

The Church Times.

HALIFAX, SATURDAY, MAY 3, 1856.

ASCENSION DAY.

The revolving course of the Christian year has brought round to us the anniversary celebration of this holy Festival, which has occurred at an unusually early period in the present year—on the 1st day of May. Our readers are aware that as Ascension Day is always the 40th day after Easter, so the particular day on which it falls in each year is always determined within the same limits as the latter Festival, and consequently it must invariably fall between the 30th of April and the 3rd of June, both inclusively. It will not again occur so early as the 1st of May during the present century. With respect to the Festival itself, it is difficult to account for the general neglect which prevails, as to the observance of this public commemoration of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is evidently to be regarded as one of the highest class of the Feasts of the Christian Church. There seems, indeed, to be in the minds of some persons an apparent confusion between the *Resurrection* and the *Ascension* of our blessed Lord, as though the latter were only the necessary consequence of the former, in the same way as the Circumcision of Christ for example, is immediately connected with his Nativity. On this subject it is justly remarked by Bishop Medley, (in his Sermon for Ascension Day) that "many persons do so confound them, and speak of the Resurrection in a way that only belongs to the Ascension—and indeed it is one of the glaring defects of the popular theology of our day, to confound things that differ, and to merge many separate and distinct truths in one or two leading doctrines, and so obscure the general truths themselves." It is to be feared, also, that the comparative neglect of this glorious Festival is very much to be attributed to the circumstance that Ascension Day has not been recognized by the State as one of the public holidays, and thus the practice of professing Christians has been regulated by command of the Civil Magistrate rather than the divine authority of the Church of Christ. We may here mention some circumstances relating to this day, to show the peculiar estimation in which it is held by the Church of England. In addition to the Collect, Epistle and Gospel—1. There are five Festivals in the year, for which a *Proper Preface* is appointed in the Communion Service, and *Ascension Day* is one of them. 2. There are six days in the year for which *Proper Psalms* are appointed in the Daily Service, and *Ascension Day* is one of them. 3. There are thirteen days in the year on which the *Athanasian Creed* is appointed instead of the Apostles' Creed, and *Ascension Day* is one of them. In fact, this sacred Feast appears to have been always regarded of the highest authority from the earliest ages of the Church. It is remarked by Mosheim, the well known Ecclesiastical historian, among the events of the Fourth Century (Part ii. chap. iv.) "In most Societies of Christians, five festal seasons were annually observed, namely, in remembrance of the Saviour's birth, of His sufferings and death for the sins of men, of His Resurrection, of His Ascension to heaven, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon His Ministers." More particularly it is stated by the learned Bingham—(Orig. Eccles. Book xx. Chap. vi. Sect. 5.) "The observation of this Festival was so ancient, that St. Austin could derive its original from no other fountain, but either Apostolical institution, or the general agreement of the Church in some plebary Council. 'For those things,' says he, 'which are received and observed over all the world, not as written in Scripture, but as handed down to us by tradition, we conceive to be either written by the Apostles themselves, or some of the numerous Councils, whose authority is of very great use in the Church. Such are the anniversary solemnities of our Saviour's Passion, and Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven, and the Coming of the Holy Ghost from heaven.' It is certain, therefore, the Feast of Ascension was generally observed all over the Church long before St. Austin's time. Chrysostom often speaks of it under the name of our Lord's Assumption into heaven. For, not to mention those two sermons upon the Ascension, which are reckoned spurious, he has one upon the Assumption, the credit of which was never called in question, wherein he styles this Festival the illustrious and refulgent day of our Lord's Assumption into heaven.' And in another Homily upon Whitsunday, recounting the great solemnities that had just gone before, he says, 'We have lately celebrated our Saviour's Passion, his Resurrection, and then his Return into heaven,' that is, the Feast of his Ascension." These last words are fully applicable to ourselves

