

irreligion and enemies of the clergy. In much more recent times the priest has found a still more uncompromising adversary in the local doctor. Although it was not the Church, but the Terrorist Republic, which found that it had 'no need of chemists,' the French medical man has long striven to diffuse the belief that religion is the enemy of science, and the religious teacher the natural foe of the scientific professor. M. Paul Bert was simply a representative of a numerous section of Frenchmen, and of their characteristic opinions; and it is a very instructive fact that the majority of the French Chamber of Deputies still consists of doctors and lawyers. Thus, throughout the country districts of France, there has ever since the first Revolution existed a set of semi-professional combatants against the religion favored by the State and taught by the priest. There has doubtless been a certain amount of hereditary faith among the peasantry, and a certain amount of appreciation of the laboriousness and self-sacrifice of the French clergy, whom the modern Roman Catholic Church has always regarded as the flower of its ministers; but this has not been enough to neutralise the results of the abeyance of religious ideas during a whole generation, and of the continuance of an active propaganda against the Christian faith.

A State persecution of the Christian religion seems to most of us an event belonging to the far distant past, but in fact it occurred in the infancy of the very same democratic ideas which appear to be now competing with Christianity. Soon after the first establishment of the first French Republic, Christianity was as much persecuted as it was by Diocletian. A priest who celebrated mass without taking an oath, which was to him what incense burned before the image of the Emperor had been to an earlier Christian, had his head cut off in a day or two if he was detected in Paris, while if he was arrested in the provinces the chances were that he would be embarked in a rotten boat and drowned in one of the French rivers. A modern persecution would not, perhaps, be carried out by the guillotine or the *noyade*; but it would easily find methods sufficient for its purpose. There are large numbers of the clergy who depend for their subsistence on employment in education, and if the liberty of giving private instruction as well as public were denied to them they would be very much in the position of the boycotted Irish landlords and the boycotted Irish farmers, who greatly owe their sufferings to the misconduct of the Irish branch of the Roman Catholic Church. The game, however, of persecuting an unpopular section of the community, is one in which the Church cannot engage without a certainty that it will soon be practised against itself on a more extensive scale, and after a severer fashion."

LAY-READERS AND EVANGELISTS

THE institution of lay-readers, though it has done good service already, and may be expected to prove still more fruitful when

fully developed, can hardly be expected to supply all the exigencies of the case. The parish which most needs such lay agents to supplement the spiritual work of the clergy is often least able to supply them. It is necessary, therefore, to look outside the parish. This necessity has led during the present year to a new departure in this diocese—the creation of the office of lay evangelist. The unit here is not the parish, but the rural deanery. Nearly a year ago I was consulted as to the practicability of instituting an order of itinerant lay preachers, who should go about and take services in neglected parts of our great towns and outlying hamlets, either in Mission-rooms or in the open air. The movement arose simultaneously in two separate rural deaneries, Auckland and Wearmouth. It was further commended to me by the fact that the initiative was taken by the laymen themselves, who were in some cases working men. Some of these were already doing evangelistic work, but they desired to carry it on under proper authority and on an organized plan; others were eager to offer their spare time to the Master's service, but they felt that they needed training to render their ministrations efficient. A meeting of those interested in this movement was held in Sunderland, at which I presided. I was deeply impressed by the earnestness and sobriety of tone which marked the speakers; and I felt that I should incur a grave responsibility if I did not do all in my power to encourage a movement which seemed to be the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and which held out hope of so much spiritual usefulness. Accordingly, at my suggestion rules were drawn up and submitted to me by the two rural deaneries after mutual consultation; and having received my assent they were published in the March number of the Diocesan Magazine. But your evangelist, it may be said, bears a strong likeness to the Wesleyan local preacher. I am not ashamed of the resemblance. I freely confess my admiration of the marvellous capacity of organization which distinguished John Wesley, and which he has bequeathed to his followers. The truest Churchmen are those whose minds are most open to the lessons which can be gathered from all quarters. I believe that the Church of England has a greater power of utilizing the evangelistic zeal of her lay members than any other Christian community, though hitherto it has been latent. Certainly this ought to be the case, for the sense of corporate unity with her, if she is true to her principles, is built upon a stronger and deeper foundation than accidental association for religious purposes. Most assuredly she will be wise to find employment for this zeal; for an untold mine of missionary power is here, which alone can cope with the spiritual destitution; and, if neglected by her, this noble passion for Christ will seek relief for its yearnings in other channels. Most earnestly, therefore, do I recommend this movement. It has already had a sufficient trial in this diocese to inspire bright hopes for the future. The regulations contemplate two orders—evangelists and assistant-evangelists or probationers. A member of the second order is not

received into the first except after due examination by persons approved by the Bishop. In May last I admitted the first band of lay evangelists for the Auckland deanery in my own chapel, six in number. They are aided by seven assistants. These men have now been at work for six months, and the result has been beneficial in many ways. I trust that the movement may spread to other parts of the diocese. This diocese, if I mistake not, is exceptionally favorable to such an effort. The population is sufficiently distributed in hamlets to need it, and yet sufficiently concentrated to make it possible. The latent spiritual power is there, I am persuaded, if we can only elicit and train and guide it.

The Church Army has now been tried in several parishes in this diocese; and I gratefully acknowledge the beneficial results. I do not put it forward as a universal specific for spiritual destitution. There are some parishes where it would be altogether out of place. There are others which do not need it, having already machinery for doing the same work. Moreover it is absolutely necessary that the incumbent should place himself at the head, so as to direct and control its operations. An army without a commander is a gross anomaly. The fastidiousness also which resists methods perfectly legitimate but not commending themselves to refined taste must be laid aside. But under the proper conditions the Church Army may prove a very real blessing to many a district. I take as examples the two parishes in this diocese where it was first introduced, and in which it has had the longest and fairest trial—the Venerable Bede's, Monkwearmouth, and St. John's, Sunderland. I cannot for a moment doubt—the confirmations are visible proof—that in these parishes it has effected what no existing parochial organization could have effected; it has dragged members of men and women out of the gutter, has expelled the demon of drink or of some other gross vice, and has seated them clothed and in their right mind at the feet of Christ. Of one thing I am sure, no incumbent need be apprehensive as to the loyalty of the officers. Loyalty is a fundamental principle in the Church army.—*The Bishop of Durham.*

Home & Foreign Church News.

From our own Correspondents.

DOMINION.

ONTARIO.

LOMBARDY.—The Christmas services in this parish passed off in a highly satisfactory manner. Matins and evensong were attended by large congregations. The latter service was rendered semi-chorally. After the offerings were presented and placed upon the altar, one of the members on behalf of the congregation of Trinity, came forward to the entrance of the chancel and read an address, at the same time presenting the incumbent, Rev. A. J. Fidler, with a handsome sleigh robe and a well filled purse.

St. James' Church, Port Emsley, has been much improved in the interior, and was re-opened on Sunday, the 12th December, when the Rev. Rufal Dean Nesbitt preached a very able and excellent sermon.

BROOKVILLE.—St. Paul's Church.—The new church was opened for divine service on Sunday, December