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ART. III.—ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF PATRONAGE
IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

PART I.

NO Churchman who has at heart the welfare of the Church of his fathers can be indifferent as to the distribution of its patronage. It has at all times exercised the minds of Church reformers, though occasional events may bring its consideration into more prominent notice. If there has been some flagrant case of nepotism, or rapid promotion showered on some recipient whose merits the most microscopic inspection cannot descry, or some disappointed ecclesiastic feels aggrieved, then an outcry will be raised about the abuses of patronage, and schemes of reform, or supposed reform, propounded.

Thus the exercise of Church patronage will be a mirror reflecting the moral sense of the times. When the religious life of the nation is low, the estimate of responsibility will be low, and the exercise of clerical patronage will be a grave index of that religious declension. No rules, however stringent and cunningly devised, will then prevent flagrant abuse. But when the religious tone of the nation is ardent, and there is a burning zeal for the Church of Christ to show itself worthy of its great Founder, this high tone will affect the exercise of patronage of every description. The writer of this article is bold enough to maintain that this desire was never more manifest in the Anglican Church than at present. True, that against the very best appointments exception will be taken by some hypercritics. But the desire on all hands to fill up vacancies with worthy nominees is unmistakably manifest. Should the progress of the Church of England still be onward, and the sense of responsibility be universal and intensified, the distribution of patronage will partake of that elevation, and to fair minds there will be little ground for cavil.

It would be a blind and foolish exaggeration to assert that the Church as it stands is faultless, and the fault at present spotted is the exercise of patronage. One Bill, if not more, is to be laid before the Legislature, proposing amendments in this exercise. One was introduced last year in the House of Lords by the highest ecclesiastical officer of the Church, and another in the House of Commons. Attempts were previously made in the same direction by Archbishops Thomson and Magee. Thus the question will for some time be before the eyes of Churchmen, and will doubtless receive the attention such an important subject merits. It is conceived by the writer of this paper that, without reference to any particular

measure, it may be of use to his fellow-Churchmen if a statement is set forth of the various forms of patronage existing in the English Church, the advantages and disadvantages supposed to attach to each, with such observations as may be suggested by a long and varied experience.

The existing forms of patronage in the Church of England, with the amount of patronage appertaining to each, may be stated approximately thus :

1. The Crown and the Prince of Wales, both as Prince of Wales and also as Duke of Lancaster.

At the disposal of the Crown are commonly considered to be the archbishoprics, the bishoprics, the deaneries, and about 520 benefices.

2. The Lord Chancellor, who is patron of about 520 benefices.

3. Episcopal patronage, which may be considered to apply to about 3,000 benefices.

4. Capitular patronage, *i.e.*, the patronage of the various deans and chapters, who can be credited with about 1,300.

5. Academic, *i.e.*, the various colleges, who can present to about 700.

6. Public bodies, such as corporations, who can present to about 200.

7. Trustees of various kinds to about 700.

8. The clergy themselves: many rectors and vicars, by virtue of their benefice, can present to about 500.

9. Private patronage, *i.e.*, patronage held by certain holders of property, noblemen, gentlemen, and others, as attached to the property. These will number roundly 6,000.

Anyone scanning the above summary will observe the immense *variety* in the patronage. Perhaps no Church in Christendom is marked by such varied patronage—a circumstance which will account for the great variety found among the Anglican clergy, and their inter-penetration and identification with the varied social life of the nation.

A second observation will be the immense amount of patronage in the hands of the *laity*. The Church of England has often been called the layman's Church. This designation will arise partly from the construction of the Church services and the Prayer-Book, in which the congregation take such a part themselves, and are made remarkably independent of the officiating minister. But the designation will fit the distribution of patronage; for as the Crown, the Chancellor, the Corporations, and the trustees will be mainly a lay element, the amount of patronage held by laymen alone will be upwards of 8,000 benefices. No wise Churchman would wish this lay element to be diminished. It prevents the clergy from being

all of one type and cast of thought, and from being dissociated from all sorts and conditions of men. On the other hand, it makes laymen feel that the Church is their Church, that they have a great stake in it; for the families who have relatives or connections in some way associated with the Church might be numbered by thousands. The inclination of Englishmen is to increase this association, that the clergy may feel still more that they are ministers (servants) of the Church, and thoroughly identified with their people.

It will be useful to consider the various forms of patronage separately, and the advantages and disadvantages supposed to be incidental to each. The cases stated will not be simply conjectures, but positively known to be facts.

1. The patronage of the *Crown*, including that of the Prince of Wales, though nominally that of the Crown, is practically in the hands of the responsible advisers of the Crown. There are cases when the Sovereign has been credited with the personal appointment of someone she delighted to honour. And surely it is but right that one in that station should be able to express personal approbation by promotion, the very circumstance indicating that the beneficiare will amply justify the appointment. But the Prime Minister is generally credited with the appointment of the bishops, deans, and the recipients of the more important benefices in the gift of the Crown. That a Prime Minister feels his responsibility is shown by a story told of Lord Melbourne, that nothing would put him out of temper sooner than the announcement of the death of a bishop. "Do what I will," he used to say, "make all the inquiries I can, someone is sure to cavil at my selection." If such a man as Melbourne felt the responsibility so grave, it is felt in a higher degree by such men as Gladstone or Lord Salisbury.

The Prime Minister is often a man of high University distinction, or is intimate with such. If not, he knows personally or by repute the men of mark, is often not indifferently read as a theologian himself, and is able by secretaries and surroundings to make the most minute inquiries. Such a man is no unmeet person to fill up vacancies that fall to his prerogative.

