

## THE OFFICIAL YEAR BOOK.

The Official Year Book of the Church of England for the current year gives a most encouraging report. From a mass of statements and statistics, eminently trustworthy, there may be gathered some idea of what is going on not only in the Established Church but also in the Scottish Episcopalian, the Irish, and American Churches. Take for instance voluntary offerings alone: it will be surprising to a good many people to learn that on church building and restoration there has been expended in about five years something like five millions. The sum contributed for the endowment of benefices within the same period came up to nearly six hundred and fifty thousand; for the building of parsonage houses four hundred and fifty thousand has been raised, and for burial grounds ninety four thousand. Thus the total amount contributed by voluntary benevolence to this department of Church work during these five years touches very closely upon six millions and a half. Not less noteworthy is it that among the places most conspicuous for the liberality with which the Church's wants have been supplied are some of our largest manufacturing towns, such as Birmingham, Bristol, Bolton, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield. Attention is especially directed to the fact that the above sums have all been 'devoted to the building, enlargement, and restoration of churches, parsonage houses, and schools, and the endowment of districts.' If we take into account the money given for the annual maintenance of Church work the sum total would, of course, be much larger. Turning to the work of education and Confirmation, we find that the number of candidates for Confirmation has increased steadily, though slowly, since 1884. In that year the total for all the diocese in England and Wales was about one hundred and ninety eight thousand. In 1889 there were two hundred and twenty five thousand. The increase from year to year has been from five to seven thousand, the largest advance having been made in 1888. On Church schools and training colleges the voluntary expenditure during the last twenty years exceeds the whole amount contributed during the previous fifty nine years. The statistics referring to the Church of Ireland show that voluntary contributions have increased from £137,000 in 1885 to £170,000 in 1889. The general conclusion which we are warranted in drawing from the contents of the Year Book is that the Church of England is rapidly growing in popularity and favour.—*Family Churchman.*

## OUR CONFIRMATION CLASSES—PRAYER.

The faithful pastor will now have brought before his candidates for Confirmation several important subjects—the solemn vows that are upon them, and which they are shortly to acknowledge in their own persons, their confessions of the Christian faith, and the obligations of the Christian life. These great responsibilities require supernatural assistance for their due fulfilment; these vows and confessions, this life of Christian duty, cannot be made and carried out without help from above. Very rightly, therefore, does the Catechist, arriving at this point, now say in all earnestness, "My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer. Let me hear therefore, if thou canst say the Lord's Prayer."

"Special grace" is to be sought "at all times," for the due discharge of these solemn

obligations "by diligent prayer." The whole subject of prayer will thus come once more within the scope of our thoughts, and opportunity will be taken for pressing home upon the minds and hearts of the confirmands the necessity and importance of prayer, both public and private. In these days of doubt it may be very desirable to point out first of all the reasonableness of prayer, and how, the moment we believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, wiser and stronger than ourselves, prayer becomes the most natural thing in the world; how it is a universal instinct found everywhere, and has, as in the case with every instinct, an Object. The universal impulse to pray means a universal belief in the existence of a Supreme Being to whom to address our prayers. In the highest sense, *laborare est orare*, to labor is to pray. To pray to God is to set God's will at work on our behalf. And God has revealed to us in His word that He desires His creatures thus to invoke and secure the Divine interposition on their behalf. We are not able of ourselves to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve Him without His special grace. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam (as Article X. says) is such that he can not turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God." We need, therefore, "the grace of God, by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will and working with us when we have that good will," and for this we must seek "by diligent."

