

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

A QUESTION OF FIGURES.

THE saying of Talleyrand that "nothing is more false than figures—except facts" we have reason to apply to the statistics put forth by religious bodies which are so fond of boasting their numerical strength. Perhaps, as this is the only strength they possess, we should deal with it charitably, were it not that they regard this boasting as less reputable merchants do their advertising, as being outside the sphere in which truth is either obligatory or useful. They remind us also of certain traders, who, not content to blow their own trumpets with enterprising vigour in self-praise, introduce a flourish or two in libellous disparagement of their neighbors, a display of temper which the more honourable merchant regards as a wasteful outflow of money and energy. These features of trade are certainly not so elevated in tone, nor so free from the appearance of evil, as to be advisable examples for Christian bodies to imitate in Christian work. We could afford to treat these comparisons with disdainful silence, were it not that our unhappy divisions are widened and our controversies embittered by statements of sectarian triumph. The arrows shot into our camp by enemies outside the walls are picked up by Churchmen partisans for use against their brethren. In a public document the Wesleyan body has just put forth a set of these swaggering and disparaging statistics. This manifesto declares that the Methodists are increasing at a much greater rate than the population of the Dominion, the Province of Ontario, or the City of Toronto, where the figures are published. The document affirms that the Church of England in Ontario is falling so rapidly into decay that its very life may be despaired of. A picture is drawn of Methodist progress which calls to mind the comic ballad of the boatswain who ate up the Captain, the Mate, and all the crew. If the figures are correct there will be ere long an entire absorption of every religious body in Canada into the Methodist society. We must warn our omnivorous neighbours that if we are swallowed they will have a very bad attack of indigestion! We confess to having some fears, because those who can swallow such statistics as we refer to could swallow anything. But we have palpable evidence that these alarming figures are based entirely on fancy, the wish has been father to the thought.

We have examined official returns with this result, that we are justified in taking the Diocese of Toronto as a fair test of the accuracy of the Wesleyan figures, so far as regards increase of population in the Province, as the ratio in that Diocese is the same as in other sections. We take this Diocese also, because, owing to the malignancy of party strife (which our neighbours have industriously utilised for their own profit), the Church in the Diocese of Toronto has, we believe, made less progress than in other Ontario Dioceses. The district now comprised within the Diocese of Toronto had within its bounds in 1871 only 51 clergy engaged in parish work, having charge of 110

parishes and missions, and 14 in college or school duties, or not specially engaged, making a clerical staff of 65 clergy. In this Diocese last year, there were 259 parishes and missions, served by 121 clergy, 28 clergy were occupied in college or school duties, or not specially engaged, making a clerical staff of 149 clergy. In the city of Toronto in 1871 there were only 10 Churches, in 1885 there were 23 Churches, while several of those existing in 1871 had been enlarged, and several new missions opened. In one Ontario Diocese wherein the population increased only 28 per cent. from 1871 to 1885, in the same period the increase of parishes and missions was 112 per cent., yet the Methodist statistics declare that in this period the Church was losing ground! In the same period in the district wherein the people increased only 28 per cent., the Church increased her clerical staff by 82 per cent., yet the Methodist statistics declare that in this period the Church was being driven off the field! In the same period the population of the city of Toronto increased 98 per cent. In this period the number of our churches and mission rooms increased over 110 per cent., and, what is more, the attendance, especially at Holy Communion, increased all round at a higher rate. Besides new buildings in the city of Toronto, we enlarged old ones, and commenced a new Cathedral.

The Methodist statistics thus require us to believe that during the years in which the Church has been losing ground at an alarming rate, in one Diocese alone where we have had terrible drawbacks, the Church has increased her parishes and missions from 110 to 259, and has increased her clergy from 65 to 149, both increases being at a rate very greatly in excess of that of the increase of population. In the city of Toronto, where the Methodist figures picture the Church as rapidly dying out, we increased our Church accommodation at a rate considerably in advance of the rate at which the population enlarged, and this too, without engaging professional solo singers to attract a crowd in order to swell our returns.

We do not boast of our progress, we regard it with humiliation. We have done enough to provoke the Master to remove the candlestick of the Church in this Diocese. We are still spending more money over utterly useless and needless enterprises, as wasteful as can well be imagined, than over the extension of Christ's Kingdom, *that is, there is spent in the Diocese of Toronto over party work which ministers only to personal vanity, ambition and love of power, more money than we all combined give to mission work.*

Had Churchmen in the past been as loyal to the Church as Methodists are to Methodism, we should have had a much worthier position, our shame would have been less galling and disastrous and disheartening. A Methodist is always, everywhere, a zealous Methodist, he puts his business into his religion, he puts his heart and his purse into "the cause," he works for Methodism as earnestly as he does for his daily bread. In this he is worthy of all honour. On the other hand the Church has numbers

of members ashamed of their colours, their party leaders have taught them to avoid ever using the name of their Mother, the Church, and have encouraged them to give their energies to all manner of work outside of and to enterprises directly antagonistic to the Church of England. The Wesleyans should be more grateful to the Church, for they have received, and are yet receiving, invaluable services from our laymen who constantly neglect Church services and duties to give our neighbours help and influence. Whatever failure we have to lament we deserve by tolerating these party agitators, who drain the life blood of the Church through the running sores created by strife.

We should be glad to see a statement compiled from official sources, giving the facts as to the position of the Church in Canada. We need hardly say that in such a matter numbers are no more an argument bearing upon the claims of the Church, than would be a statement as to the comparative numbers of those having dark hair or light. The kingdom of God is not like a political party, powerful in the ratio of numbers. If majorities are to be followed, then all Christians would have to pass over to Rome. Those who give their allegiance where the majority is, will find this principle leading them to the service of the greatest of human majorities, that which the hosts of Satan have over God's people.

Let the sects enjoy their statistics, their delight will be as ephemeral as that of a summer gnat, compared with the eternal life of the Church. The waters of the Catholic Apostolic Church will one day rise so high as to submerge the little hillocks thrown up by the volcanic fires of human vanity and passion. The story of sectarianism will form only a chapter in ancient history when He comes to subdue all things unto Himself. When He rules His Church in triumph the noise of the sects will be for ever hushed, for in that happy time all things which offend shall be destroyed.

THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD.

THE meeting of the Provincial Synod which opens to-day will have to deal with several matters needing much wisdom in their treatment. There is one question not on the order paper that ought not to be ignored. The extension of the Church in the North-West and in the Far West calls imperatively for some action looking to the organization of a national Synod for all Canada. The Synod now sitting is supposed to represent the Church in the Province of Canada, that term when first used including Canada as a whole as then politically organized, which consisted only of Quebec and Ontario. The other eastern Provinces were afterwards included, but why, when the country was extended westward, the new Provinces between the boundary of Ontario and the Pacific were not also brought into union as the eastern ones had been after Confederation, we do not understand. The present position is anomalous, because doubtless the idea of the Provincial Synod of Canada is that of a united body representing the Church of England in