sanctioned by law, or from a voluntary appropriation of seat-rents, or simply by the Offertory or subscriptions. Before Bishop Blomfield's new churches were erected, the number of churches in the diocese entitled to be supported by the ancient system of rates, could not have much exceeded 200.

CHURCH-RATES.

I fear I must not deceive you into any expectation that in those parishes where church-rates have been lost they are likely to be recovered, though certainly signs are not wanting of the inhabitants of newly-constituted parochial districts being more ready now to contribute to the maintenance of their own particular church, than they were formerly to the distant mother church of the undivided parish. The feeling of Parliament does not seem to warrant the hope of our recovering what is lost. We know not what plan the Government may devise for settling this difficult and embarrassing question of church-rates. I believe, indeed, that if what was hinted at last summer by the head of the Government be adopted, the landed proprietors of England will not be found unwilling of their own accord to tax their property by an annual rent-charge fairly calculated, that they may keep up what the vast majority of them happily regard as the most val-

uable institution in the country. I fear, however, that in the towns we could not expect to share very largely in the advantage of such a commutation, since in so many instances in towns, other arrangements have already become habitual, and people feel also that in towns the churches, from the overwhelming amount of population, are not able to provide that full accommodation for the poor which is secured in the country, and for which the landed proprietors think it no hardship to be obliged to pay. I do not mean that there is any substantial equity in considering the holders of property in towns free from a burden of this kind. Common reason tells us that the owner of a large manufactory is as much indebted as the owner of a large landed estate, to the labourers whose industry his capital is made productive, and is therefore bound to contribute his full share of whatever is required to secure for them the means of instruction, whether secular or religious, and of worship. And it is nothing but the barest justice that persons whose income is derived from the high-rented dwellings of the poor in the squalid lanes of our crowded cities, should contribute to secure for their tenants the means of frequenting that house of God, in which alone in their life of hard toil they may be taught, in the only true safe sense, to regard themselves as equal to their brother men. But I am afraid in this matter, besides what is just, it is very necessary to be looking to what is feasible. And I should be deceiving you if I said that I had any good hope of such an impost being laid by Parliament on the owners of house property in towns, or voluntarily adopted by them.

The Government measure is yet unknown. No one can say what is likely to be the result of the fresh discussions which must soon arise on this vexed question. For myself, once for all, I must repeat what I have elsewhere maintained, that I know no argument which has been adduced, which proves that there is any injustice in men being liable to a tax imposed for the maintenance of a great public institution, even if they do not themselves approve of that institution; and I see, certainly, no greater hardship in Dissenters and Roman Catholics contributing to the maintenance of our churches, than in our paying our proportion of the taxes which are charged with the maintenance of Maynooth—or, to take a more appropriate case, in the great Episcopalian landowners of Scotland being bound to maintain the established Presbyterian worship. Men, however, have irritated themselves into the belief that they have a grievance in church-rates, and it is politic, it is Christian, fully to consider their feelings. Moreover, I suppose it is granted that, whatever may be said of the justice of the present church rate, it has great inconveniences, and therefore we are quite ready for any alteration of it which can be suggested; and we wish this alteration to be made in the most conciliatory spirit towards those who are not members of our Church. How far these alterations may with safety be carried, the Government, we are led to believe, is now considering. Even supposing that the alterations were to go very far, I should feel no fear myself that the church-rates of this great metropolis would be allowed to fall in ruins, or the secular dignity of their services be curtailed, because we were thrown more unreservedly on the hearty loyalty of that great mass of persons who love the time honoured institutions of our Church, because they feel it has brought many blessings on their own and their fathers' souls. I cannot say, however, that I should be equally free from alarm in remote or very poor places. Indeed, as I have already stated, I cannot look upon this otherwise than as a poor man's question. The parish church ought to be every where, and, thank God,

still is in many parishes, and always in the country, the inheritance of the poor. It is their right to have it maintained for their use, not merely by the voluntary exertions of those who are charitably disposed to aid them, but by some provision of the law. And I do most earnestly trust that whatever settlement is devised, nothing will be done to sacrifice the rights and feelings of the great majority of the people, both rich, and poor, in order to satisfy the unreasonable demands of a politically influential few. I must say unreasonable demands, for I cannot allow any man's objections to church-rates to be reasonable, who, when a compromise is proposed, not contented with an immunity being secured to himself and his fellow-Dissenters, protests against the impost being levied by authority of law, even on those who are actual members of the Established Church, and feel no hardship in the payment.

(To be Continued.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED TO JAN. 14.

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To no. 6, vol. 7.—E. L., Montreal.

THIS

Canadian Ecclesiastical Gazette

IS PUBLISHED TWICE A MONTH,
BY H. ROWSELL, TORONTO.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

7s. 6d. per annum, from which a discount of 2s. 6d. is allowed if remitted (postage free) within one month from commencement of the volume, after which time no discount can be allowed.

TERMS FOR ADVERTISING.

10 cents per line for first insertion.
5 " " " each subsequent insertion.
Written orders for the number of insertions should be sent with the Advertisements, or they will be continued and charged for until forbid.

Agents in Montreal.—Messrs. HILL & MARTIN, Depot of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 20, Great St. James Street.

ROWSSELL & ELLIS, PRINTERS, TORONTO.