

B. C. M.

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"Ad profectum sacrosanctæ matris ecclesiæ."

THE COLONIAL CHURCH BILL

IN our last number we inserted such clauses of the proposed Colonial Church Bill as would affect this Diocese. We now give the title of each clause and, as far as we can, its intention.

The judgment of the Privy Council has laid down this important constitutional principle:—

"The United Church of England and Ireland is not a part of the Constitution in any colonial settlement, nor can its authorities, or those who bear office in it, claim to be recognized by the law of the colony otherwise than as the members of a voluntary association. It cannot be said that any ecclesiastical tribunal or jurisdiction is required in any colony or settlement where there is no Established Church, and in the case of a settled colony the ecclesiastical law of England cannot, for the same reason, be treated as part of the law which the settlers carried with them from the mother country."

Under this decision, from the highest legal tribunal to which we are subject, the Church in the Colonies would seem to have full liberty to govern itself and manage all its own affairs, as other religious bodies do, without let or hindrance from the state. Yet we find that in spite of this judgment legal difficulties and vexatious obstacles are thrown in the way of the Churches' action, because of letters patent and crown appointments. It does seem hard to lose the advantages of state connexion and yet be forced to retain its evils.

It is to remove any doubts as to the position of the colonial church, and to admit, not enforce, the only solution of the present difficulty in the way of self-government that the Bill was introduced into the Imperial Parliament. The general effect of it would be to allow every tie (except the *spiritual* one, which is the strongest and best) between the church in England and in the colonies, to be severed at once: and to provide that it shall be so in future. Where letters patent are held by the bishops, it seems that the tie cannot be quite broken except by their voluntary surrender. For we presume the crown would not cancel them except at the request of the holder, altho' it will issue none hereafter. Whether or not this separation will be for the ultimate good of the daughter churches remains to be proved. There can however be little doubt but that it is or soon will be our position. Our part must be to look the difficulties fairly in the face and to make the best of our altered status by unity of action. We would certainly hope to see the colonial churches in such a position that no holding of letters patent, no crown appointments and no impediments of English ecclesiastical law, could keep them in the position of the church in South Africa, struggling to free herself from heretical teachers, but unable quite to affect her purpose because of some indefinite status given by the Crown.