

CLERICAL PRECEDENCE.

It seems after all that we have not quite got rid of Church establishments in Canada, Provincial statutes to the contrary notwithstanding. We had supposed that the Act of Parliament secularizing the Clergy Reserves, and declaring it to be desirable that all semblance of connection between Church and State should cease, had placed all religious denominations in the Province upon the same footing in the eye of the law. But, however we in Canada have regarded the matter, the recent edict of the Colonial Secretary with respect to the titles and social precedence of our State officials, shows that the British government, or perhaps we should rather say, Mr. Disraeli's government, does not so regard it. Either they have altogether forgotten the enactment referred to, or they have quietly ignored it as a political *myth* got up to pacify "dissenters," but now so long out of date as to be only a dead letter. Henceforth all loyal subjects are to recognise "Archbishops and Bishops according to seniority," as entitled, upon all state occasions, to the seventh rank among our public functionaries, and next after the local governors of the several Provinces. No title is assigned them as in the case of the other officials, but of course with this official recognition of their dignity no one will think of addressing them in less complimentary terms than "my Lord Bishop."

We should have thought that the government of a mighty Empire like that of Great Britain, on the eve of a great political contest, and with their hands full of the weightiest constitutional and ecclesiastical questions that could engage their attention, would have something of more importance to do than invent titles, and furnish programmes of precedence for their Colonial officials. But apart from that, what, we may ask, in the language of a cotemporary,—

"What have such persons to do in a list of state officials? Where there is an Established Church, there may be the shadow of a reason for its ministers, as State stipendiaries and Government functionaries taking rank, according to certain rules, with those who are in the same service as themselves, and having, accordingly, a set place in State ceremonials and official entertainments. But where, as in Canada, the different Churches have no connection whatever with the State, where the very word "Dissenter" is an absurdity, and where all classes of religious teachers are, as far as the civil authorities are concerned, exactly on the same level, anything like these State officials giving the ministers of this Church, or that, social precedence, and recognizing them as occupying a certain position in Court ceremonial, and possessing certain rights and privileges among their fellow-citizens, is travelling entirely out of their spheres, and meddling with matters which in no degree belong to them.

"An Archbishop or Bishop of any Christian Church on the face of the earth is, beyond the limits of that particular Church, simply a Minister of the Gospel, neither more nor less honorable than any other such functionary in any other Church except what may arise from personal qualifications and character. Some persons may agree to call him *Bishop*, others *Archbishop*, or anything else which pleases them. With their taste in the matter of names, the general community has nothing to do, but when these names are taken as giving a claim to legal pre-eminence, it is quite a different affair.

"In the case before us, of all the religious officials in the Dominion, Archbishops and Bishops are singled out as recognized by the State. We suppose this is to let us understand that the highest officials in the Romish and Anglican Churches are, by State sanction, put in a position of superiority to all the rest. We suppose this, though there are, as a matter of fact, other bishops besides those of the two Churches mentioned. There are at least in this country two