

THE PEW SYSTEM.

IT must be remembered that there was no pew system before the Reformation. No doubt stools and benches, at first movable, were used in some churches from a much earlier date, but as a rule standing room only was provided until the Reformation period, when preaching came into prominence, and the services were so modified as to make seats almost a matter of necessity. It is only in the last 350 years that our English pew law has grown up. Until there were seats there could be no appropriation of places in Church, still less any law regulating or forbidding such appropriation. A man would scarcely seek—and it is difficult to see how he could possibly obtain—the right to stand or kneel on any particular spot of the Church pavement. The Bishop of Peterborough's charge against Henry VIII. that under him property in pews was invented, is therefore scarcely fair. It would be nearer the fact to say that pews themselves were invented under Henry VIII. (although they were not unknown earlier), and thus the opportunity for creating rights of property in them first occurred. But the truth is that neither then nor later was property in Church seats acknowledged or tolerated. To whatever extent pews are now proprietary, it is due to special legislation, either private Acts, or the Building Acts of the present century—legislation which, whatever its theoretical errors, has enabled a vast number of churches to be built, which, humanly speaking, would otherwise never have existed. In the early days after the Reformation it would seem that persons were permitted to construct pews for the use of their families at their own cost. Those who obtained this leave would be people of means and position, and they probably looked upon the pews which they had paid for as their own property. But this was an error of individuals, not of the law. The rights of parishioners were never lost sight of by the Church Courts, and although the law of pews had not thoroughly crystalized till the close of the seventeenth century, the main principles on which it is based have been recognized from the very first.—*The Churchman Magazine.*

THE BISHOPS AND THEIR CRITIC.

COMMUNICATED.

A GENTLEMAN residing in the city of Toronto in communion with the Church of England has, we regret to say, a considerable amount of time on his hands, which he seems unable to devote to any useful purpose. And, like many others in a similar situation, he furnishes an apt illustration of the truth of the well-known verse of Dr. Watts that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

Being afflicted with the *cacoethes scribendi*, or in plain Saxon, an itch for scribbling; the particular mischief which the arch enemy of souls finds for him to do is to disseminate periodically, foolish and mischievous attacks against the distinctive doctrines and practices of the Church of which he professes to be a member.

The last effort of this writer of pamphlets is before us. It is an attack on the Episcopal order, which for scurrility and malevolence could hardly be matched, and which for the display of the most palpable ignorance of the subject with which he attempts to deal, reaches a lower depth than any of the lucubrations which it has been our misfortune to peruse.

While such flippant productions, on so serious a subject, can only be viewed by men of sense with indignation, it is to be feared that among the ignorant and foolish the writer of it may find but a too receptive soil for the sowing of his seeds of error.

The character of this production may be imagined from the opening sentence. "I have been charged with 'speaking evil of dignities,' but when those dignities (*sic*) are false prophets, is it not time they should be exposed? and now that there are so many blind guides in the Episcopacy (*sic*) is it not time to speak plainly?"

Without stopping to question the elegance and grammatical propriety of this remarkable sentence, it is sufficient to say that it is but the prelude to the detailing, as far as eight small pages of printed matter will admit, all the scandal and impropriety and bad behaviour of the Episcopal order which the author has been able to rake out of the dust-heap of departed scandals. From the evident gusto with which each detail of sin and wickedness is dwelt upon, one cannot but feel that the writer has revelled in his self-appointed task. The argument of this tract may be shortly summed up in a few words, thus: "Many Bishops have been immoral and heretical and guilty of sinning, and have abused their office; therefore, Bishops are not necessary to the being of the Christian Church." or again, "Some persons have improperly assumed to act as Bishops who have not been validly appointed; therefore, the Apostolic succession has failed." or again, "The succession of some Bishops is traced through the Popes of Rome, but some Popes were not valid Popes, therefore the Apostolic succession has failed."

We have not space to answer in detail the utterly untenable arguments we have stated above. The writer may propound all the reasons that occur to his imagination to establish that the Episcopal office is not of Divine institution, and is unnecessary to the being of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church; and yet this fact remains incontestable that to-day, and for nearly 1,900 years past, by the overwhelming majority of those who profess and call themselves Christians, the Episcopal office has been preserved and is held in reverence and esteem. When the Prayer Book tells us—as it does in the Preface to the ordinal—that "it is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostle's time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests and Deacons, which offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requi-

site for the same; and also by public prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful authority," it is merely stating what is a simple truism. We ask all sober-minded churchmen to betake themselves to their Prayer Books as a sound and wholesome antidote to such tracts as we allude to.

The perusal of the 26th article might have shown the author that the unworthiness of a minister does not destroy the validity of his official acts, and that, therefore, though a Bishop may be guilty of heresy, immorality or other offences, yet nevertheless his official acts may all be perfectly valid and efficacious; any other doctrine would indeed lead to perilous consequences and would be a visiting of the sins of the guilty upon the heads of the innocent. And we would add the writer's argument proves too much, for if it were correct, it would establish that no ministry of any kind at all is necessary to the being of the Church. For it cannot be denied that many men in every rank of the ministry have been guilty of as many and as flagrant offences as any bishop; and if it follows that bishops are unnecessary, it also follows that neither presbyters nor deacons are necessary. We would venture to ask where Christianity would have been to-day, if there had been no Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Christian Church? It is well enough for superficial people to look at the question only through the spectacles of the 19th century, when learning is widely diffused, and the Bible may be in every man's hand, but humanly speaking the Lamp of Life would have gone out but for the clergy.

This attack upon the Bishops of the Church is published without either name of compiler or printer. Manifestly the parent is ashamed of his child. The tract is circulated in large numbers *gratuitously*, and has other marks to identify it as the work of a well-known disturber of our Israel. We trust churchmen when they see this tract will promptly use it for all it is worth—waste paper.

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

THE CHURCH AND POLITICS.

THE demand that the discussions in our Synods shall be kept free from "politics" is a claim no Churchman desires to ignore. But it is clear that when we use this word "politics" in the ordinary sense—the sense which is, we may say, current in street talk, we are giving to a large, general, and exalted word, a very specific, narrow, and ignoble meaning.

By "politics" we mean in the gossip of daily life, the issues which characterize the two recognized parties into which politicians are divided in Canada. Our Synods would be indeed degraded were they to suffer such issues to form, or to affect in any way, their deliberations. But there is the higher sense in which the word "politics" may be more justly used, and then in such a connection the Church may discover it a solemn and imperative duty to take a most active interest in "politics." Sup-

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