

PROPOSED CANON.

Candidates for the office of deacon (having received "faculties") may be admitted to that order at the age of 24 years, having first passed such examinations as shall satisfy the Bishop, in the following subjects, viz.: the History, Antiquities, &c., of the Bible and its doctrines, as interpreted by the Prayer Book (including the articles in both languages); and also, an outline of church history—regard being had especially to the history of the Church of England. No deacon shall be admitted to the order of the priesthood until he shall have attained the age of twenty-five years, nor then (ordinarily) unless he shall have first passed a satisfactory examination in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, together with such other subjects as the bishop shall require. Nevertheless a bishop may, if he see fit, advance a deacon to the priesthood, after twenty-five years' service in the diaconate, without examination in Greek and Hebrew, if he shall have found him faithful, and shall judge that he has "purchased to himself a good degree." No deacon shall have any independent spiritual charge, but shall be subject to the direction and superintendence of such priest as the bishop shall place him under. It is desirable, that in places where there is not full employment for deacons in the particular methods set forth in the ordinal, deacons should be specially employed in the work of education. Deacons shall have no place in the Provincial Synod, but shall be admitted to diocesan Synods under such conditions as the said Synods shall severally prescribe.

"Faculties." This word is introduced with reference to the preface of the ordinal. The granting of faculties is a legal prerogative of the Archbishop of Canterbury. If we are tied by this legal provision, as the church is in England, "faculties" might easily be procured, and placed at the disposal of all Bishops in Canada. No doubt, His Grace would be ready to grant them in this way upon application from the Synod.

"Twenty-one years." The circumstances of this country, and of this Church, demand admission to the diaconate at an earlier age than 23. Other professions are open to young men at an early age. It is highly expedient to place a much larger interval than at present exists between the diaconate and priesthood. The age of admission to the diaconate has varied considerably; and there is no reason why the fixed age of 23 should be regarded as unalterable. In Gibson's Codex, Tit. vi. c. v., may be seen the following comment upon the age of 23 years. The rule in the councils, (and in the canon law out of the councils) is 25; and a reason is there given for it, from the 4th council of Toledo. *In veteri lege, ab anno vigesimo quinto Levitæ in tabernaculo servire mandantur.* This also became a rule of the English church, but it was a case dispensable; and in the church of Rome, not only the Council of Trent made it 23, but the Pontifical, published about the time of our Reformation, made the age of a deacon sufficient, if it was not under 20. To this our church, in the time of Edward the VIth, added one, and is now come into the middle way, between the two extremes, viz., 23; providing also a faculty of dispensation for persons of extraordinary abilities to be admitted sooner.

In the sister church of the U. S. the diaconate is open at the age of 21. A bishop of that church, who was ordained deacon at 21, told the writer a few days ago that it had been of incalculable value to him, to have thus gained three years' experience.

"Articles in both languages." This is what is meant, (is it not?) or meant principally, in the preface to the ordinal, by the deacon being found,

"learned in the Latin tongue." But after all, is a knowledge of even Latin absolutely indispensable for a deacon?

"Twenty-five years." It is desirable to make the interval between the two orders longer than it is, and more marked. The priest who has gained experience, where only it can be attained; in the diaconate, will be a much more efficient minister, or priest, and will be received as such by his flock, when he comes to have a charge. The following extract from the 'Codex' will relieve any extra-conservative minds from difficulty in adopting this age:

"Four and twenty." Anciently, the age was 30, from our Saviour's entering upon his ministerial office at that age: *Dominus enim noster Jesus Christus trigesimo anno baptizatus est*: but the canon law making an exemption to cases of necessity, and requiring no more than 25 absolutely, that became the fixed age for the order of priesthood, and is so declared in the aforesaid Pontifical, and by the council of Trent. But the methods of education being in these last days more quick and compenious than in former times, our church has thought 24 sufficient with these limitations, which are not in the church of Rome with regard to 25; that they shall be 24 complete ("full twenty-one" ordinal); that there is no room left for dispensation; and that till they are admitted to the order of priesthood, they are not capable of any benefice or ecclesiastical promotion.

The twenty-fifth year might, in most cases, be spent in college. The advantages of a year of calm study after 3 years of practical work, and of the influence of experienced men, becoming students again, amongst, or at least in connection with, or in sight of, young theological students would be immense.

