

THE WYCLIF QUINCENTENARY.

A GREAT opportunity has been lost. Wyclif was a man worth commemorating. It was worth while drawing the attention of a great thinking and working community like that of Canada, to the history of the period to which he belongs, to his own personal character, thoughts, opinions, and works, to the results of his teaching in England, in Bohemia, in Germany, and throughout the civilized world. This was worth doing, and it has not been done.

This failure is more deplorable when we think of the great success of the Luther celebration. When we remember the vast assembly that met little more than a year ago to do honour to the great Saxon Reformer, and more especially the large and complete array of representative men that appeared on the platform, we feel that the opportunity afforded by the return of Luther's four-hundredth birthday was not lost. When we re-call the various speeches, of various qualities, indeed, but, all contributing something to our knowledge—we are aware that we learnt something of Luther—that the man himself stood more clear before us in his unique personality, that the need for such a man became more evident, that his work, in its greatness and in its defects, was more intelligible, would be better appreciated. Of all this we find nothing, or hardly anything, in the Wyclif celebration.

In the first place, we ask, where were the representative men, in comparison with those who occupied the platform to do honour to Luther? In the celebration of 1883, we had, of churchmen, the Bishop of the Diocese, the Provost of Trinity College, and many others. We had the leading Presbyterian clergy present and speaking. We had a large representation of the Methodist body. We need go no further. At the Wyclif commemoration, there was not one of the parochial clergy of Toronto on the platform—not one! Of the Methodists not one. And yet it was the excellent Dr. Cather, an English Wesleyan Methodist, who did more than any one man to awaken English people to an interest in Wyclif, by writing, canvassing, and setting in motion every agency within his reach, in order to compel the English people to recognize the greatness of the man who, being one of themselves, became the "Day Star of the Reformation." Surely English clergymen and Methodists may be supposed to have some interest in such a celebration?

We have no information as to the manner in which this demonstration was got up. By whomsoever this was done, it was accomplished in the narrowest spirit. It would certainly appear that there had been great neglect on the part of some one or more persons. It was not a secret that Wyclif died on December 31, 1884. And yet the clergy as a whole ignored the fact. They cannot then blame others for taking up the matter. And these others have, naturally enough, done the thing in their own way. Perhaps we ought to be grateful to them for doing it at all, we could not reasonably expect them to approach the subject from any other point of view than their own. We may be a little distressed that they have not enlarged their view of the Church and the world; but perhaps that would be a little unreasonable, for then they must change so much besides that they would cease to be themselves. At least we need spend no more speculation on that subject. We shall make no progress in it that will be of

much avail. Let us see what was done by the speakers at the meeting.

Several things might have been done. First of all some one might have given us a picture of the man John Wycliffe, made him stand before us as he lived, with something of his habits, circumstances, methods of thought speech, and conduct, so far as these could be recovered. Something of this kind was done for Luther. Of course, it would be much more difficult to do it for Wyclif. He was a century and a half earlier than Luther. He was not nearly so much of a doer as the German reformer, his circumstances did not allow of his standing out so clearly on his field of action as his successor. Besides, he had not the striking individuality of Luther. Still something might have been done in this way, and *nothing was done*. Not the very ghost of Wyclif, to say nothing of his living form, stands before us as a result of the celebration.

Again, we might have learnt something of Wyclif's opinion in reference to the controversies of his day, on "Dominion" (a very leading subject,) on the Papacy, on the subject of justification, on the Sacraments; but we had as good as nothing on these topics. Certainly at a meeting held by such staunch Protestants we might have expected to hear something in answer to the many charges and objections brought against Wyclif's conduct and his teaching; but there is no sign that any of the speakers had even heard of them, or, if they had, that they had anything to say in answer to them.

