

in the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer; and, 2. Whether it might not be expedient to revive the ancient order of 'readers,' as was designed by Archbishop Parker immediately after the Reformation,—beg to report as follows:—

"I. In considering the question submitted to us, we have assumed—

"(1.) That there is an urgent necessity for additional agencies within the Church of England, adapted to the present circumstances of our country.

"(2.) That there are many persons, in different stations of life, who would rejoice to be employed in the work of the Church under some definite and authoritative commission, but who are precluded by various causes from becoming candidates for holy orders.

"II. With these facts before us, we have first of all turned our attention to that part of our instructions which directs us to consider the best means of promoting the efficiency of the Diaconate with a special regard to its distinctive and subordinate character.

"III. The distinction between the second and third order of the Christian ministry is clearly defined in our Ordinal. The distinction has, however, been very much lost sight of, partly in consequence of the Diaconate being considered merely as a stepping-stone to the priesthood, and partly in consequence of the Deacon having not unfrequently been placed in the sole charge of a parish. We think that the difference between the deacon and the priest would be marked more distinctly, if the deacons were encouraged to continue in that order, whenever practicable, for a longer period than is now usual before they are advanced to the priesthood; and that it would contribute greatly to the efficiency of their future ministry, if they could be placed under the direction of experienced incumbents during their diaconate.

"IV. We have next considered whether this third and lowest order of our Church is capable of any extension, so as to admit the persons already alluded to, who may be supposed capable of rendering efficient service under regular appointment. But we regret to say that we find serious obstacles in the way of such extension, and for the following reasons:—

"(a) The indelible character of the diaconate, constitutes one great difficulty: inasmuch as the Church might on this account often lose the help of those who could give the service of a time, but not the service of a life, to this especial part of her work.

"(b) The amount of literary qualification, as required by the Ordinal and the canon, presents another difficulty. The persons whose services are sought could not for the most part be admitted, unless the strictness of the examination be relaxed. And, inasmuch as it would be practically impossible to have different degrees of qualification for the same order, there is too much reason to fear that the whole standard of qualification for admission into the Christian ministry might ultimately be lowered.

"(c) Other impediments present themselves from the provisions of statute law which affect persons in deacons' orders.*

"V. From these and other considerations we are of opinion, that, whatever increase may take place in the number of persons admitted to the Diaconate, a new agency is also required, which may be supplemental to it, and disturb as little as possible our present ecclesiastical system.

"VI. Our attention has therefore been directed in the next place, and according to our instruc-

tions, to the expediency of reviving the ancient order of readers. We find that this office, which can be traced back to the third century, or even to an earlier period, was partially restored, at least in name, for a short time, immediately after the Reformation. The purpose of its restoration was to secure parishes from being entirely destitute of all religious teaching, there being a want at that time of persons duly qualified, in respect of learning, for admission into holy orders. That want, indeed, no longer exists. But a class of persons is now needed to assist incumbents of populous and scattered parishes in house-to-house visitation, in catechism, and in performing such religious services as may be assigned to them by competent ecclesiastical authority.

"VII. Various terms have been suggested as indicative of the nature of the office which the present necessities of the Church require. But, whatever name may be assigned to the office, we think that its duties should be so adjusted that it may include persons of all ranks and classes of society; the time of some being given wholly to the work: of others, only in part; some receiving stipends, and others rendering gratuitous services, that those admitted to it should be subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, receiving their commission on the nominations of the incumbent from the bishop of the diocese, after due examination as to their moral character, their religious knowledge, and their efficiency, with the solemnity of a public service in the church, and by an instrument under the episcopal hand and seal; and that they should be in all respects under the control and direction of the incumbent in whose parish they are employed. We further think that they should be at liberty at any time whatever to resign the commission so received from the bishop, and that the bishop, on the other hand, should have the authority to revoke such commission on the ground of erroneous teaching or immoral conduct.

"VIII. We make this recommendation with a full conviction of the pressing wants of the church of England, and of the need of a greatly multiplied agency to enable her to fulfil the purposes of her high and holy calling. Nor would we conclude without the earnest prayer that, whether by these or by some other means, an 'effectual door' may be opened for the piety and zeal of those who seek by a definite mission from the Church, and in hearty communion with her, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of their fellow creatures.

