

FROM WEEK TO WEEK.

Spectator's Comments on Questions of Public Interest to Churchmen.

In his charge to Synod, recently delivered at Kingston, Bishop Mills dwelt with considerable vigour upon several timely subjects, chief among which was the subject of political ethics in Canada. Spectator had hoped, and still hopes, that the Church will move as a body, led by its House of Bishops, to hold up before the people of this country a more worthy conception of citizenship and the duties that pertain thereto. The effectiveness of an effort such as this depends in large measure upon the momentum it acquires, a clear vision of the object set before us, and an intelligent comprehension of the limitations within which such a discussion may profitably be conducted. It is because we have felt the necessity of action on a large scale that we have pressed upon the Bishops the wisdom of laying hold of this subject, not as individuals, but as a body. Through their presiding officer the call would go out throughout the Dominion, and hundreds of clergymen and high-minded laymen who realize that something must be done, would have the proper sanction and authorization for their action. A desultory fire here and there may do something to check the enemy, but victory is not achieved without concentration and co-operation. We cannot withhold, however, our admiration for those who, seeing no sign of movement in the main army, go forward without due support. It may seem but a feeble cry in the lonely wilderness, yet it will hasten the action which abnormal caution withholds.

What may be described as the objective of a movement such as this? It cannot be the casting down of one set of men merely to put others in their places, although this may be a necessary result in the realization of the conditions that are sought. We know, however, from experience that Governments may change, and yet the evil that oppresses us is not wiped out of existence. Our aim is not and cannot be to make men see alike or vote alike on public questions. But we may do something to make men value their duties and privileges as citizens, and induce them to hold honour as sacred in public as in private affairs. We surely are not mistaken in the opinion that a vast number of our citizens regard their responsibilities far too lightly. Can it be that the impression so widespread that many men will exchange their right to a voice in the government of their country for a coin is all a myth? Is it possible that the suspicion that the pressure of private interests in high places sometimes colours legislation not wholly for the public weal is only after all malevolent slander? It requires unlimited innocence to believe that behind all this there is not a dangerous reality. If judicial enquiries reveal little guilt in their official findings, the explanation is to be found in the vigorous requirements of evidence rather than the absence of wrongdoing. All this is cynically admitted by men who participate in political warfare when privately discussing the adventures of a campaign.

The work that all good citizens have before them is no less an undertaking than to uplift public opinion to a higher and more wholesome level. England has passed through the days of political degeneracy, and now stands as a conspicuous example of a nation cherishing political honour. Victory is as dear to a Briton as to any other man under the sun, and we may depend that those who seek public positions are not all saints. But the sense of public rectitude is so strong that the man who would employ methods which are taken as a matter of course on this continent to promote his election would be summarily cast out and rejected from the society of self-respecting citizens. What has been done in England may be done in this country also. We shall never in any case advance the cause of good government and good citizenship by sitting still and negatively acquiescing in a debased morality. If the Church does not move as a whole in an attempt to raise

the tone of public morals, then let us be thankful if individuals and sections of the Church go forth to do their duty under conditions that are associated with great difficulty.

The report of a commission, reluctantly appointed by his Grace Archbishop Bond to thoroughly enquire into the status and outlook of Sabrevois College, Montreal, the Anglican Mission among French Canadians, contains this significant paragraph: "We deem it our duty to state that we are persuaded that the finances of the mission have suffered, and will in the future continue to suffer seriously from the fact that through the creation of the Missionary Society of the Canadian Church the impression is widespread that contributions to its funds are to cover all the gifts of our Church people for missionary purposes other than local diocesan funds. And inasmuch as the work is officially 'The Church of England Mission to the French-speaking population of British North America,' we would recommend that the strongest possible representation should be made to the Board of Management of that society, that the continuance to raise the amount desired from this diocese will require that the claims of this special mission upon the funds be fairly and properly considered." The view that this commission evidently takes is that while the Canadian Church has hitherto regarded the mission to the French a purely diocesan obligation, it holds that it is or ought to be a national one. The purport of the recommendation is that unless the Missionary Society is ready to take over a share of the responsibility for the mission the diocesan contribution to the society ought to be reviewed. We are aware that Churchmen in Canada divide in their opinions regarding the wisdom or necessity of a mission to the French. That is a matter which we do not propose to discuss. If, however, the mission exists, and its object meets with the approval of the majority of Churchmen in Canada, on whose shoulders should the burden of its maintenance rest? Upon the diocese in which it happens to be situated, or upon the whole Church? The issue raised by the commission seems to Spectator to be a fair one for the serious consideration of the Church at large. The Church in Canada has received some of its most distinguished clergy from this very mission, and its work as represented by the laity has been far from fruitless. It has received assistance from all parts of the Dominion through the efforts of collecting agents, but has not been formally recognized by the Provincial or General Synods. Without anticipating the claims which the French mission may make, it would seem that simple justice and public policy would alike suggest that when the matter comes before the Board of Management it should be dealt with according to some principle that would appeal to the public. It cannot satisfactorily be waved aside as unimportant. It must be a worthy or unworthy effort of the Church, and it must be either diocesan or national in its claims for support.

