

COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Colonial Churchman.

Messrs. Editors,

In the Colonial Churchman of the 26th January last there is an article which, in more than one point of view, is interesting and instructive. I refer to Laing's Journal of a residence in Norway. It furnishes an example of that correspondence* between the usages of our own Church and those of other leading branches of the Reformation, which is much too little known, and it sets in a striking light, the value and importance of the particular ordinance of Confirmation.

In another point of view, however, I do conceive that the article calls very strongly for correction; and I hope you will permit me by means of the few observations which follow, to obviate what appears to me to be its hurtful tendency.

I advert to the representation which is given of the manner in which Confirmation is administered in the church of England. It is stated not only that the Bishop knows nothing of the candidates for the rite; but that the pastor usually knows nothing more of them than that they are baptized and of due age.

Now with respect to the Bishop it is evidently out of the question, that except in some particular instances, he should have previous knowledge of the individuals whom he travels round the diocese to confirm; and the responsibility of ascertaining their individual fitness, must lie upon their immediate pastor. The Bishop is only responsible for impressing upon the Clergy and people at large a sense of the solemn importance of Confirmation, and for establishing and enforcing certain general rules to secure as far as may be, the restriction of the rite to proper subjects, and the improvement of it to their real edification and advancement in holiness. The parochial, or other clergyman who examines the young people and assists their preparation, has a special opportunity in Confirmation, aided by parents and friends, for arming the young of his flock, at a critical period, against the battle of the world which they are about to encounter; and imprinting upon their minds as well the great principles of faith, as the particular obligations of church-membership.

That the church of England as a body have at all times adequately done their duty in this behalf, is what I will not maintain. In the lax times of the church, Confirmation may, in many instances, have degenerated into little better than a customary form: and there have, no doubt, been some parishes (of which the personal experience or observation of Mr. Laing must be presumed to have furnished him with an example) in which the candidates have received their tickets with scarcely any examination, or even with none.

The very exaction of tickets, however, shews the purpose of the ruling powers in the church that no ill-prepared candidates should pass. The prayer-book itself, in more than one place, states a certain amount of attainment in religious knowledge, which it is to be insisted upon that the candidates should exhibit. They must be masters of the creed, the Lord's prayer and the decalogue, with whatever more may be considered as implied in requiring that they should be "further instructed in the church catechism,"—a formulary which is expressly provided as "An Instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be Confirmed by the Bishop."—It must be left, I apprehend, to the judgment of the minister to decide on the degree of enlightened acquaintance with the truths taught in the catechism which, coupled with

other evidences of a serious purpose in the undertaking, must constitute the requisites of admission. Some may establish too low a standard of spiritual attainments; others may strain it a great deal too high, and exact promises dangerously rigid. The occasion is one of marked importance and solemnity; but the ordinance is designed particularly for those whose course is presumed to be yet before them, and who are now in an early stage of their career. Severe tests ought not to be applied to them: strong meat ought not to be administered: searching questions as to internal evidences of the work of grace in their hearts ought to be sparingly proposed. If besides a general statement of the leading truths of Revelation, they can give a distinct account of repentance and their own need of it; forgiveness of sins through Christ and their own need of that also, as well as of spiritual aid and guidance, and if in their lives and manners they do not deny their God and Saviour, I conceive that they are properly admissible to Confirmation, which is to be regarded with full faith as a conveyance of Grace to the recipient who is duly prepared. But it is rather to our purpose to consider what has been the actual practice of the church of England in the preparation of candidates.

That the church of England in general does not regard confirmation as a mere form, may appear from the variety of tracts, both devotional and didactic, including the *Catechism on Confirmation*, prepared for the use of young persons about to receive the rite, which are on the list of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge; some of which have been in circulation for a century or more.

That the Bishops use their endeavours in the same behalf, appears from the tenor of the circulars usually addressed to the clergy with reference to Confirmation, and from the rules established respecting the age which it is necessary to have attained before admission, and which some of the Bishops have lately fixed at 15 or 16 instead of 14, which is still, I believe, the usual limit. The episcopal instructions to the clergy are often very particular and very strict: and the address which they deliver in the church to the young persons themselves, very solemn and impressive. I remember a bishop who, in the town where he resided, had all the candidates for some time before one of his confirmations, once or twice a week at his own house, when he instructed them familiarly in the principles of their faith.

