

Letter from London.

(From a valued correspondent.)

LONDON, Feb. 28th, 1883.

The London Diocesan Conference has recently held a most successful session. Vigorous debates were held upon the burning questions of the day which have attracted wide-spread attention. The object of the Conference was to provide a mode whereby the Church people of London might be able to express their feelings upon ecclesiastical questions.

Pronounced opinions were expressed against the Wife's Sisters' Marriage Bill which is shortly to have its second reading in the House of Commons. One speaker admirably explained how the real strength of the case lay in Christ's words—"They twain shall be one flesh"—implying that they should be held to have exactly the same relations. The Bishop of Salisbury characterized the Bill as full of danger to the domestic happiness of families, and entirely opposed to the ancient law of the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Should it become law it would destroy the real brotherhood of brother-in-law, for he who was a possible husband could not be a real brother.

Earl Cairns said that the question was one not of abstract politics but which went deeply into the moral and religious life of families and the Church, and the triumph of the Bill would prove disastrous to morals and peace.

Another subject under discussion was one of much practical importance—in what manner the surplus ecclesiastical endowments of the City of London could be made of benefit to the poorer parts of the metropolis. It is a notorious and lamentable fact that while there exists a spiritual destitution in the crowded districts of London, there are sixty richly-endowed Parish Churches, with sixty richly-paid incumbents, who preach to phantom congregations, because since they were endowed the population has been driven away by the encroachments of business. Thirty clergymen, many of whom live at a long distance, draw each over £1000 a year for what is practically a sinecure, one receives £400 for preaching every Wednesday evening to a few old women, paid by doles to attend. The rectory houses are mostly let for commercial purposes. The wine bill of one parish amounted last year to £67. The City Charities, which are worth £40,000 a year, are mostly muddled away. The Bishop of London announced that he intends his Bill for the Demolition of the City Churches to be introduced during the present session of the House of Commons. This bill will, if passed, remove a crying evil, and apply these immense endowments where they will accomplish some proportionate result.

The question of committing to the laity a larger portion of the ministry of the Church received earnest consideration. Instances were adduced where overworked incumbents had received most valuable aid from lay helpers, and where services conducted by laymen under the directions of the Parish Priest had brought hundreds of outcasts into the pale of the Church. It is evident that much of the prejudice which formerly has existed against lay agency, and which was fostered by the late Archbishop, is being overcome. The new Primate is strongly in favor of a Lay Diaconate, and has expressed an opinion that lay agency may be usefully employed, especially in the over-crowded parts of London.

The Bishop of Bedford moved for a committee to report on the best way of dealing with agnosticism and other forms of unbelief. He expressed himself as appalled at the prevalence of scepticism among the higher classes of English society. The press openly discussed the question whether Christianity was not a curse, and whether there was a God and a hereafter. It behoved the Church to come forth and do battle with these mighty forces arrayed against her, and not wasting her strength on minor details risk the losing of the great struggle. She should speak out and render her reason to every man that challenged her. The teachers of the Church should be better equipped for their warfare; more systematic and extended knowledge of the evidences of the Faith should

be required of candidates for holy orders and should be spread among the body of the people. The Diocesan Conference is expected to develop into a National Conference that shall meet annually and form a representative assembly of the whole Church.

An affirmation bill has been passed through the House of Commons for the relief of Mr. Bradlaugh. It is deeply to be regretted that the interests of morality and religion should be ignored, and Parliament should depart from its religious traditions, in order to satisfy the infidel artisans of Northampton who shout for their infidel representative.

At a recent meeting of the Church Missionary Society Earl Cairns said it was a common thing to hear some people who had been abroad say that though a great deal of money had been spent, there was very little result. They themselves admitted however, when pressed, that they had never taken the trouble to inquire into the matter, but thought it clever and smart to condemn missions, though they knew nothing whatever about them. To his mind there never was a time when missions were so successful as now.

The assaults of which the Bishop of Manchester has lately been the object have suggested to a correspondent of the *Guardian* the propriety of establishing "a close time" for Bishops, during which it shall be illegal to hunt, harry, or drag them through the mire. By this means the lives of prelates might be prolonged, who should be quite as precious as wild birds.

It is said that the total abstinence movement has gained more triumphs of late in England than in America. The late reports of the United States National Bureau of Statistics show a steady increase during the past five years in the consumption of liquors, more than commensurate with the increase of the population. Thus the consumption of malt liquor in 1878 was 310,000,000 gallons; in 1882, 527,000,000, while the consumption of distilled spirits grew from 57,000,000 to 71,000,000 gallons. These figures show a marked retrograde movement; whereas in Great Britain there will be a great diminution of revenue from intoxicating liquors. Other means will have to be resorted to of replenishing the public purse, but money will be spent more usefully by people who previously spent it to their own injury.