The recent discussion in both Convocations in England in regard to the place the Athanasian Creed should hold in our services was most interesting. Not for thirty-two years has the question been up for public consideration, and the change wrought in a generation is somewhat remarkable. Bishops and priests almost without exception declared that the use of this ancient symbol as now ordered is a source of distress to the ordinary lay mind. There was no heroic declaration on the part of any of the participants in the discussion, that retirement from the Church would follow the tampering with this creed, such as made Canon Liddon's protest so emphatic in 1872. Most of those who spoke made clear their belief in the essential statements, but few, if any, failed to realize that there is a public demand for some action. As might be expected, the remedies were numerous and varied. Some would delete the damnable clauses as not of the essence of the creed; others would soften it by translation. Some would make its use optional, and others would relegate it to

great scarcity of clergy, both at home and abroad, has just been laid before both Houses of the Convocation of Canterbury. The report was presented in the Upper House by the chairman, the Bishop of Salisbury, and in the Lower House by the Archdeacon of Dorset, and has great interest for us, not only because of the subject dealt with, but also because a communication from a committee of the General Synod of Canada on the cognate subject of the permanent diaconate is contained in it. In both Houses this was mentioned. The Bishop of Salisbury said: One matter he omitted to mention on the previous day, concerning the appendix to the report. That appendix was occupied with the discussion of a communication from the committee of the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada on the extension of the diaconate. The present committee, therefore, considered whether a diaconate which would not necessarily detach men from secular callings would be an expedient thing; and the committee had decided in the negative, giving their reasons. He thought it would be the proper course to ask the House to allow him, as chairman of the committee (unless his Grace would like to undertake the duty himself, which would give great pleasure to them), to send copies of the report to the chairman of that committee, the Bishop of Huron, so that it might go forth as the judgment of the present committee. It might be desirable to say at the same time that it had not been discussed in the House, but that it was sent for their information." In the Lower House the Archdeacon of Dorset said in speaking of the report: "In the next place it also dealt very largely with the experience of the rest of the Anglican communion, and as one who owed a very deep debt, indeed, to that which he himself personally had learned from work in the colonial Church he was extremely glad to be permitted to present a report which dealt so largely with the practical experience of the Church in the colonies and in America. In the third place, this report also incorporated, he thought, for the first time, a direct communication from the General Synod of the Church in Canada; and that General Synod occupied, he believed, a unique position in the Anglican communion, and perhaps in the world, in that it was the expression of the most fully developed synodical system which existed at the present moment in the world with the due subordination of the diocese to the province and of the province to the General Synod." From this it appears that the views of the committee of the General Synod of Canada did not receive the support of the committee of the Province of Canterbury, but it is to be borne in mind that neither of these reports has been yet discussed by the bodies to which they were presented. Without going into the details of this most learned and exhaustive report, suffice it to say that the committee reports adversely for reasons which are given to the revival of the minor orders of sub-deacon and readers. It is, however, favourable to a large extension of the use of lay readers; that is, persons who may be admitted to read the public prayers in the Church, and to preach in consecrated buildings after due examination and license thereto by the Bishop. The extent to which this has already been done will appear from the following statement: "The Bishop of London read an extract from the London diocese book relating to the regulations which existed with regard to lay preachers. There were about fifty-seven diocesan readers and 200 parochial readers in the diocese. The latter simply worked in their own mission-rooms. They were all men of education and standing in the diocese. Some were members of the House of Lords, some were members of the House of Commons, and some of them were lawyers. They passed an examination by the Bishop's examiners before they were licensed, and they were admitted at a solemn service held in St. Paul's Cathedral." The Church at large will await with much interest the fuller discussion of this subject by the Convocations of Canterbury and York.