

number, comprised several leading High Churchmen, Broad Churchmen, and men indifferent, clerical and lay; with three peers of strong Protestant tendencies, Lords Ebury, Harrowby, and Portman,* and one Regius Professor of Divinity, Dr. Payne Smith, who would be on the same side; but not a single representative of the working Evangelical clergy. An outcry at once arose; whereupon, probably, the list of the previous Commission was looked up, and Venn's name being noticed on it, he was added as a twenty-ninth member.

He was now seventy-one years of age; many infirmities were on him; he was already seeking to retire gradually from regular C.M.S. work. But he felt that he must not hesitate to obey this new summons; and he became one of the most regular attendants at the numerous and prolonged sittings of the Commission through two years, being present himself forty-four times, although latterly he had to be carried in a chair from Dean's Yard into the Jerusalem Chamber. He resolved from the first to be no mere party voter. He set himself to master the whole subject of the history of English ecclesiastical law and ritual, though a subject not previously familiar to him. "I was astonished," wrote Lord Chichester, "when he told me of the books which he had read up to qualify himself." The part he actually took in the long discussions, not only on controversial questions of ritual, but on the revision of the rubrics one by one, and also on the Lectionary, was no small or secondary one. He wrote careful notes of all the proceedings, which are extant; but many of the points most hotly debated are now almost archaic, and no practical object would be gained by reprinting even the small fragments which Mr. Knight felt able, without breach of the confidence of the Commission, to publish in Venn's Memoir. His speeches on the eastward position in the Holy Communion, on the repetition of the words of administration to each individual communicant, and similar matters, which Knight gives, are interesting, but do not concern this History. There is no doubt that he regarded the labours of the Commission, upon the whole, with satisfaction, notwithstanding his failure to obtain the exclusion of the Apocryphal books from the Lectionary; and that he regretted the fruitlessness of those labours, so far as the amendment of the rubrics by legislation was concerned.† Of the personal esteem in which his fellow-Commissioners came to regard him, the following striking words are an illustration, written by Dean Stanley on hearing of his death:—

"Amongst the recompenses for the many annoyances of the Ritual Commission, I consider one of the greatest was the opportunity it gave

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Venn's
work on
the Ritual
Commis-
sion.

Dean
Stanley
on Venn.

* Lord Shaftesbury was asked, but declined.

† He suggested to the friends who sympathized with him on the Commission that they should hold a short prayer-meeting before some of the sessions; and this was held at the house of Canon Conway, then Rector of St. Margaret's.