

## The Church Times.

HALIFAX, SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1856.

## DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY.

THE near approach of the time appointed for the election of Representatives of the Laity to sit in the Diocesan Assembly, will probably lead our readers to expect some further remarks upon this important subject, notwithstanding our recent articles; for this will be the first election of members of the Assembly, the former Delegates having been sent only for the purpose of settling preliminaries, of deciding whether Synods should be held, and settling rules for their guidance.

The meeting in October next will therefore be the first regular meeting of the Assembly, and we hope that in every Parish fit persons will be found, able and willing to take their part in the transaction of business, in which all are more or less interested. It is no longer a question whether a Synod or Assembly shall be held in this Diocese. It is already constituted, and the only question is: Shall we all endeavour to make it as efficient as possible? Shall we take care to have all parties represented, or shall we leave in the hands of a few the deliberations and decisions upon the affairs of our Church? Before the Constitution was settled, there may have been room for doubt what would be its character, and how far it might endeavour to extend its powers, but now we should think that all must be satisfied, by the limitations imposed in the "Declaration of Principles;" and in the 10th section of the "Constitution."

The various objections urged against such assemblies have been from time to time refuted in these columns; but we intend now to furnish our readers with a brief summary of the case, and they may rely upon the accuracy of our information as to the facts which we have taken the pains to procure.

That the members of the Church of England have a natural right to meet together, to discuss and decide upon their own affairs, is self-evident, unless they are hindered by some special enactment or authoritative prohibition; and we must believe further that it is desirable and expedient to exercise this right, unless it can be proved, that the practice of all ages, from the time of the first Council at Jerusalem, has been wrong, and what is good for all other denominations is not good for us. It was generally supposed that the "Act of Submission" deprived us of our natural right, and Bills were introduced into the Imperial Parliament to restore it, but in the course of the debates upon these Bills it was suggested, and we believe is now generally allowed by the best authorities, that Colonial Diocesan Synods are not affected by that Act. Still doubts were, and are, entertained by some, and a Bill was consequently introduced, (of which the peculiar phraseology is to be noticed,) stating that, by reason of Laws and Usages having special reference to the Church of England and Ireland as established in England and Ireland respectively, doubts are entertained, not even asserting that it is properly a doubtful matter, but only as a fact that some persons do entertain doubts. And this Bill, although it never became law, implied such high sanction that nothing more can really be required, for none deny that Synods held with the consent of the Crown are lawful and constitutional. Now the consent of the Crown is given, or withheld, in accordance with the advice of the responsible Ministers, and the Government in 1853 approved the Bill before its introduction, and afterwards supported it in both Houses. Thus in the only way possible the sanction of the Crown was given to this measure. It certainly was approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury; for his Grace, after much attention to its preparation, introduced it into the House of Lords, and conducted it most successfully through that august assembly. In the lower House it was not rejected, but was deferred in consequence of the late period of the Session when it was taken down, and in the next Session the principle was affirmed by the large majority of 196 to 62. And even if instead of this approval, the principle had been condemned by the lower House, we should still have all that can be required by Churchmen in the sanction of the Queen, whose right to authorize every kind of Synod is unquestioned, and of the Archbishop, both of which as we have seen were decidedly given. There can then be no danger of interfering with the Royal Supremacy by convening meetings which Her Majesty has expressly sanctioned. But then it may be asked, granting their legality, what are their powers? We will give instead of our own opinions, an extract from a letter of the Bishop of Adelaide, submitted to the Meeting at Montreal lately: "I have been advised, (upon consulting the Solicitor General, F. Kelly,

J. Napier, and A. S. Stephens,) that 25 Henry VIII. c. 10, does not render illegal Diocesan Synods. Each Bishop can summon them and invite Laymen to be present at them. It is within the administrative power of such Synods to make Diocesan regulations, adopting and applying the Canons of 1603 to the use of the Diocesan Church, to make trusts, &c.—they may apply existing Provincial Canons and Ecclesiastical law to the exigency of the case." There are many questions now decided on the sole authority of the Bishop, which it will honour to belong to the Synod to discuss and to determine; and we have no doubt that, for some time, it will find quite enough to occupy it during a short Session in every second year. At present there are already on the Books 3 notices of motions, and a Committee appointed at the last Meeting to prepare business for the next.

It has been said, that we ought to apply to the Provincial Legislature for power to act, or at least to legalize our action, but who is to apply? How is the voice of the Church to be uttered except through some suitable organization? If any legislation is required at any future time, an Act adapted to our wants is more likely to be obtained, if the application is made by a representative body after due consideration.

We anticipate much good from the approaching Election, if the Members of the Church, feeling that they have an important duty to perform, will endeavor to secure the services of good practical men. All shades of opinion should be represented here, and those who obstinately refuse to take part will only have themselves to blame for whatever is done contrary to their views. Its opponents cannot suppose that their absence will improve it, but if present their voices and votes might exercise a powerful influence upon its deliberations.

Some have objected to the rule that the concurrence of the Bishop, as well as of the Clergy and Laity shall be required, but without this, as "Cura" has lately urged, we should approach too nearly to the Presbyterian pattern. Moreover the minority at all events cannot object to the most unlimited veto, for if ever exercised it must be in their favor, its use and effect being to check rash and hasty measures, and to prevent a small or accidental majority passing resolutions not truly expressing the sentiments of the Assembly, whilst practically no Bishop can long refuse to concur in any good measure supported by a large majority of Clergy and Laity.

