

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

THE PRIEST'S DILEMMA.

THE word "Sacerdotal" is no such profound mystery as those fancy who use it to alarm ignorant laymen, as naughty boys use a turnip lantern. They fancy that when this word is used in their party screeds that the jaily shiver in their shoes. We rather believe that a quiet laugh passes round as such speakers assume that their audiences are too ignorant to know the meaning of so very common a word, which everybody of ordinary intelligence knows means simply, of, or belonging to a priest, or the priestly office. There is nothing alarming in the word except the superstition imported into it by party speakers. There cannot possibly be priests without sacerdotal functions, or belongings, or duties, of some kind. That lay Christians are priests involves their discharge of priestly obligations, hence a lay priesthood, were that the sole ministry, could not be actively engaged without sacerdotalism. The very act of intercessory prayer, one man for another, is a "Sacerdotal" act, it is a distinct coming of one man between another man and his Maker.

The passage, "There is one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus," is turned into an absolute falsehood, and a foolish one as well, when interpreted to mean that no one save Christ has any authority to stand between one soul and God as a mediator and intercessor. St. Paul in almost every Epistle tells the early converts that he constantly exercises the sacerdotal functions of mediator and intercessor on their behalf. This was the Apostle's notion about "one man coming between a soul and its Maker," which we hear denounced on certain platforms as unscriptural!

Regard also one title of our Saviour. He is the "High Priest" of His Church, not, mark, the *sole* Priest. This title implies that there are priests of a lower degree, it involves too the discharge by Christ of sacerdotal functions, so that sacerdotalism, that thing we are told that is so worthy of contempt, is manifested in Heaven. There is no little blasphemy then in speaking of priestly functions so scornfully.

We were told with much hopeful exultation a few days ago by a Priest of the Church, that the Church of the future would be wholly free from the sacerdotal element. It is manifest that such a Church will not have a High Priest as its head, therefore will have no relation to Christ—which seems, in other respects, quite certain, for even Christ cannot be head of His own Body and head of one manufactured by men!

Some few who denounce sacerdotalism are themselves priests of the English Church. They may wriggle as much as they can to escape this dilemma, but it is a position out of which no verbal contortions can lift them one hair's breadth. They, of their own free will, applied to the Church for authority to serve in

its ministry as priests. They were familiar with the great distinction drawn between deacons and priests. They voluntarily, under circumstances of peculiar solemnity, took on themselves the vows and obligations of the priesthood, they have discharged since such duties as the Church does not suffer any one who is not a priest to discharge. If they regard themselves as not priests, their acting the part of priests in divine service, according to the order of the Church, is a wicked fraud upon the Church whose priestly functions they are discharging. This is plain but most just language. Whoever stands before the congregation to do the priest's office, who, while so engaged, regards himself as no priest at all, but only a sham one, must be so dead to all sense of honour that the very worldliest of men would shrink from such shame.

What would be the general judgment on one who sought and secured military rank, who then discharged the duties and took the pay of an officer in the army, and while so commissioned taught the privates that his rank was a mere delusion? Or what the judgment on one who entered the legal profession, took office as a Judge, and then launched his sneers at the other officials and the machinery of the law? Such men would be covered with public contempt. Are then the ministers of Christ to be honoured who have less honour, less common decency, than the world demands in secular officials?

It is high time religion was relieved from the scandal of language being adopted and professions made by men to get a clerical position, who take Orders as Priests, preferment as Priests, rank and honours as Priests, duties and functions as Priests, and yet all the while are denying that any such office as they have been ordained to exist at all! One would suppose that if it were suggested to a truly religious person, that he might be tempted to act such a part, he would reply, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing? As a priest he necessarily does those acts that are priestly, that is, sacerdotal, if he regards those acts as valid, as the true acts of a priest, he is a believer in and practiser of—sacerdotalism. If he regards, however, the priestly office as a mockery, he, out of his own mouth, stands convicted of imposture.

We ask then any priest who fulminates against the sacerdotal feature of the Church he serves, or rather shames, to reflect upon his position. We press home to him these questions: "If you are not a priest why do you still take rank in the priestly order of the Church? Why do you perform the priest's office, especially in Holy Communion? Why do you allow the congregation to pay you honour and give you privileges as a priest? And, if you are a priest, as you are if so ordained, why do you scornfully sneer at "Sacerdotalism," seeing that the thing you treat so contemptuously is the outward and visible sign of that authority, and that office, and that life to which you have been ordained by the Church of Christ?"

THE LEGAL DOCTRINE OF INTENTION.

THE case of the convict Buckley who was tried at Toronto Fall Assizes for murder, but punished only for manslaughter, has excited unusual interest owing to the first sentence upon him being cancelled, and a new one passed extending the term of his imprisonment from five to fifteen years. This man one day about noon, early in the summer, had some disagreement with his paramour, whom he struck to the floor with a chair, then kicked her to death. The poor creature, wicked as was her life, had a noble woman's heart, for when the brute was kicking her, she exclaimed, "O! Tom, don't hurt me, I love you so." This reminds us of the creature, ugly and venomous, still having a precious jewel in its head. The woman, it is said, was drunk, but her dying words were those of pathetic self-control and womanly patience, under fearful provocation. When the slayer of this victim was tried, the doctrine was laid down that the distinction between murder and manslaughter consisted in the presence or absence of an intention to kill. On this legal distinction the plea was raised that Buckley had no intention to kill the woman, therefore was not her murderer. The jury, whose common sense seems to have been wandering, brought in a verdict based on this doctrine of intention, a verdict which, in plain English, reads thus:—"We find that Thomas Buckley struck a violent blow at Bertha Robinson which felled her, then he kicked her in spite of her pleadings for mercy, and by those kicks she died, but we think he had no criminal intentions, the woman's death was an accident, he did not commit murder, but only manslaughter." The question we desire to draw attention to is this,—How could the judge or jury know this criminal's intention in killing that woman? For ought they know he may have been intending to murder her at the first opportunity, they knew no more of his intentions than they know of what the man in the Moon thinks! The legal doctrine of intention as interpreted at the Buckley trial is downright nonsense, it has no semblance of reason in it. We can only judge of a man's intentions by his deeds, and we submit, that a prolonged attack by a man on a woman, begun in a fury of angry, and culminating in so brutal an assault as kicking her to death, in spite of her pleading for mercy, seems to us a demonstration of a murderous intention. This, in any man, would be so, but when this assault was made by one who had before sought to take human life, who for fifteen years had led a life of crime, it does seem to us, and we have the vast mass of the community with us on this view, that Thomas Buckley *murdered* his victim under circumstances of especial atrocity. But it is, we believe, sound law, at least we heard an English Judge so rule, that if one man while engaged in a felonious act kills another, he is guilty of murder. Now Buckley was surely engaged in a felonious act while smashing a chair over a woman's skull, and while prostrate kicking her?