at the present season, and with reference to the Parish of St. Paul's, we are thankful to record that the Services of the day were of a peculiarly interesting and impressive nature. Providential circumstances too, seemed to contribute to the proper observance of it, as, after several days of damp and gloomy weather, the morning of Ascension Day dawned with uncommon brightness, thus affording a favourable opportunity for meeting in the House of God, to celebrate the last great triumphant act in the history of our Saviour's life upon earth. The Services of the day commenced with the administration of the Holy Communion in the Bishop's Chapel, at half past 7 o'clock. There was no other Service used on the occasion, and it is evident from our Prayer Book, that this Service is quite complete and independent in itself, not being connected with Morning Prayers or any other Service, nor restricted to any particular period of the day. The 79th Hymn was chanted at the beginning, and the *Gloria in Excelsis* at the end, the whole Service being concluded within an hour. The Bishop officiated, being assisted by the Rev. J. O. Cochran. There were 58 Communicants, including 8 Clergymen, there was also a good attendance of other worshippers, and there seemed to be a remarkable degree of solemnity and devotion connected with the whole Service. There were also, as usual, two full services in the parish of St. Paul's, and St. Luke's Chapel of Ease, morning and evening in the former Church, and morning and afternoon in the latter, Sermons were preached in St. Paul's, in the morning by the Ven. Archdeacon, from St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51, and in the evening by the Rev. Edmund Maturin, from St. John, xiv. 2, 8. The congregations were rather small during the day, being chiefly composed of females, but in the evening there was a better attendance. On the whole, we trust that it was a day of much spiritual comfort and edification to many devout and humble members of the Church, who kept the feast in the true spirit of the beautiful Collect for the day, and it is satisfactory to observe that several persons availed themselves of the privilege of assembling four times in the house of prayer, thus imitating the example of the Apostles and other Christians on the first Ascension Day who retired from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem for united prayer and supplication, and of whom it is recorded by the sacred Evangelist, that "they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."

THE TORONTO SYNOD.

In order that no inconvenience may arise from the state of the roads, and anxious to have a full attendance, the Lord Bishop of Toronto has notified the Diocese that the Visitation is postponed until the 30th April, and the Meeting of the Toronto Synod until the 1st. May.

This Synod of the Diocese of Toronto, is expected to be of universal interest. A division of the Diocese will be made, and it will depend upon the wisdom of the Synod to establish a just principle for the appointment of the Bishop present and future. A correspondent of one of the papers points out the difficulties which beset this subject, which have their origin most likely in some political arrangement, which a no small party in the Church very properly demurs to sanction. He remarks:

"It seems to be considered necessary that the sum of £12,000 should be provided for the support of a Bishop, and that until this is done no appointment can be made. To this I cannot but think there is great objection. In the first place it is very difficult in this country to raise £12,000, and, judging from the present disposition of our Church, seems just now to be impossible. I say £12,000, because although the Archdeacon of Kingston in his circular stated that £8,000 had been raised, yet he stated also, that it was raised conditionally, the condition being the appointment of the Revd. Thomas Hincks. But since it is evident that the Church here will never submit to the appointment of that gentleman, (at all events, in this very objectionable way,) it would, of course appear that we are not to have the money."

If we can judge from what we find in the papers, our Canadian brethren are determined to maintain for their Church the right of self government, and they allow no considerations connected with the question of legality to interfere with their proceedings. We do believe that if this were urged upon them, they are sufficiently alive to their natural and inalienable right to regulate their own affairs, without being subject to State restrictions, that they would take the simplest method of proving it, if the State manifested any coercive intention, by separating entirely from the Mother Church, and becoming of themselves an independent Episcopal Church. Happily, however, there is no difference of opinion between the State and the Church upon this important point, and the connection remains unimpaired, and mutual benefit will be derived from the relation which each will maintain towards the other. The force of Sir William Molesworth's despatch to the Governor General of Canada, if it ever

had any, is entirely done away by subsequent proceedings of the Home Government, which sanctions any Synodal assemblage of the Colonial Church, and directs its Ministers to give royal effect to any laws that the Legislature may make in their favor, and to any powers, save that of dominancy, that it may confer upon them. The Canadian Church has acquired this independent position, and this will be the rule in all the other colonial dioceses whenever the Churchmen in them get rid of their slavish notions, and are sufficiently alive to the great privilege of self-government, which it is within their power to establish for themselves and their posterity.—The increase of the Church, its self-supporting capacity, and its ability to resist the encroachments of other denominations either upon its members or its possessions, will date from the day when its action is concentrated, and a unity of purpose prevails in its separate dioceses—and we look forward to the time when a general Convention of the Provincial Church shall still further strengthen and spread her influence over every portion of British America.

