

Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 1876.

OUR DIOCESAN SYNODS.

The month of June seems to occupy a similar position in the religious calendar of this country that the month of May does in England. There, however, the "May Meetings" are looked forward to as furnishing either the knowledge required of the progress of the Church in far distant lands, or the usual modicum of sensational aliment demanded by the season; while here the June Synods are engaged in actual legislative enactments, intended to meet the requirements of a struggling Church passing through the changes that might reasonably be expected in a rising country; but not by any means ignoring a measure of the aforesaid stimulant, which is just as inseparable from the active operations of the Church as it is from the movements of any other body of men.

The meeting of a Diocesan Synod in Canada means a certain amount of independence in local legislation. The Synod is not merely a deliberative assembly, like the Church Congress; and, therefore, we must expect to find the ordinary amount of inconveniences and dangers connected with institutions which have the right and the power to assert their will. It might be supposed that, as every one of the subjects discussed has a reference, direct or indirect, to the highest religious interests, therefore each of them would be approached with the calmness, the fairness, and the humility which its nature and importance demand. But while the wheat and the tares grow together, not only in the world, but also in the Church, and while the best examples of human nature are liable to infirmity and mistake, it must ever be in vain to look for that universal and absolute self-surrender, and that close conformity to an authoritative standard, which many seem to imagine so easy of attainment. The consequence of which is that the purest intentions are sometimes misapprehended, if not purposely and knowingly misrepresented; and contentions and bickerings are sometimes manifested, where an overwhelming impression ought to be felt of Christ's promised presence with His Church, and of the duties and responsibilities belonging to each member of the Synod. These duties and responsibilities are in exact proportion to the extent and the value of the privileges afforded; and they do not flow from the power possessed of doing and saying something, whether right or wrong, but from the demands made upon us by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, from the claim, which the Church He founded continually advances, and from the privilege we possess of doing something to promote the peace, the progress, and the extension of Messiah's Kingdom.

Sentiments of a similar nature to

these are expressed in a very judicious article in the *Huron Recorder* on "Our Church Legislation," which we must take the liberty to quote. The writer says:—"We have known some, and those not a few, who, at an earlier period were eager to secure for the Church this independence of legislative action, but who would now, if their vote could decide the matter, cast it in favour of the former condition of affairs, with all its attendant disadvantages, but well-known immunities. We do not write thus, be it understood, because we ourselves have any fault to find with the present independent condition of the Church in this Dominion, whatever difficulties may lie in its path, nor would we for one moment wish matters otherwise. We believe in this, as in other matters, there is One shaping our ends in accordance with His Divine Wisdom, so that they shall the better ensure in the end His own glory and our common good. Thus, we would no more think of putting from us our religious than our civil liberty, or resigning our right to control and legislate upon ecclesiastical matters than, to use the illustration we made use of at the outset, we should think of relinquishing our substance, or to be deprived of our reason, in order that we might escape the responsibility and care their possession entails upon us." "The moral at which we have arrived is simply this: that in connection with our Church membership in this country, we must think not only of its privileges, but its responsibilities; not only what it secures to us, but the claims it has upon our prayers and efforts, our liberality and self-denial. Its difficulties, we should remember, are our difficulties, and must be bravely met. Its duties are our duties, and must be diligently and faithfully performed. Its laws are our laws, and so, if righteous, must be properly preserved and administered; if otherwise, must be rescinded or improved. Its liabilities are our liabilities, and must be honourably and duly discharged. Its missionaries are our missionaries, and must be generously provided for and sustained."

SYNOD WORK.

A great variety of subjects have to be discussed in the course of a few days now, in our Synod meetings. The notices already sent in to the Secretaries, in many instances, furnish but little indication of the matters that may be brought before these assemblies, as so long a notice is not necessary to be given; and it not unfrequently happens that some of the most important subjects are not announced at all until the time for giving notice has almost gone by. There are, however, several notices given which are of an important nature, and to which considerable attention may very profitably be given, before they come up for public discussion.

In the *Huron Synod* we observe that

the Venerable Archdeacon Marsh has given notice: "That inasmuch as the Synod has decided to appropriate one-half of the collections made at the missionary meetings throughout the diocese to aid Foreign Missions; Be it, therefore, resolved, that the same one-half of the collections made at the missionary meetings during the past year be sent to the Bishop of Rupert's Land to be employed in the support of mission work in the said diocese of Rupert's Land." The Synod has done well in recognizing the claims of Foreign missionary work. The Church herself, was meant for every part of the earth's extended surface; she never considered any part of the world as foreign to her purposes, and is at home everywhere. The Diocese of Rupert's Land, like that of Algoma, is so far foreign that it embraces populations of a different race, a different tongue, and a different religion from ours; and it so far belongs to Home work, as it is a part of our own Dominion.

The *Bene Decessit*, proposed by the Rev. F. W. Raikes, is also important. It is part of the unfinished business left over from last year. It proposes "that a communicant removing from one parish to another, shall procure a certificate from the Incumbent of the parish of his last residence, stating that he or she is a communicant of good standing; and that the Incumbent of the parish to which he or she removes, shall not be required to receive him or her as a communicant till such letter shall be received." A very desirable arrangement for two reasons; one, because it is a step, though a slight one, in the direction of the discipline of the Church; and the other, because a great number of our people are lost to us from removals, when they have no generally recognized means of claiming the privileges of church membership to which they are entitled.

The Rev. J. F. Wright's proposal to increase the stipend of the clergy after ten and twenty year's service, respectively, is deserving of some consideration. If the virtues of self-denial and renunciation of the world are desirable to be practised by the younger clergy somewhat excessively, it need not be altogether forgotten that length of service in the Lord's vineyard may claim some recognition of the debt the Church owes for it.

In the *Toronto Synod*, the regulations respecting the various committees, which were recommended by the Executive Committee, and adopted last year by the Synod, will come up for confirmation. The alterations proposed will, no doubt, again receive the sanction of the Synod, as they will render the working of the ecclesiastical machinery less cumbrous, and, perhaps, quite as satisfactory as heretofore. The canon on the distribution of the Commutation Trust Surplus, will also require confirmation. Some discussion on this is not