

Canterbury, the late Bishop of London and I waited upon him, and asked his sanction to an experiment in reference to the establishment of an order of scripture-readers; and his Grace recommended us to make the experiment in our respective dioceses, we being both connected with metropolitan parishes with very large populations. We made the experiment for two or three years, and the result was so satisfactory that we again called upon him at the end of that period, and he convened a meeting of the bishops on the subject. Since that time both the two Bishops of the London diocese and myself have licenced, in the way pointed out in that petition, individuals to act as scripture-readers on the appointment of an incumbent, subject to him, and removable by him at his pleasure. After being examined so far as we thought it needful by ourselves, and after personal interviews with them, finding them to be the best of our belief fitted for office, my own experience of their usefulness has been such that if any thing is needed to give them greater authority, or to extend the system more widely, I should be extremely desirous of joining in such a work. At present I am not aware that there is any difference in the way in which scripture-readers are appointed or removed, from the recommendations contained in the petition, with one exception, and that is, that there is no religious office. It is there recommended that they shall be introduced to offices in the religious services of the church. I should add that, in the first instance, there was considerable jealousy of their being permitted to do more than read the Bible. Subsequently, however, when experience taught us that these scripture-readers were entirely under our own control, permission was given to them to explain scriptural subjects and give illustrations thereon. In my diocese I have received but one complaint in reference to those who have been so occupied, and that was with respect to a man of peculiar power who stepped beyond his office, and was not only an instructor of the clergy, and offered to supply them with sermons upon any given subject (a laugh.) The good man might probably have been actuated in this last desire by the praiseworthy motive of eking out a comfortable subsistence; but I sent for him and at once cancelled his licence. I have always requested the incumbents to acquaint me when they have had any cause of complaint against scripture-readers, but in no case whatever has any complaint been made. In some instances they devote their whole time to the work. In others, they give four or six hours a day; and in two instances I have permitted the employment of individuals who came only on half the Saturday and the Sunday.

The Bishop of LINCOLN—There is a great difference between the class of scripture-readers authorised by the resolutions and the class of men alluded to in the petition, who would perform their duty gratuitously.

The Bishop of LONDON—I wish to bear my testimony to the extreme value of the work of the scripture-readers in the diocese of London. The number is very large; complaints are extremely rare; and the clergy seem to attach great value to their services. A very important change has lately been made by the Scripture-readers' Society, in admitting persons who can only give a small portion of their time to the work. I presume that what the Bishop of Lincoln desires is, to obtain the services of those who do not wish to accept any remuneration. This has been pressed on me from time to time, and I believe there is a considerable feeling in favour of such a mode of proceeding. No doubt the dissenters may have laid hold of a large class of the laity, from the

fact of employing their energies in this way, and I see no reason why we should not follow their example. Many persons believe that if the church in the last century had employed the laity in that way, we might have avoided a great deal of dissension. I should be glad if any practical result should follow from our attention having been drawn to the subject.

The Bishop of ST. DAVID'S—I would ask, first, what is the essential distinction between the functions of this new class you propose to institute and the lay assistants who are at present employed in the church; and, next, what is there at present to prevent any bishop from enabling any incumbent to employ the services of such a lay assistant as he may think proper? Unless there be such a distinction and disability, I do not understand exactly what we are doing.

The Bishop of LINCOLN—The difference between the lay agents at present employed, and those whom we hope to obtain, if the church were authorised to do so, is, that the present lay agents give up their whole time to the work, and receive a salary.

The Bishop of ST. DAVID'S—What is the difference between their functions?

The Bishop of LINCOLN—I do not know that there is any, except that the agents now proposed might assist the clergy somewhat more than the scripture-readers.

The Bishop of ST. DAVID'S—What is there to prevent the bishops from taking this step now?

The Bishop of LINCOLN—There is nothing to prevent the incumbent accepting the offers of such men, especially if the bishop authorises his acceptance, but it is thought desirable that certain distinct regulations should be laid down and agreed to by the bishops, and that the effect of making this an institution instead of leaving it to individuals would be to draw out a much larger number of labourers and remove scruples which many clergymen now entertain.

