

a battle to fight with Schlegel. But if we are simply to give the first place to the greatest dramatist, we should have thought that, even in the country of Voltaire, certainly in the country of Victor Hugo, that question had been finally decided; and that Shakespeare ("the immortal Williams," as the Frenchman called him) had now no competitor.

#### THE BISHOP OF OXFORD'S CHARGE.

The publication of the Bishop of Oxford's Charge in the *Guardian* places within our reach a document of considerable interest, appearing as it does at the time when the Archbishop's judgment is being expected, and coming from one who holds so remarkable a position on the English bench. It is commonly reported that Bishop Stubbs, being so eminent an historian, was that member of the Lambeth Court to whom the Archbishop looked for help in his inquiry; and it is well known that he is a somewhat pronounced High Churchman, supposed to have a decided leaning to the side of the Ritualists. For these reasons, the Bishop's utterances on the services of the Church, their history, their meaning, and the manner of using them, are of no ordinary interest.

The Bishop lays no claim to absolute impartiality, because, he remarks, such a profession would hardly be believed, and because he is aware that every man is, consciously or unconsciously, under some kind of bias; but he says he will do his best to state matters of fact as matters of fact, and matters of opinion as inoffensively as he can state them. We think it will be allowed that he has succeeded in this endeavour to a very large extent.

A considerable portion of the charge is taken up with an historical summary of the process by which the "Old Service Books were transformed and modified until they issued in our present English Book of Common Prayer. But there is little new to be said on this subject. We all know how the first book of Edward VI. satisfied neither the Roman nor the Puritan, how the second book was produced by foreign influence, how the reign of Mary came as a break, and the Prayer Book of Elizabeth struck that which has been the permanent note of the English Church. Bishop Stubbs seems to think that the Marian period stopped the downward course. We fancy that the moderation of the new book was owing rather to the influence of the Queen and Parker. But it is quite certain that the great blow to Puritanism was given by the excesses of the Commonwealth.

The Bishop sketches, in an interesting and somewhat fresher manner, the different tendencies which have come out, in regard to doctrine and ritual, in the development of the English Church. From the close of the Nonjurors' separation to the revival of fifty years ago, the Bishop remarks, ritual history was a blank. Yet, we think he might have remarked that the Evangelical revival during that period was preparing for the ecclesiastical revival, and even in its own way, anticipating the revived services which are supposed to belong to the Tractarian or even to the Ritualistic movement.

Perhaps the most important portion of his charge is that in which the Bishop expresses his opinion "on the matter of Church Courts, qualified, competent, and capable of deciding on points of doctrine and ritual as would satisfy men who are working on diametrically different principles." On this so-called burning question we think it better to give his Lordship's own words, rather than any summary of them of our own.

"What we really want," says the Bishop, "is a supreme court, so well informed, so rigorously impartial, so equitably open to the consideration of practical questions, so careful in the elaboration of decisions, and so properly qualified to adjudicate causes on which the interests of human souls are believed to turn, that the loyal will obey its decisions with complete acquiescence, and the disloyal neither seek nor find ways of defying or evading them. The law of the Church of England is a law binding on the heart, mind, and conscience of the clergy, and they have a right to demand that the administration of the law shall be in the hands of men in whom, for such qualifications as I have enumerated, they are justified in having confidence. That demand being fulfilled, in conscience as well as in justice, they are bound to obey the decisions of the courts, or to put themselves into such a position that they shall cease to be affected by them: that, I suppose, all will admit. But I must go further, and say that, even if the courts were not such as they could have perfect confidence in, still, so long as they are the courts established by the law of the land which maintains the clergy in possession of their property and rights, the alternative remains, obedience or punishment. This may strike you as a harsh pronouncement under present circumstances, but it is only a reduction to the lowest terms of the *ultima ratio* in all litigation."

It is probable that one-half of this passage will be unacceptable to one side, and the other to the other. Yet the veriest Erastian will hardly think our present courts ideal, even if he and many others think they are nearly as good as we are likely to get; and those who like them least will hardly maintain that a man is bound to obey only the decision of those courts with the constitution of which he is quite contented.