"Hebrew." Is it not the experience of every unfortunate priest, who, like the writer knows nothing, or next to nothing, of the original language of the larger half of God's own Word, that he cannot thoroughly exercise that office of the "Scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven," whom our Lord compares to "an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

"A bishop may xxx advance a deacon xxx without xx Greek and Hebrew." It does not follow that because the bishop may, he will. Yet there may be cases where he will "see fit," so to reward faithfulness in the diaconate. It is not necessary to there being a permanent diaconate, that any deacon should be incapable of promotion; that would be contrary to the spirit of 2 Tim. iii. 13, quoted in the canon.

Might not a period, or rather several periods of study be, in some cases, allowed to the deacon during his first 12 years of service, if the bishop considered him to have ability and energy to fit himself for examination in Greek and Hebrew. If he succeeded in the attempt, all well and good; if he did not, he would still gain something, and the church would gain something also. Those years of study had better be stated years, say 4th, 8th, and 12th. A deacon could not then importune his bishop to advance him out of course.

"No independent spiritual charge." The mischief of inexperienced young men being placed in independent charges is too well known, and too obvious to need comment. All sensible young men, even after they have waited for admission to Holy Orders, till the age of 23, still desire to commence their ministerial duties (if it were possible) under some one who could advise and direct them:

Ought there not be, at least, one deacon to

every priest? In our country parishes, where a priest spends so much time upon the road, travelling from one congregation to another, and thus loses a vast amount of time, which might, and ought to be given to better things, i.e., prayer and study, and attention to his family, (1 Tim. iii. 4. Compare Genesis xviii. 19, and Sam. iii. 13,) a deacon might be placed in every congregation.

One priest might then have charge of half a dozen congregations, separated by distances of from 5 or 8 to 20 miles. Thus, the priest might live, say at A, where he would have also his deacon to assist him, and to "baptize and to preach" (ordinal) "in his absence." The priest then would spend one Sunday at home. He would hold, of course, two services, with the Holy Communion, at A. At all the other stations the resident deacon "in the absence of the priest," would hold also two services (a matter, this, of paramount importance.) The next Sunday the priest spends at B, 20 miles off, where, as at home the Sunday before, he administers the Holy Communion, and catechises the children. He leaves home, to go to B, early on Saturday, and returns late on Monday, devoting two half days to visiting at B. Tuesday to Friday he spends at home. The third Sunday is devoted to C and E in like manner. C is, say 10 miles from A, and 5 from D—D being 12 from A. The fourth Sunday he spends similarly at E; and so on.

In the country, then, there may be 5 or 6 deacons to each priest. In towns, many parishes, require a deacon, and perhaps two to each priest. If there happens to be two or three small congregations, they might be placed under the charge of one priest, as suggested above in country parts—especially ought every cathedral church to have its staff of deacons.

"Deacons xxx employed in the work of education." It is thought by some, and strongly desired by others, that deacons might, in part, at any rate, support themselves by the labour of their own hands. Let it be assumed now that they may not do so—although some priests' hands among us are coarse and rough from holding a plough, or wielding a mattock—still seeing that "it appertaineth to the office of deacon to instruct the youth in the catechism;" that numbers of priests are employed in the work of education (secular as well as religious); that they are appointed to the office of (even secular) teachers by bishops in some cases, while in other cases bishops have held, and hold, the office of teacher themselves, with the approval of the body of the church; that "aptness to teach" is a ministerial (not mere diaconal) qualification (1 Tim. iii. 2, and 2 Tim ii, 24.) A deacon may certainly be employed in teaching; he will thus be enabled partly to earn his own living. And, who is going to calculate the blessing to the christian world, (yea, even to the unchristian world,) of having a large body of deacon schoolmasters. It would be one of the noblest works that any bishop could do, to inaugurate such a body in the vineyard over which the Lord has placed him to preside.

This is, already a lengthy essay. The importance and the largeness of the subject requires length. There is yet more to be said. There are some objections to be examined. Without such examination, these suggestions would be, perhaps, summarily dismissed as not practical. Thus, it is asked, how are deacons to be supported? Take first the country case we have proposed—there are clergymen, suppose, at A, B, C, and D; clergymen, wearing out, not merely their horse and harness, but their heart and spirit, in toiling