The Bishop of OXFORD—They would certainly gain strength by being an authorised body.

The Bishop of LLANDAFF—A gentleman called upon me and stated that he wished to be employed in my diocese. I thought there was some difficulty upon the subject as he did not understand the Welsh language, but I said that if he wished to be useful I had no doubt the incumbent at Cardiff would be happy to receive his assistance. He said that that was not exactly what he wanted. What he required was the opportunity of meeting large numbers of persons under my sanction whom he could address, thus drawing a distinction between the scripture reader and the teacher.

The Bishop of ST. ASAPH—I do not see any objection to a committee being appointed to consider the question, but I do not see why any incumbent may not employ such persons at the present moment. Most certainly he can do so under the sanction of the bishop. The only question is, whether the Bench of Bishops, as a body, should sanction any regulations on the matter. I think it is better that we should not, but that each bishop should confer with his own clergy, and make such rules as might be suitable to the circumstances. If any step were taken by us as a body, there might be a danger of our establishing a new order in the church of sub-deacons. The crusade which ought to be carried out in England is to convince the laity that the pecuniary resources of the church are utterly inadequate for the purposes to which they are applied, the ministration of religious services, and the promotion of the work of religious teaching among the people, and then the next great step to be taken is to draw forth a larger sum for the payment of the clergy. Such assistance is

not wanted in my diocese, but that is the real question in the great metropolitan dioceses.

The ARCHBISHOP—The question does not seem to be one arising out of any experience which has been had of inconvenience or evils in the existing system. That system, I believe, has worked well; and I do not see what other sanction is necessary than that which has already been given.

The Bishop of LINCOLN—Your Grace, speaking of the great value of scripture readers, says in effect that you have never known any inconvenience arise from their employment, and that it would be better to leave well alone. I entirely agree with that, and would not interfere with the present *status* of the scripture readers for the purposes for which they are employed. But in many of our dioceses they do not meet the requirements of the district, and we cannot find funds for other agency. There are some who do not require pay, but are willing to give a portion of their time, and we should be glad to accept their services. Nearly all the clergy of the large town of Nottingham have signed this petition, and are most anxious that these parties should be employed. I recently met with a Methodist preacher, a most able man, who is now employed by that body, but who would, I believe, have been much better satisfied if he could have been employed in this manner by the church.

The ARCHBISHOP—I doubt if you can act upon one uniform system throughout the country. I believe you must be guided solely by the circumstances of each individual diocese. I have found no difficulty in many large towns in getting persons to give a portion of their time to the relief of those who belong to their parish; but it may be otherwise in large manufacturing towns, and the very fact of the matter being thus brought before us shows that there is a want in existence with which I am not acquainted. Perhaps you will mention the names of the committee.

The resolution having been seconded by the Bishop of London, it was put from the chair and agreed to; and the Bishops of London, Winchester, St. Asaph, Oxford and Lincoln, nominated a committee on the subject.

The sitting was then prorogued until the following day.

#### LOWER HOUSE.

The members of the Lower House assembled in the Jerusalem Chamber, Archdeacon Bickersteth presiding as Prolocutor.

#### EXPENSES.

Dr. McCALL, as chairman of the Committee of Expenses, presented the report, which stated that the balance in hand and outstanding assets amounted to £29 0s. 3d., and that there was due by the Lower House £88 19s. 6d., showing an excess of debts beyond assets of £59 19s. 3d. This excess was occasioned by the expense incurred in printing documents connected with the discussion upon "Essays and Reviews," which amounted to £85 15s. 6d. To meet this liability, it was proposed to increase the assessment.

#### THE NEW EDUCATION MINUTE.

Petitions and *gravamina* were presented by Archdeacon Randall, Sir G. Prevost, the Rev. A. Oxenden, Dr. Jebb, the Rev. H. Mackenzie, and Lord A. Compton, condemnatory of the Revised Code, issued by the Committee of Council on Education.

ARCHDEACON DENISON proposed to substitute, with the consent of his seconder, the following for his original motion—

"That an address be presented to the Upper House, praying for the appointment of a joint committee to consider of a representation to her Majesty's Government in the matter of the