The duty of the parochial clergy in relation to this subject is thus laid down in the 61st canon:—

"Every minister that hath care and charge of souls, for the better accomplishing of the orders prescribed in the book of common prayer concerning confirmation, shall take especial care that none shall be presented to the bishop for him to lay his hands upon, but such as can render an account of their faith according to the catechism in the said book contained. And when the bishop shall assign any time for the performance of that part of his duty, every such minister shall use his best endeavours to prepare and make able, and likewise to procure as many as he can to be there brought, and by the bishop to be confirmed."

It was my lot to witness not long ago in England the execution, in a modern instance, of the duties thus laid down. I was passing some days at the Rectory of a country town at the time when the confirmation was close approaching. The young people of the parish, chiefly belonging to the peasantry, attended at the house in the evening by classes, for several weeks before the time, to be examined and instructed by their pastor. The confirmation took place during my visit; and the orderly and reverent manner of conducting the ceremony, in itself most affecting and impressive; the seriousness of deportment among the young people, together with the excellence and suitableness of the address made to them by the Bishop, produced altogether an effect which could hardly be supposed to be that of an empty show, and which strengthened the attachment to the church and her institutions even among persons who had at one time been greatly estranged from her.

Such scenes are not uncommon either in the mother country or the colonies; and I am persuaded that you will feel it to be not unimportant that some of your readers, as well in the British provinces as in the United States, who may have received unfavourable impressions from the article in question respecting the administration of the rite in the church of England, shall be made aware that the facts of the case are very different from the picture of Mr. Laing. Commending, therefore, to your indulgence and acceptance the foregoing imperfect observations upon the subject, I remain, gentlemen, your faithful servant and ally in the Gospel,

ANACTOROS.

For the Colonial Churchman.

Messrs. Editors,

Those subscribers to your excellent paper who are residents in New Brunswick, and who are friendly to the Church Society formed in this Province, will have derived much satisfaction from perusing the interesting account given in your paper of 1st June, of the visitation of the Clergy, held a little previous to that time in Halifax.

It has always appeared to me that detached as the Clergy are, the meeting of a few of them will always be pleasing to themselves and profitable to their people. How much more satisfaction then, and how much greater advantage, may be looked for from a general meeting of the whole Clergy of a Province, with their Bishop at their head, to counsel, animate, and cheer them by his advice; and when they may, if only for a few days, take sweet counsel together and walk to the house of God, not only as friends, but as brethren, bound to each other by the holiest bands of affection.

Those who have been long separated, are delighted in recognizing old familiar faces, and find exquisite delight in reverting to the days of other years; and even an inattentive observer can not but perceive how sweet and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity;—those brethren especially who are employed in the highest and holiest vocation, whose business it is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort others,—and who can with a very poor grace, one would think, intreat their people to live together in christian unity, if they themselves take no pains to cultivate feelings of brotherly affection towards those who are engaged in the same sacred employment with themselves.

To myself there was a peculiar pleasure afforded by the account of the formation of the Church Society for the Province of Nova Scotia, and that it was entered into with so much good feeling by the Laity, and with such entire unanimity among the Clergy.

The whole proceedings have furnished an entire approval of the conduct of the Clergy of this Province, and who, by the by, if they have been somewhat condemned in the public prints, for assuming too much, and even for acting without the direction or concurrence of the Bishop, may take to themselves the credit of being first and foremost in this labor of love.

May the only rivalry between our societies be—which can accomplish the greatest amount of good, in disseminating the truths of the blessed Gospel, and in extending the influence of our beloved Church.

A PRESBYTER OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

For the Colonial Churchman.

Messrs. Editors,

How happy is that country where our holy Religion is taught in all its purity! How happy the people who are blessed with the regular ordinance of Religion! What a delightful day in happy England is the Sabbath, the day of holy rest!

My heart sickens within me when I read of the manner in which the Sunday is spent in all Roman Catholic and some protestant countries on the continent of Europe, where the theatre and the ball room succeed the solemnities of the sanctuary.

But not so, thanks be to God, is it in our parent land! In the large cities what blessed opportu-

*In Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland, the churches are strictly episcopal. The only Archbishop is in Sweden. The Danish church has its deans and archdeacons, and its course of Sundays after Trinity, &c. like our own. Even the Presbyterian churches of continental Europe have their Liturgies, forms for baptism and marriage, &c. with the retention of sponsors at baptism, and the observance of Christmas, Easter, Passion Week, Whitsuntide, and Ascension day.