

## MONTHLY NOTES

### LAY REPRESENTATIVES

(Communicated)

The Synod meeting (which has just been brought to a close) is always a matter of interest to churchmen, and though we of St. Alban's are not permitted to send representatives in so far as the laity are concerned, that fact does not prevent us from watching its proceedings each year, knowing as we do that the general prosperity of the Church depends to some extent upon the work there accomplished.

It will not therefore be out of place to glance at the composition of the Synod and the qualifications of its members.

Commencing then with the clerical members, it appears that every clergyman in charge of a Church or Mission is entitled to take his seat in the Synod; so that on all questions that come up for discussion the clergy are fully represented, and are from their educational advantages and frequent opportunities for public speaking, always able to present their views on the different matters that arise to the best possible advantage.

Now as regards the laymen. Their qualifications are as follows: they must be men of twenty one years of age or upwards; must be communicants of at least one year's standing; must have communicated at least three times during the twelve months previous to the election; and must be duly elected by the vestry of the Church which they represent.

The vestry, it may be explained, consists, in Churches where they have rented pews, of all pew-holders, who are not in arrears for rent or other Church dues up to Easter. In free Churches, that is, in Churches where there are no rented pews, it consists of all men of upwards of twenty one years of age, who have applied before the twenty-second day of the January previous to the election to be placed on the vestry list and have delivered to the Church-wardens of the congregation of which they are members the following declaration.

"I solemnly declare that I am a member of the Church of England and of the congregation of— Church (naming it); that I am of the full age of twenty one years; that I am an habitual worshipper with the said congregation and have been so for three months next preceding January the first instant; that I am not registered as a member of any other congregation; and that during the three months above mentioned I have not voted, nor do I intend to, as a member of any other congregation at an election of Lay representative in the next Synod."

If however the name of the party is already on the list of those who were entitled to vote at the last election, it is not necessary to repeat the above declaration.

The vestry thus constituted is, as we know, called to meet on the Monday following Easter Sunday in each year, and at that meeting, or at an adjourned meeting according to the readiness or unreadiness of the financial report of the Church's affairs, the Church wardens are elected and appointed and then the lay representatives are elected for the next Synod.

So it would seem that the Church-wardens are charged with the duty of looking after, and managing the temporal affairs of the Church while the lay representatives are supposed to interest themselves in the more spiritual matters that arise in connection with Church affairs, and especially, to make it their business to attend the meetings of the Synod and take part in its deliberations. Therefore, as we Churchmen follow from year to year the discussions in Synod and see how large a portion of its limited session is taken up with financial affairs and the best methods of managing them, we feel compelled to make an addition to the division of duties as above indicated and say that Church-Wardens have the management of the local finances of each parish while lay representatives appear to devote most of their energies to a share in the management of the finances of the diocese at large, leaving spiritual matters to take second place.

If the money matters appear to have the upper place in the Synod, the representative legislative body of the Church of England in this diocese, how is it with the local governing body in each parish, that is, the vestry?

I think it would be found that a typical meeting of the Vestry in a parish where nothing out of the ordinary had occurred during the preceding year would be something like this. At eight o'clock, the time when the meeting is supposed to commence, the members begin to drop in at the place appointed. Five minutes later several little groups of vestrymen are to be seen discussing the probabilities as to who will be the incoming Churchwardens, and what will be the complexion of the report of the out-going ones, rosy-hued or gloomy. By ten minutes past eight probably both Churchwardens are present, the Rector taking the chair. The meeting is then opened with prayer and the vestry clerk or some other appointed person reads the minutes of the last Easter meeting which are duly confirmed and pass into history. The way is now open for the Churchwarden's report. If they have been prompt men of business, it will be forth coming and will be read for the enlightenment of the assembled vestrymen and, through the reporters, for the information of the public. If, however the Churchwardens resemble one of the early Saxon kings in that they are unready, or, if the officers of the Church in the exercise of their discretionary power, decide in conjunction with their Rector that it would be better not to read the financial report at this particular meeting, then it will be found by the vestrymen that through some accident or unavoidable delay the report is not at hand and that part of the proceedings will have to be taken up at an adjourned meeting. In either case they can go on with the election of the people's warden and the appointment of the Rector's warden. When this is over and it is found that one of the two or three lay representatives is retiring or, it is thought desirable to have one or two new ones, one of the older members of the Vestry usually nominates a disappointed aspirant for Churchwarden for the position, adding a few complimentary remarks as a salve to the wounded sensibilities of the would be warden, and the nomination being duly seconded with the addition, perhaps, of a