"(Signed) EDWARD BICKERSTETH, Chairman." The report was ordered to be received.

HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Archdeacon BICKERSTETH, in moving that the House resume the consideration of "the Report of the Committee of the Lower House of Convocation on Home and Foreign Missions," said he thought the most convenient course would be to proceed paragraph by paragraph. He then read the first paragraph of the second portion of the report, headed "Foreign Missions," as follows:—

"Upon the subject of Foreign Missions we feel that the prominent position which England holds among the nations—her vast resources and widely extended commerce—her long enjoyment of temporal blessings—and, above all, her possession, through the Divine mercy, of the Gospel in its purity, are privileges which carry with them the gravest responsibility. Possessing as we humbly trust we do, the blessing of evangelical truth and apostolical order, and ample means for the fulfilment of the command, 'Goe into the world,' &c., we are solemnly accountable for the recommending of that blessing throughout Christendom, and for the extending of it throughout the world."

The paragraph was agreed to, with some verbal amendments.

Archdeacon BICKERSTETH then read the next paragraph:—

"The emigration from this country at one time during the last few years was averaging nearly 1000 persons a day. It must be remembered, too, that our emigrants are for the most part in humble circumstances, and that they are, therefore, least able or willing to make an effort to supply themselves with spiritual ordinances. Our colonial possessions cover about one seventh part of the earth's surface; and they comprehend a population of more than 3,000,000 of colonists, and nearly 200,000,000 of heathens and Mahometans. All these have a national claim upon us for a participation in our spiritual privileges, and to them must be added the untold millions, beyond our limits, still lying in darkness. While we desire to express our thankfulness to Almighty God for what has already been done through the agency of various societies, in the sending forth of devoted men into these wide fields of labour, and of late years in the rapid development of the colonial episcopate, and the consequent rapid increase, both in number and efficiency, of our missionary clergy, we feel how very far our efforts fall short of our opportunities, and how very small a number comparatively of the professing Christians of this land are taking any part in the fulfilment of their Lord's command."

Some verbal amendments having been agreed to, Archdeacon GRANT observed that the statement in the paragraph with respect to the amount of population was not exactly correct, and proposed to insert, after "our colonial possessions," the words "and foreign possessions."

The amendment was adopted.

Canon WORDSWORTH proposed to introduce into the recommendation of the committee a paragraph to the following effect:—

"That while we hail with great satisfaction the recent Act of the Legislature, which has placed the vast territory of India under the direct sovereignty of the British Crown, we desire to express our earnest prayer that this legislative measure may tend to the diffusion of the Gospel among the millions of the East, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ."

Canon WOODGATE said the report was drawn up before the occurrence of the events to which Canon Wordsworth, had alluded, and he thought it would be better to allow the paragraph to stand without the proposed addition.

Archdeacon DENISON proposed that the paragraph should terminate with the word "opportunities."

Canon SELWYN suggested that the latter part of the paragraph should stand thus:—"We feel how very far our efforts fall short of our opportunities of fulfilling our Lord's command."

The Prolocutor put Archdeacon Denison's amendment, which was negatived, and the paragraph was agreed to, with some verbal alterations.

Canon WORDSWORTH proposed to introduce a paragraph acknowledging God's blessing upon our arms in India, and declaring that the putting down of the rebellion, and the transfer of the sovereignty of that country to the Queen, imposed upon us the duty of making further missionary efforts in that part of the world, and using our conquests not for the extension of our secular power, but for the higher and more holy ends of advancing God's kingdom, and the promotion of Christian truth.

Archdeacon BICKERSTETH heartily acquiesced in the suggestion, and the paragraph was inserted. The following paragraphs were agreed to after some discussion on verbal alterations, some of which were inserted:—

"We have had occasion already to allude to the value of the parochial system; and it is to this

* For example, clergymen in holy orders are exempt from serving on Juries (0 Geo IV., c 50 s. 2). They are also precluded from sitting in Parliament (Stephens' Commentaries, vol. II. p. 391,) or from engaging in trade (1 and 2 Vic., c 106 s. 29,) &c.