

MONTHLY NOTES

little more ointment applied for the same purpose as before, he is unanimously elected as lay representative.

This being the last business brought before the Vestry the Rector now makes a few congratulatory remarks about the retiring Churchwardens, the way in which they have performed their duties, and, also, about the wise choice the vestry has made in electing those for the incoming year. The vestry then adjourns, every man feeling that he has done everything that can be expected of him as a vestryman and a churchman.

In this attempted description of an ordinary vestry meeting, I have tried to keep as near to an unvarnished outline of the bare facts as possible, so as not to give a wrong impression to those who have never attended such meetings. And I would now ask if there does not seem to be something wanting in these proceedings? If there is not something left out that is necessary to round off and complete the year's business as it is brought up before each vestry? It will be perceived that the church officers, whose duty is to manage the temporal affairs of the parish, to deal with the dollars and cents contributed by each vestryman and churchman of the locality, are required every year to give a detailed account of the manner in which they have discharged their duties, and are thus made to feel, during the whole of their tenure of office, their individual responsibility to those who elected them.

The natural result is that churchwardens are, with rare exceptions, faithful to the trust reposed in them and perform their duties so as to benefit as much as possible the church of which they are officers.

Let us now turn to the lay representative being required by the vestry to give an account of the manner in which he had performed his duties in so far as the Synod is concerned? It is quite possible that when the rectorship became vacant and the lay representative together with the Churchwardens waited as in duty bound upon the Bishop to recommend some Clergyman as being acceptable to them as Rector, they might be required by the vestry to give an account of their stewardship. But that is a thing of rare occurrence—an event that but seldom happens—and so perhaps because the lay representative's duty is just then closely connected with the home and local surroundings of the vestrymen, he is held down to a sense of his responsibilities; while, in his ordinary Synod duties that are intended to benefit the whole diocese and only affect the vestryman's parish indirectly and to a small extent, he is allowed to do just as he pleases and to feel that the probabilities are in favor of his not even being spoken to about the matter by any of the vestrymen.

Now I will venture to assert that any business firm who sent out a representative to transact business for them, and permitted him to come home and resume his ordinary duties, without even inquiring what he had accomplished during his absence would not deserve to have their business done properly and might with reasonable certainty be expected soon to go to the wall. Yet hard-headed business men, who would be the first to condemn the folly just referred to, go on year after year in the same foolish course in their vestry work for the simple and solitary reason as far as I can see that it is only church work.

It is no wonder that under such circumstances the Synod reports are often unsatisfactory—that the actual work of the Synod is performed by just a few—that the lay representatives as a whole take little interest in the various questions that come before the Synod—that appeals by the Synod often find but a feeble response in the various parish churches—and, in short, that legitimate church work languishes throughout the diocese. How can it be otherwise when there is an important piece of perpetually unfinished business in every vestry in the diocese—when every parish seems to proclaim to its sister parishes, "I take care that the business that concerns me is properly done and duly accounted for, but as for the business of the diocese at large, what do I care how it is done? I elect men to attend to it as a matter of course, but I never trouble myself as to whether they do it or leave it undone"!—now what is the remedy for this state of affairs? I cannot imagine our Church as ever contemplating, that one part of the parish machinery provided for carrying on its affairs should be developed and used according to the special needs of that particular parish, and that the other and not less important part of the same machinery should be just started on its way and then permitted to come to a standstill before it had completed its revolution, or produced the result for which it was designed.

The remedy I think is this—let the vestry of each parish require from their lay representatives every year a report of the different matters that came before the Synod of which they were members, and of the position they individually took on each question. And in order that this be not done in a perfunctory manner let there be an adjourned meeting of the vestry for this purpose so that there can be a free exchange of views between the vestrymen and their representatives on every important question. Then to make this lead to something more than barren results let the Clergy educate their people up to their duties and their privileges as members of the grand old Church of free-born Britons, whose sympathies have no bound and whose duties are world-wide.

I admit that there are difficulties in the way arising from the luke-warmness or indifference both of the clergy and of laity, but it is inconceivable that when intelligent churchmen think out this matter and perceive the inconsistency of their present conduct they will permit such small obstacles to stand in the way of duty.

It is competent for any member of a vestry to move that an adjourned meeting be held for the purpose of receiving the report of their lay representatives in the last Synod, and if he has previously spoken to some of his fellow vestrymen about it and mentioned his intention to the Rector, I think he would have no difficulty in getting his motion carried. But if such a one is afraid that there will be no report ready he can, instead of taking the above course, move that upon the following Easter and each succeeding one an adjourned vestry meeting be held for the purpose of having and discussing such report, and that the lay representatives be instructed each year to prepare it for that meeting. Such a course, I believe, to be perfectly legitimate and would in time produce great results.