

Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1876.

THE EASTER VESTRY.

One of the Rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer, says:—"Yearly at Easter, every Parishioner shall reckon with the Parson, Vicar or Curate, or his, or their Deputy or Deputies; and pay to them or him all ecclesiastical Duties, accustomedly due, then and at that time to be paid." This is understood to have referred to a kind of composition for personal tithes due from every Churchman to his church, and consisting of the tenth part of every man's gains, which were always due at that time, if they had not been paid at the other offering days. At first the usual offering days were Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday, and the feast of the dedication of the Parish Church. By an act of Henry VIII, A.D., 1536, they were settled to be at Christmas, Easter, Midsummer, and Michaelmas. By an act of the second and third of Edward VI., these personal tithes were ordered to be paid "yearly at or before the feast of Easter, and also all lawful and accustomed offerings, which had not been paid at the usual offering days were to be paid for at Easter next following." The canons of 1603 arranged that Church-wardens and their assistants shall be appointed in Easter week, at which time their monetary transactions are to be arranged, accounted for and transferred. The Church Temporalities Act for the old Diocese of Toronto, enacts that these transactions may take place on Easter Monday, or if from any cause they do not take place at that time, then, at any subsequent Vestry Meeting, they will be equally valid. The New Church Act of Nova Scotia provided that these things shall be arranged on Monday in Easter week, otherwise the different officers continue as they were. It does not seem to be very clear, from the Act, what may be done in case the appointments and examination of accounts are found desirable at another part of the year; unless these things are viewed as part of the general business, which by the 9th Section, may be transacted at any other time.

From these facts, it is evident that the celebration of Easter in the Church's estimation is incomplete without due attention being paid to temporal matters as well as spiritual. The highest Festival of the Christian year—the commemoration of the most joyous event, so far as we know, that ever occurred in earth or Heaven—the celebration of that most glorious triumph over sin and death, the Resurrection of the Saviour, giving us the only joy we can have in life, and confirming to us the only hope we can look for in death; it has seemed good to the Church that there should be connected therewith a consecration both of body and soul to the service of her Great Head; that private Christians should dedicate their property also to

the Church of the Lord, for which He himself was content to give his own most precious blood; and that arrangements should be made, by the appointment of proper officers and providing the requisite funds, that the services of the Church should be efficiently maintained during the ensuing year.

With this view of the case, a deep feeling of responsibility, a weighty sense of duty ought surely to attach itself to the proceedings of those who meet together for such purposes as these, and at so holy a season as that of Easter. We can easily understand that some may object to feel at all impressed with any particular solemnity at this season. But then, in their case they would altogether refuse to keep any season holy, or to consecrate anything at all to the service of their Master. Such men would surely not complain when told that they are not very sound members of a Church which sets apart particular seasons to celebrate important events and to teach fundamental principles.

The business of a Vestry meeting, besides the election of proper officers in connection with the temporalities of the Church, is almost entirely of a financial character; it has no spiritual functions. A great many extraneous subjects are often introduced, which are entirely out of order; such as the mode of celebrating divine service, the qualities, character and acts of the incumbent—matters which belong to other tribunals altogether. Even the disposal of the Sunday collections does not belong to a vestry meeting, according to the Rubric in the Prayer Book. But even though the subjects to be brought before these meetings are solely connected with the temporalities of the Church, yet are they of so much importance to its progress, that they demand great care in their treatment, and should be considered with the solemnity and godly fear which their high importance and the sacredness of the season would suggest.

We hardly know of anything that gives us greater pain than when we have witnessed or heard of an inattention to these principles. That on the Sunday, we should fix our minds on the holiest and brightest event in all history, and then find the Monday desecrated to the most unholy uses, the worst passions of human nature being brought out with the plea of doing God service, is inexpressibly painful. It could never have been the intention of the Church to bring into so close a contact, the highest solemnities of our religion, and the most reprehensible proceedings that men could be guilty of. These developments are however occasionally met with in the mother country; they sometimes occur in the Church of the United States; and we are sorry to be compelled to say that our Church in Canada is by no means free from such exhibitions. We have known of several instances of a peculiarly revolting charac-

ter, but the most notorious and the most widely bruited abroad just now is the case of *Grace Church*, Toronto. In our notice of its vestry last week, we were unwilling to dwell on the more repulsive features of the meeting; but as the daily papers have circulated their accounts over the Dominion, and we have received letters from other dioceses on the subject, any silence on our part will have no effect in preventing publicity. That the House of God—though only the basement of it—should be turned into a perfect bear-garden, that their clergyman should be assailed by such epithets as "liar—pup—blackguard," as on some former occasions the same individuals have spat in his face, surely argues a state of things which demands some very prompt remedy, even if that remedy should amount to an absolute excision. From the proceedings that took place, it appeared that the violent members of the meeting were those who did not worship at the Church at all. They rented a pew; they had a *proprietary right* in a part of God's House, and therefore claimed the power to make regulations for those who do worship there! A monstrous anomaly, we would say, that has no parallel in any other Church of Christendom! It may, just possibly be the law; but it is a law under the operation of which, no religious body besides our own, would ever expect to flourish. It is a relic of the barbarism of past ages, that may have answered its purpose some time ago in England, but neither belongs to the requirements of the present age, nor to the need the Church has of expansion in this country.

The men who acted in this way, boast that they are Low Churchmen, evangelical, anti-ritualist, with a catalogue of names which form the *ad captandum* staple of those who have passions to gratify, instead of a religion to promote. So far as we can determine, the authors of such unholy proceedings are just as much *high* as they are *low*, so far as Churchmanship goes; for they are not Churchmen at all. Their assault is not an assault upon ritualism or upon high Churchmanship, but an attack upon all Christianity and upon all Religion: and we have no hesitation in saying that for the abettors of such proceedings, the Creed of the African or the South Sea savage would have too much religion contained in it. We respect the Low Churchman, if so he please to call himself, who claims to rely alone on the merits of the Crucified One, and builds up his system in accordance with that grand fundamental truth; and we respect the High Churchman who holds the same creed, and believes that the sacred jewel is best preserved in an appropriate and authorized casket, that it is best set forth in the way Christ's Church intended it to be set forth—that is, in an observance of her rules. But that those who really are not churchmen at all, that they should have the majority of votes in our