

The Church Times.

HALIFAX, SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1855.

THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF THE CLERGY.

A very little consideration must make us sadly feel, that as a Church, we in regard to public charities can hardly expect that blessed commendation, "She hath done what she could." For the absence of all those Public Institutions which in other lands prove that Christianity is any thing but a principle which centres all on self, and are at once witnesses of Christian brotherhood and asylums for the needy, sick and erring; marks too plainly in Nova Scotia our shortcomings—and yet we believe that this may be traced not to an ungenerous spirit, but to the want of having the matter fairly canvassed and its necessity plainly represented to our people—for there is quite enough to show how strong a yearning there is among us for deeds of charity; in the liberal response made to the appeals of those charitable Societies which provide for the consolation, relief, and visiting of their poorer brethren at their own humble abodes—besides we do not believe that over a case of individual distress was made known and proved worthy without calling out a most generous sympathy—we see this yearning also in the fact that having no Institutions of their own for the reception and reclaiming of the erring; our members, dissatisfied with remaining inactive, seek to share this honour with the other Evangelical bodies.

But what we grieve over is that the Church has under her patronage and protection no home to which she may invite her aged, unprotected and unfortunate members to a tranquil retirement.

It is surely time to look this matter boldly in the face, and see if no remedy can be devised for what we must confess to be a crying want.

We are led to these thoughts by hearing of a step in the right direction, in the movement that is now being made to relieve the present anxiety and those forebodings for the future which must often sorely press on those "made by the Holy Ghost our overseers"—as they reflect on the lot which awaits their families when God shall call themselves from their labour for Him and them, and they shall be left without protection, oftentimes without a home. We shall soon be summoned to exert ourselves and prove our readiness "to bear one another's burdens" in raising a fund to supply the necessities of the Widows and Orphans of our Clergy—and if we make the solicitude displayed for the bereaved families of our Soldiers who die in defending the honour of our country, as a type and omen of the feeling ready to be developed in behalf of the Widows and Orphans of those who fight God's battles, and maintain His honour against the assaults of an ungodly world—we may augur well for the success of the present project. The peculiar position of our Clergy in the amended Church of Nova Scotia has a loud claim on our consideration. The dignity of their sacred office, the best interests of religion, demand that they should be well, therefore expensively educated, and this entails such an outlay, as sometimes to embarrass the candidate for Holy Orders even before his Ordination, and the liquidation of which must be in after life, a heavy tax on incomes barely sufficient for present necessities. What opportunity in such cases is there for providing for their families—for our Clergy are forbidden by Ecclesiastical law under its severest penalties to engage in any mercenary business which may hinder the work of their ministry or derogate from their character—bidden also by their obligations and vows to spend themselves and their time in "doing the work of Evangelists," ranked (as the interests of religion demand they should be ranked) among the higher orders of society, while their profession least of all liberal professions offers the facilities for providing for a family—with all these proper checks on pursuing any scheme by which they may leave means of support for their families whose training does not generally fit them to buffet with the world's cold slush, what wonder if the minister of Christ is oftentimes depressed and prostrated by the appalling prospect which seems to await his helpless little ones—a prospect of poverty caused neither by his crime nor improvidence, but by the peculiar situation of his sphere of duty. How painful to picture his wife and children obliged to remove even from the home so long the scene of their duty and domestic joys—so long a home open to the poorest parishioner who came for relief or counsel. Must not such thoughts as these threaten to paralyze his efforts, for we must remember that, in becoming our Pastors, the Clergy did not cease to be men, and men must be anxious for the welfare of those they love; nor does Christianity forbid such anxiety, provided it does not degenerate into repining or dis-

gust in the Providence of the Father of the fatherless who now not by miracle but by man works out his plan to succour the widow and the orphan. To aid in this is to become workers together with God, a noble office with an exceeding great reward. It is also plain that in taking away anxiety from our Pastors, we not only show them great kindness, but do our parishes material good—not only fill their homes with light hearts and hopeful trust, but indirectly benefit the souls committed to their charge; for we thus enable our spiritual guides to pay less attention to their own temporal concerns and more to the eternal welfare of their flocks—we afford them more time for attendance on the duties of their study and their parish, "reading, exhortation, doctrine," of giving themselves wholly to those things—and as they become better workmen, better guides, more fully imbued with the love of the "great Shepherd of the Flock," and His solicitude for the sheep of His hand committed to their care, we ourselves shall be in a position to become better men—the more knowledge and scriptural wisdom our teachers can impart, the wiser may the taught become in heavenly things; and thus has God ordained a double blessing for the grace of charity to the giver and receiver of the gift, since if we water the fields of others our own shall be watered—on earth then as in heaven there is promised a blessing on the liberal hand and generous heart. We do not complain that our Clergy, even in the present distress from want of a Society to whose religious care they may confide their families, neglect their spiritual duties—on the contrary, we have reason to thank God that they set us a most eloquent example of confiding trust in that Gracious Being who never leaves nor forsakes the "seed of the righteous," that they obey the command of their Heavenly Master in wearing their own as well as the affections of their people from earthly things—that they are more anxious for a successful ministry, than their own comfort, and to lay up in heaven souls through their instrumentality converted to God as their best wealth, leaving as a rich legacy to their posterity the name of a "good and faithful servant"—but it is not the part of a good man anything but the duty of a Christian Pastor to shut his heart to the claims of the family which God has given him—for he teaches, and should himself be taught, "That if any provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel"—and a concern for those he leaves at death is certainly proper to an ambassador and follower of that Saviour, who before his own bitter death sanctified this concern by the example of commending to the care of his beloved disciple His widowed sorrowing mother.