The Archbishop of York has issued to his clergy a short form of service with special prayer, beseeching the Divine interposition in favor of more propitious weather. This he points out is not done in a querulous or complaining spirit but is a fitting appeal to the Almighty Ruler of the Universe at a time of abnormally severe weather, when fields are flooded and the perils of the sea greatly increased.

Those who have watched with interest the rise and progress of the Salvation Army will feel some disappointment at its more recent phases. It is too evident that many of its converts lack seriousness—the first requisite of Christianity; that General Booth has made a mistake in meddling with financial matters by issuing Salvationist Bonds as a means of borrowing money for the organization; that he has incurred deserved odium by encouraging Miss Charlesworth, daughter of a London clergyman, to disregard her parents' wishes and take a leading part in the campaign in Switzerland where she and her associates have come into conflict with the authorities and been expelled from one or two cities. Perhaps this organization missed its great opportunity in refusing the proffered shelter of the Church of England, whose eternal foundations resist the devouring waves of time which are apt to undermine such revivalist movements. A. P. S.

Paragraphic.

The Rev. Mr. Zara, recently of the Roman Communion, is now working in Philadelphia under Bishop Stevens.

The Churchmen of Honolulu have started a journal of their own—*The Anglican Church Chronicle*.

A writer in the *Christian at Work* affirms that the Church year is growing in favor among all the denominations.

Eight preachers (including a Bishop) of the Zion Apostolic Church, were confirmed by Bishop Whitte at Petersburg, Va. It is said that almost the entire Zion Union Apostolic Church will follow their leaders into the Church.

Professor Sayce writes to the *Times*, pointing out that the Maltese Islands are the only part of the world in which remains of Phœnician temples still exist, and expressing a hope that measures may be taken by the Government to preserve them from destruction.

The statistics of crime in France show that 75 per cent. of the criminals can read and write. The governor of one of the prisons complains that his prisoners are too well educated. It is the educated rascals who are hard to catch, hard to keep, and hard to convict.

On the evening of January 25th, the festival of the conversion of St. Paul, Count Campello held his first service in the mission room recently secured in the Via Farini. The congregation, which numbered many Italians, entered heartily into the service. The sermon was delivered by Count Campello, and was on the life of St. Paul in Rome. On Sunday, January 28th, the attendance was very encouraging. A soldier who had joined the congregation requested permission to bring others, as he knew of several who would gladly participate in the services, which are now held regularly on Sunday afternoons.

The A. T. Stewart estate at Garden City, Long Island, includes 17,000 acres, on which 6,000 trees have been put out. The town is twelve miles long and four miles wide. For St. Paul's School for boys four million bricks were needed. It will accommodate 300 boys. The copper leaders and pipes for the building cost \$26,000. The Cathedral will not be finished for at least another year. Its organ costs \$100,000. The building is 192 feet long, and finished in marble and bronzes. The chimes can be played along with the organ and furnish a chorus. The Episcopal Residence is approaching completion.

The Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York, Dr. Bridgeman, pastor, has decided to make some important changes in their evening service. A special committee, appointed recently to consider the question, reported that a liturgical service is desirable; that the Reformed Churches have made a mistake in so generally casting liturgical forms aside; that in many Churches the idea of worship is almost entirely crowded out, and that preaching has taken its place; and they consequently believe that the Church, at its evening services, might use with profit some modified liturgical form.

The congregation and parishioners of All Saints', Birmingham, recently forwarded a congratulatory address, handsomely engrossed and illuminated, to the Archbishop elect of Canterbury. Dr. Benson was born in the old parish church, in which churchyard his father, mother, and sister now lie buried. During the years that have elapsed since Dr. Benson severed his connection with Birmingham he has on frequent occasions shown the interest which he feels in matters connected with All Saints', and he never omits at Christmas to send some floral decorations to be placed upon the grave of his parents. The parish of All Saints' is the largest and one of the poorest in Birmingham.

The first public demonstration of the Church Temperance Society in New York city was held in Steinway Hall. Secretary Graham has succeeded in enlisting a wide interest in the work, which is supported not only by such prominent Churchmen as Dr. Potter, Cornelius Vanderbilt and the Cuttings, but by such Presbyterians as Drs. Crosby and Paine, by Rabbi Gottheil, and by philanthropists generally. The *Herald* gives maps of districts of the city "Where Lager Reigns" and "Where Whiskey Reigns." The objects proposed are the restriction of licensed places of drinking, numbering now over 9000, and the suppression of the 1000 illicit places, so that there may be not more than one saloon to 500, instead of one to 125 of the population, as at present. The sale of liquor to minors and Sunday opening are also practices which are to be withstood.