On the prosecutions the Bishop expresses himself in a somewhat more one-sided manner. He goes on: "Appeals to popular prejudice; the use of misrepresentation; the propagation of controversial antagonism among the ignorant and ill-informed; evil speaking, lying, and slandering, are unpardonable whether in the mouth of a controversial divine, or in the columns of a religious newspaper, or in the little stinging paragraphs of a society journal. They would be unpardonable in the mouth of an apostle or an archangel." "And those who teach the ignorant and prejudiced to misuse the vocabulary of controversy are not less sinning against their own souls. I am sick of hearing about sacerdotalism and mediævalism from men who scarcely know how to spell the words, and who have been taught to misuse them by the very prejudice that construes every unintelligible accusation as a condemnation. I do not care, if one party is as bad as another, to modify my words of censure. These evil words and cruel insinuations harm most those who use them; but they wound the whole body of Christ. They are sins against that charity without which the profoundest and most perfect orthodoxy is no more good than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Morally looked at, they call out, stimulate, and exasperate the worst feelings of human nature; religiously looked at, they are most thoroughly opposed to the law and example and express teaching of the Saviour: ye know not what spirit ye are of, if ye use them, any of you. And they are the very crowning of the sin of schism, the forcible rending of the mystical body of the Lord. I tried to speak dispassionately of the material points of dispute about these matters: here there is no need to speak dispassionately; there is no question for

doubt; burning indignation is not out of place."

In conclusion the Bishop remarks that the charges of disloyalty and lawlessness so lightly made are ungrounded or exaggerated. It is not likely that every one, or perhaps any considerable number of men, will accept the whole of the Bishop's reasonings and conclusions. But most men will agree that his utterances deserve to be seriously weighed.

#### CHRISTIANITY FOR SIX MONTHS.

Under this not quite reverent title a New York paper discourses on the fact that most of the Church work in cities is done, in the United States at least, from the beginning of October to the end of April. In the course of its remarks, some things are said which are good and true, and some things which are not so good or so true.

At the beginning we would take exception to the writer's acquiescence in the relative, if not absolute, cessation of Church work for a considerable portion of the year. We grant that there is and should be a difference between one season and another. The Church's Kalendar indicates this difference quite distinctly; and there is a good deal to be said for the discontinuance, or partial discontinuance, or shortening of sermons during the hot months of summer. But we confess that there is something to us extremely repulsive in the thought of the Church (or the churches) "striking work" for three or four months in the year. If we mean what we say, during winter months, of souls perishing, and of snatching them from death, it is not quite clear that we can give up being "fishers of men" during the summer months.

But, says the writer in question, "Christianity is only one of the factors which control modern life." We quote this sentence because we are not absolutely certain as to its meaning, and because it may convey a notion to which we should take exception. Christianity is not the whole controlling power of life. What does this mean? If it means that there is any other directing principle in human life, supreme and absolute and universal, besides the Gospel command of love to God and love to man, then we do not agree with the author of that sentiment.

We believe, however, that the writer means something different from this — that he means to say that men receive other moral and religious teaching besides what comes from the pulpit. He goes on: "It [that is, Christianity] is of the highest importance, but it is not so absolute an element in the life of a people as it was fifty years ago." If, we repeat, the writer meant this of Christianity, of the revelation of God in Christ, as his words would imply, then we should take immediate and direct exception to his thought. But it is pretty clear that it is the ordinary preaching of the Gospel that he is referring to. Then he goes on: "The minister has his rivals in the newspaper, in the theatre, in the movement of educated life. Much as he may control society, a multitude of activities have slipped the leash of spiritual control and are his rivals in claiming the attention of the people."

All this is true enough in a way; but it does not at all amount to an illustration of the writer's general assertion about Christianity. It is quite true that men are not now, to nearly the same extent, dependent upon the pulpit for their knowledge of Christian truth and doctrine. It is also quite true, as this writer goes on to maintain, that "it requires not less heart but a great deal more head than it used to, for a minister to be a leader