It was perhaps too much to expect that anyone of the speakers should have read the works of Wyclif—such as have been already published. We might have expected at least to hear of Trialogus; recently reviewed in these columns, but no, the only evidence that any single speaker at this meeting had ever heard of his works was furnished by a reference to the Latin polemical works, just edited by Dr. Buddensieg, the first two volumes published by the Wyclif Society. This was gratifying, as proving that there is in Toronto at least, one subscriber to the Wyclif Society, but it did not evince a very large acquaintance with his writings. This reference, we may add, did not come from one who even nominally represented the Church of England.

We certainly had a right to expect a tolerably complete account of Wyclif's translation of the Bible. But nearly the whole address on this subject was of a rambling character, dealing very little with the necessary points, we had no quotations from writers of eminence as to the influence of Wyclif's translation on succeeding versions. We moreover gained no idea whatever of any distinctive characteristics of this version, or of the manner in which it influenced future translators and was modified by them. Indeed the whole of the address on Wyclif and the Bible displays an absolute non-acquaintance with the more salient and interesting aspects of this question. We were told, indeed, that Wyclif's version was translated from the Latin vulgate which, we were informed, was far from pure, although that might be said with equal, or perhaps greater truth, of the *Textus Receptus*, from which mainly the authorized version was made!

We wish we could speak with greater cordiality, and with some slight gratitude, of this commemoration; but it is impossible, not only has the thing been done otherwise than well, but this doing of it has prevented its being well done. Wyclif was a great man and did a great work. He influenced the Bohemian reformers who perished at Con-

stance. They, in their turn, exercised a very wide influence upon Germany. The result of this came out in the Lutheran Reformation. Wyclif, moreover, had no less a part in the formation of our noble English language than that "well of English undefiled," Chaucer. May we hope that one result will follow from this and other gatherings? We see that there was loud applause at the announcement that Wyclif's works were now to be published. Was the enthusiasm expressed in that applause worth a guinea, about five dollars, a year from each one who applauded? That is the applause needed for the production of Wyclif's works. The Wyclif society require about 400 or 500 additional subscribers, in order to get on successfully with their work. No doubt the "intercollegiate" libraries will be among the subscribers. But we don't see them in the list of members, published Dec. 31, 1884,—not even that of the institution which bears the reformer's name! Perhaps it is an omission. There must have been a large number among those applauding persons to whom a guinea a year cannot be much to give. And the guinea is wanted; and as they applaud the publication, no doubt they will, without delay, forward the guinea for the last three years, and for the present year of 1885. The honorary Secretary is John W. Standerwick, Esq., General Post Office, London, E.O. We trust the feeling manifested at the Wyclif celebration will stand the test we have applied. We regret that so noble an opportunity of doing justice to this great character was lost.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

A REPROACH AND ITS REMEDY.

HOW comes it to pass that so little attention is paid to the observance of this festival? It seems worthy of special and devout celebration. This Feast calls to mind, that the blessings of the Gospel are not limited to one race and a single nation, as were those of the Jewish church; but were, as on this day, thrown open to us Gentiles, to all the world. We are reminded too by this celebration that the Church of Christ is a Catholic Church, "the holy church throughout the world."

We do not seem to consider and appreciate, as we ought, the mystery which is dwelt upon in such glowing language by St. Paul in the epistle for the day, or the glorious purposes for which our Lord was manifested. (See the Collect for the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.) Else, we should not see more than half our Churches closed, and a beggarly attendance in those that are open, on this one of the most important and interesting of the Church's festivals.

These thoughts came into the mind of the writer as he walked home from evensong, on the Feast of the Epiphany, at which the attendance had consisted of the officiating priest and one other person, such a service, and such a congregation surely does not meet the intention of the church, in placing this day in her calendar. She contemplates a marked observance, having appointed special lessons, Collect, Epistle and Gospel, and the recital of the Athanasian Creed for the festival.

Might not the Clergy do something to increase the consideration paid to this, and the other holy days and holy seasons of the Church, by taking occasion on the previous Sunday to call special attention to them, explaining their use and object, and urging their proper commemoration; and by taking care, also, that the services shall be cheerful, appropriate and attractive, and at such hours as