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF THE CLERGY.—The Annual Sermons will be preached on Whitsunday, at St. Paul's by the Lord Bishop, and at St. Luke's by the Rev. W. Bullock, on behalf of the Special Funds of the Diocesan Church Society appropriated to this object.

The Canadian Legislature have decided that Quebec shall be the Capital city of Canada and the Seat of Government.

The Missionary at Weymouth begs, through the *Church Times*, to return many thanks to his Parishioners, for the handsome present he has lately received from them—a Silk Gown and Scarf, accompanied by a note expressive of the kindest wishes for his own and his family's welfare.

ONE WEEK LATER FROM EUROPE.

(Per Telegraph to Reading Room.)

The Steamship *Persia* has arrived at New York, Liverpool dates to 19th inst.

Cotton has advanced $\frac{1}{2}$.—Sales large.

Breadstuffs have declined.

Flour is lower. Wheat 3d.

Corn has also declined from previous advices.

Provisions unchanged. Business limited.

Sugar declined 6d.

Confederations finally closed on Wednesday.

Lord Panmure has declared that orders of troops to North America has no reference to affairs with the United States.

PEACE!—On Friday morning last we had the satisfaction of announcing, in an Extra, that a Treaty of Peace had been signed by the Plenipotentiaries at the Paris Conference.

The intelligence caused general rejoicing. Bells were immediately rung, and flags displayed. In the evening, there were brilliant illuminations, fireworks, bonfires, torch-light processions, firing of cannon, &c., &c. The "demonstrations" surpassed anything of the kind ever before witnessed in this quarter.—*Yarmouth Herald*.

MELANCHOLY DISASTER!—Schr. Mary, Nickerson, of Argyle, was capsized off Cape Ann during the gale of Monday last. A boy was washed over board and lost. Capt. Nickerson and Aaron Boyd perished in the rigging. Samuel Allan was taken off, on the following morning, and the vessel taken into Salem.—*Ibid*.

The St. John's papers contain detailed accounts of the awful wreck of the British Barque *Blake*, of 800 tons, Edward Rudolf master. This vessel sailed in excellent order, on the 8th Feb., from Slip Island Harbour, Mississippi, bound for Cork, with a cargo of pitch pine deals. When near the middle of the Atlantic, she encountered a series of terrific gales, or rather one continued hurricane lasting from the 4th of March until the 19th.—But long before this latter date the ship had become waterlogged, her sails and spars had been blown away, and every heavy sea made a clear breach over her deck. Several of the crew had already been swept away, and those who survived were suffering the most extreme sufferings from cold, hunger and fatigue. The gale began to abate on the 19th. For thirteen days the wretched survivors remained upon the wreck without tasting a morsel of food except one rat, which was divided amongst them. The account of their sufferings during this time, as given by the master himself, is quite harrowing. On the thirteenth day, one of the crew—the second one who had done so—sank under his sufferings and died.—The body was not thrown overboard. It served as food for the survivors, until four days afterwards, on the 23th, the sufferers were taken from the wreck by the schr. *Peggeon*, of St. John's N. F., bound to that port from Lisbon. They had been tantalized, during the most intense stage of their sufferings, by seeing three other vessels pass them at different times. They arrived at St. John's on the 15th of April. The survivors numbered eight, including all the officers of the ship.—Eight of the crew had been washed away, and two had died on the wreck from cold, fatigue, and hunger.—*Recorder*.