Most earnestly therefore do we exhort the friends and lovers of our Church to give heed to the appeal now to be made for the Widows and Orphans of those "guides of the Most High God" who have showed to us the way of life—and ask them to make the Church which was the sphere of the Pastor's labour of love, the channel of charity to the Pastor's family. Let us hear in this appeal not only the cry of the anxious Widow and her fatherless children, but the voice of Him who has taken them under his special charge and claims in the most touching manner to be their Father and their God. Let us be earnest in ministering to the necessities of the saints, the wants of those who are "widows indeed" as we admit those to be for whom we speak—"Well reported of for good works—having brought up children, having lodged strangers, having relieved the afflicted, having diligently followed every good work,"—let us rejoice in aiding in the work of God, secure of being doubly blessed, here in the delight of doing good, hereafter in sharing God's glorious benediction. Let us be fellow workers with God, who has made us as his agents the guardians of the Widow and the Orphan by His inviolable will, and has threatened vengeance on those who faithlessly deny or neglect this trust—has promised blessing on the man who for "God's sake" fulfils it. This plea "for God's sake" coming even from the most abject worthless beggar, touches a spring of charity in our hearts—how much stronger is the appeal when coming from the mouths of those whose husbands and fathers have a claim on our sympathy by their lifetime of good will and hard work for us. Let us be so useful in our generation, that having "visited the widows and fatherless in their affliction" we may indeed have justly gained on earth from our fellow labourers the character which is but a rescript of that which shall be recognized and blessed in heaven by the great Lord of the Vineyard.

When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him, because he delivered the poor that cried and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy—for such there is

but one higher commendation, to be yet heard from the Judge of all, the widow's Everlasting Friend—"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world—for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me—Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto Me."

CONVOCATION.

The Convocation of the Clergy of the Province of Canterbury assembled in the Jerusalem Chamber, adjacent to Westminster Abbey, on Tuesday, February 6. Several important matters have come under discussion. The principal subject of the first day's proceedings was a report relative to an alteration or change in the Church services. The resolutions of the upper house, appeared to the lower to contemplate a change in the rubric, rather than that every rubric should remain unalterable except for the purpose of forming a new service—and was met by an amendment, to which the upper house did not agree, and the subject was deferred to a future session.

Both Houses met again on Thursday. In the Upper House the Archbishop of Canterbury read the report made to the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury upon the changes required in the constitution of Convocation. Several resolutions thereupon were submitted to the Lower House, but it does not appear from the account of their proceedings that they have come to any decision upon them.

On Friday the Lower House proceeded to discuss a motion for the admission of lay members to Synod. The motion was proposed by the Rev. Mr. Seymour, as follows:

1st. That the law of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture, for the government of his Church, and as witnessed by primitive antiquity, while it vests the authority and power to govern, primarily in the spirituality, does not forbid—rather does it encourage them—to call and admit faithful laymen also to their councils: synod, at such times and in such manner as they shall judge to be best for the welfare of the Church. 2nd. That the circumstances of the present times suggest certain and urgent reasons why the Church of England, in taking steps for the revival of synodical institutions, should take advantage of this liberty, and also provide some more formal and regular opportunities than at present exist, whereat the counsel and co-operation of the faithful laity may be secured to the proceedings of Convocation.

The motion having been seconded, The Rev. H. A. Woodgate proposed the following amendment—"Whereas, owing to the suspension of ecclesiastical discipline as regards the laity, every inhabitant of England, whatever his religious persuasion or manner of life, is recognized by the law as a member of the Church of England, and admissible to a full participation of its rights and privileges; and whereas dissenters have contended, both in Parliament and out of it, that dissent ought not to involve the forfeiture of such privileges, or of a vote in the management of the Church: it is neither just nor expedient to entertain the question of the admission of laymen to the councils of the Church, until by the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, or by some other method, effectual means be taken to determine what constitutes a bona fide layman of the Church of England."

After a short discussion, The Prolocutor put the amendment and the resolution from the chair, when the former was carried by a large majority.

The Clergy Discipline report was taken up, and laid aside for future consideration.

Upon the proceedings of this meeting of Convocation, which appears to have made an important step to a resumption of its full powers, the London Guardian observes:—

"Convocation has sat for three days, and broached, without settling them, several important questions, on one of which (respecting alterations of the Rubric) the two Houses have been unable to agree. The proceedings would be more intelligible and more satisfactory if they did not wear the appearance of being despatched in such an amazing hurry. It is obviously impossible for such subjects as a revision of the Church Services, Church Discipline, and Convocation Reform, to be properly disposed of without leisure for consultation, with Dr. Peacock (Prolocutor) posting to and fro between the Upper and the Lower Houses, and amidst anxious looks at the relentless progress of the hour hand of the clock. The work, therefore, is left unfinished; and reports, resolutions, amendments and cross amendments jostle each other in the printed narrative, in a rather confused and perplexing manner. The substance, however, of a working representative body is there—the independence of thought, coupled with submission to constituted authority—the disposition to examine every question carefully and freely—the desire to be unanimous without a surrender of principles or convictions. Nothing is wanted but time for transaction of business, the habit of temperate discussion, and a fuller acquaintance with the laws and usages of deliberative assemblies. Meanwhile the system of