"The Lord's Prayer" is now taken as a typical example of what prayer should be, and as gathering up into itself all possible petitions. The explanation of it that follows in the Catechism shows how full and all-embracing the prayer is. First of all it postulates the existence of our Father in heaven. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. xi. 6). Next it is a pattern of prayer in its unselfishness. It teaches us not only to look on our things, but also on the things of others. It is in the plural number throughout. There is no unworthy or selfish egoism in it. "I desire my Lord God, our Heavenly Father, to send His grace unto me and to all people." This sentence will suggest the practice of intercessory prayer on the part of the candidates for each other during the solemn period of preparation that all may be co-sharers in the same grace on the day of their Confirmation. The next clause in the explanation of the Prayer brings forward the important subject of "worship" and "due reverence" in the house of God, and reference can be made to the Prayer for the Church Militant where it touches on this subject. It is from the Confirmation classes that the congregation of adult worshippers in our churches is recruited year by year, and it is therefore most desirable that some wholesome advice should now be tendered to them as to how they ought to behave themselves "in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). The parish priest will press home upon his young people the importance (1) of losing no opportunity of attending divine worship, and especially being regular hereafter at the Lord's Table; (2) coming in time before service begins; (3) offering up a private prayer for the Divine blessing on entering the church, and before leaving it; (4) joining audibly and reverently in the responses; (5) and carrying themselves with all gravity while in church, remembering always that it is no other than "the House of God and the gate of Heaven." The explanation of the Lord's Prayer will also afford opportunity for pointing out our entire dependence on God for all things that are needful "both for our souls and bodies," and for "protection in all dangers, ghostly and bodily." The explanation evidently suggests that in this prayer we ask for more than mere bodily nourish-

ment when we say "Give us this day our daily bread"; and that the petition has a Eucharistic element; that when we thus pray we ask to be nourished with the Bread of life, that spiritual sustenance that we can obtain more fully at the Lord's Table. It is also evident that the explanation regards the clause, "Deliver us from evil," as embracing in it specially deliverance from our ever present enemy the Devil, who is the Evil one, as the revised version has it. Such an explanation of this special clause will bring to the front the mysterious subject of evil, the existence of a great spiritual enemy, "that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan (Rev. ii. 2), the reality of Satanic temptation, "your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter v. 8, 9). It may be well also to point out the reality of the spiritual life that can be so invaded from without by a great spiritual adversary, and the need, therefore, of constant watchfulness. As our outward and physical life is threatened from time to time by bodily sickness, accident, poison, etc., against which we must provide remedies and protection, so is it likewise with the inner invisible life of the soul. It is threatened in many ways, and our great protection must be in evermore invoking the supernatural aid of God's grace, and making diligent use of all means for obtaining the same. The wide subject of prayer in all its bearings is thus brought before the class; and it will be well to supplement the instruction, first, with illustrations of the practice of prayer, both from the Old and New Testaments; secondly, with instances of invitations to prayer and of promises of answers to it; and thirdly, the manner of prayer, how it should be offered, from the heart, intelligently, and with reverence. The fact that our Lord gave a form of prayer, to be used "when we pray," will like be employed as an argument to show what high Scriptural authority the Church has for a written liturgy.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.*

## THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS,

(From the Church Review.)

This venerable Society has been in existence for 190 years. It had its origin in the closing year of the seventeenth century, when Dr. Thomas Bray, who had been appointed Commissary of the Bishop of London for Maryland, was stirred to supply the spiritual wants of these fourteen colonies on the coast of North America, which were then subject to the British Crown. Dr. Bray and his friends were aided by the powerful help of Archbishop Tenson and other Bishops, as well as by the Lower House of Convocation, then not yet silenced, and on June 16th, 1701, William III. granted a charter incorporating "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." Its first objects were: '1. the care and instruction of our own people settled in the colonies; 2. the conversion of the Indian natives; and 3. the conversion of the negro slaves.' The first Missionaries of the Society, the Rev. George Keith and the Rev. Patrick Gordon, sailed from England on April 24th, 1702, and landed at Boston in North America on June 11th. Other clergymen, schoolmasters, and presents of books were sent immediately afterwards to the Continent of America, Newfoundland, the islands of the West Indies, the British factories at Moscow and Amsterdam. Through eighty years the Society tried repeatedly to obtain Bishops, but in vain. It was the policy of the British Government at that time absolutely to prohibit the consecration of Bishops for foreign parts, and so far to restrict the growth of the Church. Those American colonies which now form the United States were the chief, though not the