

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

## ECCLESIASTICAL PUFFERY.

It seems to be the fashion now-a-days to indulge, on certain occasions, in a style of speaking and writing with regard to ministers and their actions, and other matters ecclesiastical, which must be exceedingly distasteful to right-thinking men, and which is, to say the least, not honoring to the truth. The custom alluded to is not confined to ecclesiastical circles and occasions, but seems especially prominent in these, and of course in these we are more particularly interested. It is right at all times to give men their due meed of praise, but not to be able to speak of the commonest service without a meaningless profusion of flattering phrases seems childish and absurd. Suppose, for example, some well-known minister happens to preach or lecture on some occasion out of the ordinary course of his duty, we are informed of the event in the most highly eulogistic language—language that might awaken some credulity if the gentleman were some new and unknown light that had appeared on the scene of the Church's labor, but which concerning some familiarly known person can only be offensive to him, and absurd in the eyes of the general reader. All the flattering adjectives that can be compiled are attached to the performance which in reality was of a most ordinary kind.

If such a one should preach, his regular hearers read with surprise that his discourse was as usual, "able, eloquent, logical, impressive, rivetting the attention of his audience." Or if addressing a handful of people in the country, his address is "delivered with such power and eloquence" as might be ascribed to Demosthenes himself.

The reverend gentleman, as ministers are most offensively styled, knows himself to be a very ordinary preacher, and that he could not be eloquent to save his life, yet he must have all this fulsome flattery meted out to him as though he had been swaying with his burning oratory thousands of the people in some great crisis of their history; the fact being that perhaps he has been feebly addressing a hundred people in a rural school house. In short, it would appear either that we have a great many very able and eloquent divines among us, or the writers of such eulogies are very easily impressed, or imagine that everything a prominent man or a stranger to the locality may say ought to be worthy of his high-flown style of praise.

The evil of this custom is, that it robs real worth of its due merit, and renders criticism utterly false and useless. Surely men of sense do not wish to be praised to the skies for every little extra speech, or sermon, or report, into which they may have thrown some unusual, but not undesirable, energy. Surely it would be enough to characterize their performance justly and point out its real merit in judicious language. Nor would the occasional use of an opposite style of criticism be without a good effect. If men were told sometimes, for example, that they came short of the occasion; that the sermon was dull, pointless, and inappropriate; that the report was an unintelligent and wearisome document; or again, if it were sometimes said that the "reverend gentleman who came to speak on Foreign Missions addressed to the meeting some stale twaddle on the subject which utterly disgusted his intelligent hearers; he was manifestly both unprepared and uninterested in his subject, and only helped to kill any interest in the cause which the people may have felt;" such a critique would often be very near the truth. And our people are not such dullards as to be deceived or impressed by those who, in the fulness of their self-conceit, imagine any remarks they may offer are worthy of any occasion, however empty and trifling these remarks may be. And if such reverend gentlemen were told that they had injured the cause they came to advocate, that they had killed the meeting they were sent to stimulate, it might save congregations from painful afflictions, and teach "reverend gentlemen" a useful lesson, and be of great service to our various schemes on whose behalf these imbecile utterings were offered. Or if, again, it were said that the "reverend gentleman" from the city or elsewhere "addressed the meeting in a rambling and eloquent style, but spoiled the effect of any good that could be discovered in his address by the utterly vulgar and inappropriate anecdotes he managed dexterously to introduce, neither to the gratification or edification of his audience." such critiques kindly and courteously given might be of use, but this

undistinguishing, universal larding over of everything and every person with praises, utterly disproportionate to the occasion, seems to most sensible people both offensive and injurious. A little truth occasionally would give meaning and value to praise when it was awarded. The idea seems to be that it is proper courtesy so to speak, and that the names of ministers ought not to be mentioned without some reverential eulogy. It serves as a species of substitute for the titles and dignities that are wanting in our plain Church. One phase of this tendency is seen in those uncalled-for eulogies and certificates of character that Presbyteries are in the habit of issuing when a minister leaves the bounds. It must sometimes not be easy for the confectors of these panegyrics to keep within the bounds of truth, and yet bring in all the necessary adjectives of praise. Why should ministers require such certificates, like discharged servants, unless they are leaving the bounds of the Church? Who believes these documents beyond the one person interested? We do not wonder that it seems to many a very unnecessary practice, as generally carried out. The same remarks apply to books or other literary utterances of ministers. Some reviewers seem to think indiscriminate praise in such cases completely satisfies the truth, and utterly worthless publications are floated about on these meaningless pufferies. The evil is not at all confined to our Church or country, and the existence of it would seem to prove that real excellence is somewhat rare, and if it should appear in our midst there are no words left by which to distinguish it from the emptiness that has already exhausted all possible epithets of approbation. No doubt the most ordinary men and the humblest service deserve to be spoken of with praise, but let it be given in moderate terms, and do not disgust people at what is good by describing it as something altogether extraordinary. If a sermon or a book or a lecture come short, let its defects as well as its excellencies be kindly pointed out, but let us not bury truth in this universal, undistinguishing, childish indulgence in praise when no praise is deserved.

PRESBYTER.

