

SALISBURY DIOCESAN SYNOD—THE BISHOP'S ADDRESS.

THE third session of the second Synod of the Diocese of Salisbury was held on the 11th and 12th ult. It was presided over by the Bishop, and was attended by nearly three hundred members. Although it differs from our Diocesan Synods in Canada, in that it has no legislative or executive functions, its proceedings are not divested either of interest or of importance, and will doubtless have their weight in the Church at home. A considerable number of subjects relating to the Church was discussed, and many of them were of more than local interest—such as matters connected with Missions, the extension of the Diaconate, shortening the Church services, the resolution of doubts in the use of the Prayer Book, Marriage within the prohibited degrees; nor was the discussion on the Public Worship Act one of minor importance or of limited interest. On the question of the Diaconate, the Synod appeared to be generally opposed to extending either it or a sub-Diaconate to persons engaged in professions or trades. With reference to shortening the services, the feeling was decidedly more in favour of separating the services in the morning than of mutilating any of them. On the subject of special missions, the Bishop expressed his wish for an increase of lay-readers, and said that at the present time he did not think there were five of them licensed in his Diocese, although it was a thing asked for on all sides. His subsequent remarks went to show that he wished to have more organization or system about the matter, either a board of examiners to test the fitness of candidates, or something else he had not thought of, but which he would be glad if some one would suggest to him. But he thought it a matter of the highest consequence; as it had been said that the old-fashioned Rector and Curate in a large parish had much the same effect as if they lit a Cathedral with two wax candles.

The most important part of the Synod, however, was, as we often find to be the case among ourselves, the address of the Bishop, in which he referred at some length to the difficult position in which the Church is now placed, as well as to various subjects of immediate interest at the present time. He believed the true principles of the Church of God include a body of communicant laymen, freely elected and occupying a sort of independent position, and that for the purpose of forming a legislative Synod. He spoke of the other system, under which the clergy alone formed Synods looking for the consent and obedience of the laity, as being "the mediæval system." But should not the Bishop have called it the primitive system? For we could not refer to a Synod constituted in any other way, either in early or in mediæval times—not, indeed, until a very recent period; and we fancy it would be difficult to find scriptural authority for anything else. His Lordship referred to disestablishment in a tone rather more desponding than would appear to be called for; and remarked that "if disestablishment comes

upon us, it will come upon us in a very different manner from that which they had witnessed in Ireland"; and, he added:—"It appears to be one of those cases when a second visit of the Sybil would offer much harder terms than the first." But we confess we cannot imagine why such should be the case. If there is any honesty at all remaining in the English bosom, surely the endowments of the Church which were unquestionably voluntary—and this would include by far the greater part of them—would not be sacrilegiously appropriated to secular uses in the way that Henry the Eighth, of infamous memory, robbed the Church. There appears to be far less difficulty in assigning a large portion of the revenues of the Church of England to a origin of a purely private and voluntary character than in the case of the Church in Ireland. And what right, we would ask, has the English Parliament to seize upon the property belonging to the Church more than upon that of a Presbyterian or Socinian congregation? Even if the State had given the whole of it to the Church, by what moral or legal right could the State seize upon it again? But in point of fact, it is more than could ever be done to show that the State ever gave a penny of its revenue or endowment to the Church in England, in any period of her history. The Bishop deprecates mere "Act of Parliament unity," and believes the ancient primitive unity which springs from within, in the actual unit of heart and truth, is a much greater influence than the unity arising from any Act of Parliament. But he does not believe in disestablishment, nevertheless.

His Lordship feels very uneasy as to the condition of the Church, and the law of the Church at the present time. He thinks that in England the legislative and judicial functions in the Church at present are considerably confused; and this arising from the paralyzed legislative powers of the Church. The judicial functions, he says, are now invading a very considerable province which literally is not theirs. What with a heterogeneous mass of documents scattered over 150 years of controversy, with usages, injunctions, and rubrics, the whole body of which are notoriously incapable of being executed, he thinks it by no means impossible that the ten eminent judges sitting on the Ridsdale case (for instance) may each select some different leading principle, and give at least as many judgments as there are judges. "What we want, and cannot do without," he says, "is a living voice in the Church of God." Questions arise which are not dealt with in any of these documents I have mentioned, and which have to be dealt with in a peculiar manner. Suppose the teachings of Swedenborg, Irving, and other men of that stamp, were to be renewed, and any patron were to present to me a clerk to be appointed to this or that benefice, who held this or that opinion, that clerk would perhaps sign the thirty-nine articles and go through every test. But what could I do? The law has not contemplated the heresies of this generation, consequently we want something of the kind which will enable us to deal with heresies as they arise.

In reply to a claim that in his Diocese they were at peace, it had been said that such might be the case, but they were not at peace satisfactorily. He would not like to have a Tooth case in his Diocese. He would not like it for the sake of the parish concerned; because he would not like to send any of his most hard working clergy to Devizes Gaol; as he thought that would be a very sad thing for him to do. He would much have preferred that the Public Worship Act had provided for a Bishop mediating first between the contending parties; and then if he thought proper, the power of extinguishing the whole case might come afterwards. If such had been the arrangement, and a case of the kind were to come before him, he might bring the two parties together, and try to bring them to peace. If he should not succeed, it would rest with him to determine whether the case should go into Court or not. He hoped, however, that no such case would occur in his Diocese, for he would have great reluctance in allowing a case to go the length the Hatcham case has gone. His Lordship, we think, had a very correct impression of the evil that must be done in a parish when such proceedings as those which have recently occurred in Hatcham are allowed to take place. The amount of evil unquestionably done in that parish must be immense, whether the clergyman's ritual was right or wrong.

A REMARKABLE PHASE OF MODERN UNBELIEF.

PERHAPS one of the most remarkable features of modern unbelief is to be found in the want of faith which its votaries show in the consolation and sentiments furnished by the various systems propounded in connection with a denial of the Christian Revelation and of a personal God. What such people mean by adopting so much of the phraseology of Christianity, by sympathizing with so many of its aspirations, and by claiming so many of its results is perfectly puzzling to any one who looks for consistency in any part of the wide domain of infidelity. They tell us they will hear of nothing supernatural. They reject all theology, and say religion must be grounded entirely on what is "frankly human;" but yet their aims and aspirations are evidently a great deal higher. The hymn "Nearer my God, to Thee," is one example among many. But how unexplainable if M. Renan is to be believed when he says, that "after organizing society, the next duty of thinking men will be to organize God!" How empty such an aspiration if the Cause of the universe is not above it but inferior to it! How absurd the expression of such a wish, if, as the modern pantheists teach, it is by evolution alone that the unknown and unknowable creator attains anything like self-consciousness. Mr. Frederic Harrison is one of the most distinguished of the English Comtists, who therefore disbelieves in the supernatural; and yet he says:—"Morality will never suffice for life; and every attempt to base our existence on morality alone, or to crown existence with morality alone, must certainly fail. For this is trifling away the