If we read aright the signs of the times, the necessity of organization will soon be felt. Union is strength, and, unless we are prepared to deliver ourselves an easy prey to the spoilers, we must lay aside our prejudices and act together heartily, shewing that "if one member suffer all the members suffer with it," and that all will join in defence of any one portion assailed. But we cannot do this with effect, unless we are able to meet together, to deliberate and decide upon the best course to be adopted in any emergency. Under these circumstances we think the Country Parishes will have much reason to complain if St. Paul's and St. George's still persist in depriving them of the benefit of the counsel of the able men, who might be elected in Halifax. There are many of us who are not satisfied to remain unrepresented, whilst small and distant Country Districts have a voice in the Assembly; but we cannot help ourselves if a majority of those who attend the Easter Meeting are determined to keep us in our present ignominious position, without a voice, where we might fairly expect to exercise considerable influence.

We subjoin for the information of the Electors in the several Districts, the two Clauses of the Constitution by which they are to be guided:

7th. Each District forming a separate cure of souls may send 2 Lay-representatives, and the Parish of St. Paul's in the City of Halifax, may send four, so long as its present area remains undiminished.

4th. The Representatives of the Laity must have been communicants for the twelve months preceding the election, and every adult male Parishioner may vote for the Parish or District of which he is a member, upon subscribing the following declaration, (if required by the chairman or any parishioner present.) "I do declare that I am a member of the United Church of England and Ireland, and belong to no other religious denomination."

## EDUCATION.

THE Act for the better encouragement of Education, promised in the Speech at the opening of the Session, has at length been introduced by the leader of the Government. It is not altogether such as we would desire, but where we cannot have exactly what we wish, it is the part of wisdom to make the most of what is within our reach, and knowing that the present system is very defective, and the provision for the education of the poor in many parts of the Province altogether insufficient, we gladly hail any at-

tempt at improvement. The distinguishing feature of the new Act is, the establishment of free Schools, and the introduction of a general system of assessment towards their support. We know that a strong prejudice exists against assessment; but we believe that it is absolutely necessary, and in some places, under the provisions of the last Act, a voluntary assessment has been made, and the result of the experiment has been very satisfactory to all concerned. In the proposed plan of assessment, no new principle is introduced, for the amount required is to be levied, and in every respect dealt with in the same manner as the County Rates, so that in fact there will be merely an addition to the sum now paid by each person assessed.

Some of those who have no children, may think it unfair that they should be taxed for the benefit of those who have, but it should be remembered that every one is interested in the wide diffusion of Education. The general prosperity of the Province must be more or less affected by it, and where the Government of the Country depends upon the people, and every man has a vote, it cannot be otherwise than important to all to have an enlightened population.—Of necessity a people sunk in ignorance, must be an easy prey to every deceiver, and will be likely to follow any artful and unprincipled leader seeking to gratify his own ambition and promote his own interests at their expense.

It is well known that those who have not been educated themselves, do not appreciate the advantages of education for their children, and are inclined to leave them in the state in which they are themselves; and therefore we think the State would be quite justified in compelling all persons to send their children, under a certain age, to School. But if this should be regarded as interfering too much with the liberty of the subject, there can be no constitutional objection to the enforcement of the obligation to provide Schools for all who choose to take advantage of them. In the Schools now constituted, or to be established under this Act, there is and will be one great defect. We mean that, however efficient they may be in imparting instruction, there will be little education in the highest sense, for its principal element will be wanting. Instruction without moral training, and without religion, is not education, although the word may be so applied in its popular signification, and we must confess that we do not see how, whilst the present unhappy divisions prevail amongst Christians, any general system of complete sound education can be adopted. In two Editorials lately, we have pointed out the difficulties with which the question is beset, and we cannot avoid the conclusion, that the only practicable course is, to provide secular instruction for all, leaving to the parents and the Ministers of each denomination the duty of imparting religious instruction. We should indeed prefer having our share of the public money, in proportion to our numbers, appropriated in some way to the support of Church Schools; but we must allow that it would be gross injustice, to grant such a privilege to any portion of the community, and withhold it from others, and if divided amongst the several leading denominations it would be altogether insufficient, since each would desire to have its own School in Settlements where one Common School is enough for the population. So long, therefore, as we are treated alike, we shall be content to accept the general system proposed. Only we are disposed to think, that the daily business of each School might be commenced with reading a Chapter from the Gospels, without note or comment, and that any Minister might be allowed, on at least one day of the week, to visit the School to give religious instruction for an hour to the children of his own congregation, apart from the others. This would interfere but little with the general business of the School, and would obviate a very strong objection felt by many to the restriction of religious teaching to the Lord's day, as though it were not necessary for the other days of the week.

Although we do not always agree with the policy of the Government, we are ever ready to give them credit for any honest attempts to benefit the country, and so long as their measures are fair and based on sound principles, we shall feel bound to support them. We think that this Educational Bill ought not to be regarded as a party measure, for although calculated to reflect much good eventually, it is likely to be at first very unpopular in some places. We hope that it will be discussed without party spirit, and that the members on both sides of the House will have the courage to vote for a Bill, for which their constituents will be certain to thank them after some experience of the benefits derived from the proposed system, however unwilling they may be beforehand to acquiesce in any increase of taxation.