## ARCHBISHOP LYNCH'S CONTROVERSIAL WORK.—IV.

On page 4, he says, "What, therefore, is the true Rule of Faith, or by whose authority are articles of faith to be defined?" These two parts are, in reality, two perfectly distinct questions. His Grace tries to answer both at once. He says, "The Presbyterians and Methodists say by the authority of their General Assembly or Conference." This is an Archbishop's answer to the question, "What is the true Rule of Faith?" Suppose I were to say to a person, "Which is the way to Blank?" and he were to say "Yes," there would be just as much sense in his answer to my question, as there is in the Archbishop's answer to the other. His Grace further says, "The Church of England has to acknowledge that the Royal authority must settle its Rule of Faith." This means that if the British sovereign should bid it lay aside the Bible as its rule of Faith, and take, instead thereof, the Book of Mormon, the Koran, or the Shasters, as the case might be, it must obey. He adds, "But none claim infallibility for these authorities, therefore they have no infallible rule of Faith, and all are liable to error, according to themselves." On page 9, he says, "Protestants do not pretend to infallibility, and consequently are liable to lead their followers astray." He plainly reasons according to the following syllogisms: (1) "He who does not pretend to infallibility is not infallible; Protestants do not pretend to infallibility; therefore they are not infallible." (2) "He who pretends to infallibility, is infallible; the Church of Rome pretends to infallibility; therefore she is infallible." This, it must be admitted, is a very easy way of proving the infallibility of his Church.

On page 6, he says, "Q.—Did not Christ command his disciples to search the scriptures? A.—No; in the first place, he could not command them to search the New Testament, because it was not written." If Monseigneur will only read the New Testament carefully, he will see that by the term "Scriptures" is meant the Old Testament. If it were the duty of those who had only the Old Testament to study it, surely it is not less our duty to study the scriptures, who have both Testaments.

On pages 7 and 8, he gives the following marks of the true Church, all of which he says his Church has, but none of them any other has. His proofs that his Church has these marks are mere assertions. He says,

(1) The true Church must have been instituted by Christ, and continued by his apostles and their lawful successors, under the presidency of St. Peter and his successors in office." What he here says about the successors of the apostles, and those of Peter, he has to prove, which he does not. It would save him a world of useless labor, if we would only take his mere word. (2) It must be Catholic as to time as well as to place; spread throughout the entire world from the apostolic times." The word "catholic," or "universal," refers not to time, but to place. The omnipresence of God is a very different thing from His eternity. It is a curious thing that Mr. Roy, of the one-minister denomination, Montreal, fell into the same mistake of applying the term "catholic," or "universal," to time as well as to place. Some Churches, the Waldensian for example, have never acknowledged the supremacy of the Romish Church. Some of the standard writers of the latter Church acknowledge that certain of her doctrines cannot be found in the writings of the apostles. Her peculiar doctrines cannot be found there. A countryman of the Archbishop's, it is said, once used the following argument to convince a Protestant that the Church of Rome was the first: "St. Paul wrote an epistle to the Romans, but nimirum a wan"—(I am afraid that he used a very much stronger expression, but let him have the benefit of a doubt)—"but nimirum a wan, at all, at all, did he write to the Praetendants." A better argument in proof of the antiquity of the Romish Church is nowhere to be found in the Archbishop's book. (3) I must teach the same doctrines." There is a very great variety of opinions in the Romish Church even on essential points. Yea, we have a proof of this in the Archbishop's work. When we come to what he says about infallibility, we shall find that, on this question, he is inconsistent. Further, on page 75, he teaches doctrines directly opposed to certain ones taught by St. Augustine, whom he professes to hold in the highest respect. So much for the unity of his Church. (4) It must be holy in its doctrines, sacraments, and in the large number of its members, though some may be so only in name." Many of the doctrines of the Church of Rome are "doctrines of devils;" such, for example, are those that no faith is to be kept with heretics; that they should be put to death when it can be done with safety to the Church; that anything is right if it be done for the glory of God, that is, the interests of the Church; that even one's most secret thoughts should be revealed to the priest; and that the Church can grant indulgences and dispensations. Of her seven sacraments, five are not sacraments at all. It is a noteworthy fact that when Popery has full sway, Sabbath-breaking, robbery, licentiousness, and murder abound. In Vienna, the capital of Austria, more than half of the native population are bastards. When Pius IX. was king, Rome was one of the most wicked cities under the sun. (5) It must be infallible, that is, it can never teach error." When the Archbishop's Church is weighed in this balance, she is found to be far wanting.

On page 8, the author says, "They (Protestants) fail in the sanctity of doctrine, allowing divorces against the command of our Lord Himself, who said: 'Whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder' (Matt. xix. 6). Divorces open the doors to numerous sins and scandals." If he will go on to the ninth verse of the same chapter, he will find our Lord thus speaking: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." There He allows divorce in one case. He does not in these two verses contradict Himself. But, admitting for the sake of argument that divorces are wrong, what shall we say of dispensations? Do not these open the doors to numerous sins and scandals?" By these marriages can be contracted within degrees within which the Church of Rome herself says God forbids marriage. For example, she says that God forbids a man to marry his deceased wife's sister. But he can do so if he get a dispensation, which, of course, brings money to the Church. I once—not knowing it—married a Roman Catholic couple so related. They were excommunicated for having broken the laws of God. I got plenty of abuse in the local paper, of which Vicar General Langevin, then acting as Bishop, was really the editor. By and by the couple raised \$20, with which they bought a dispensation. They were married by a priest, and now all is right with them in the eyes of the Church. Yea, by dispensations, marriages can be contracted within degrees within which there can be no doubt whatever God forbids marriage. One of the