The only objection of any weight that has ever been made to Crown appointments, especially of the lower kind, is that they have been often given as rewards, not for clerical or theological distinction and tried fitness for the office, but as rewards for political aid in elections. The objection is not without foundation. But even then the power of public opinion is so strong and so unsparingly exercised, that a Minister would shrink from appointing on political grounds alone. The recipient will be found to be a man of distinction

of some kind, and may eventually justify his appointment, though brought to the front by processes open to criticism.

2. The patronage of the *Lord Chancellor* has been sometimes described as a means of rewarding cousins and other connections down to the remotest degree. Others have been described as the rewards of persistent wearying importunity. Such descriptions could not be maintained since the revival in the Church. Whoever scrutinizes the appointments by later Chancellors will find that, if the benefice is anything above a starving, the recipient has done some service in the Church. Possibly such recipient would have otherwise lived and died in obscurity, but by the aid of some lay friend he has been able to catch the Lord Chancellor's eye. That is indeed one great advantage of having such an "appeal to Cæsar." His patronage secretary and other officials diligently correspond with the referees of such applicants, and make minute inquiries. Private letters have been known as sent to this effect: "You are named as Mr. Blank's referee and parishioner. He is described as open to a certain objection. Should that in your opinion debar him from the preferment he seeks, or is it over-balanced by his other merits?"

Another objection alleged against the Lord Chancellor's patronage is that, considering his short tenure of office—not for life, but whilst his party is in power—his patronage is too large. Many of his benefices are of small value, dispersed all over England, and inquiries respecting them and the fitness of the candidates very difficult. This was felt so strongly by one Chancellor (Westbury) that he obtained an Act empowering the sale of a large number, which he scheduled. His hope was that they would be purchased by those having property in that neighbourhood, and thus interested in its welfare, especially as the purchase-money was to augment the value of the living. This was a move in the right direction; if successful, it would point to an extension of that process. The Chancellor's patronage would then, though more circumscribed in operation, be of increased value, and would enable him to reward many a meritorious pastor not self-asserting, nor rushing about the country, but doing his duty faithfully, though noiselessly, and submitted by some sympathetic observer to the Chancellor's consideration.

3. Proceeding to *episcopal* patronage, Churchmen will be astonished to find it so small. Some bishops have but fifty or sixty benefices at their disposal, many of them of slight value, and the whole being only approximately 2,700. The theory of episcopacy is that the bishop is the chief pastor of his diocese, and the clergy are his vicarii, and it would *primâ facie* appear a manifest advantage to the Church that the

clergy should be nominated by him who incurs the chief responsibility. If his life be prolonged, and he be earnest in his office, he becomes personally acquainted with every clergyman in his diocese. Even where the diocese is unwieldy, he may, through his suffragans (now so common) or his archdeacons, learn not a little of each clergyman's operations, not simply the fussy, the loquacious, but those who live always in their parishes and faithfully pursue their path of duty. But English statesmen have ever viewed with disfavour the increase of episcopal power. They have shown great fear of ecclesiasticism, of the Church becoming too powerful, an *imperium in imperio*, and thus, if united in opposition to the Government of the day, a troublesome factor. It is quoted of Monsignor Dupanloup, the recent Bishop of Orleans, "When I say to my clergy, 'March,' I expect them to march as one man." Englishmen have dreaded this in the English Church, and have legislated accordingly.

Bishops are but men, after all, and have "their treasure in earthen vessels," and episcopal patronage is liable to objections. Little need now be said of nepotism—a vice which so often disfigured episcopal patronage in times past. There will never be another Harcourt aggrandizing every one of his blood by pickings from Church property, nor will any prelate nowadays say, as was said to a clergyman *now living*, when, after fifteen years' charge of a parish as curate, he asked his bishop to present him to the vacant living, and hinted at his struggling poverty, "Sir, poor men should not enter the Church." Those days are passed away. But a modern bishop has other dangers. Besides being surrounded by hangers-on saying his shibboleth, he is liable to display crotchets. Bishop Lightfoot, late Bishop of Durham, was one of the greatest divines this century has produced. He had previously been a distinguished Cambridge Professor, and was fond of tuition. When made bishop, forgetting the University of Durham before his eye, and its provisions for ministerial training, he took young men into his house, trained and ordained and soon promoted them. Thus his nominees had been barely eight years in service, and veterans who had borne the burden and heat of the day were left out in the cold by the obtrusion of the "Bishop's lambs," as they were called. Archbishop Thomson's episcopate was open to the same criticism. In his later years he systematically promoted young men, who could well have waited twenty years, to benefices that would have gladdened hard-worked veterans by a little better pay and lighter work in their old age.

These were blemishes in distinguished men. Who is free? Still, the increase of episcopal *patronage* (not *power*) would in

many dioceses be beneficial to the Church. Many a prelate has been known to lament his inability to reward his meritorious clergy, owing to the scantiness of the patronage at his disposal.

4. The patronage at the disposal of the *Universities of Oxford and Cambridge* is very small (about 700). At one time one of the projected reforms of the Church was to multiply this patronage. All the Fellows of the colleges were then in holy orders, and the bulk of the students had the ministerial office in view. But a clerical Fellow of a college is now the exception. The students aiming at clerical life are in a great minority, and considering the character of the electors, now mostly laymen, partly Nonconformist or Socinian, and partly of no religious belief whatever, few Churchmen would desire an increase of collegiate patronage.

5. The patronage held by *public bodies and trustees* is of a varied character, and will embrace about one thousand appointments. With the exception of the Simeon Trustees and the Church Patronage Society, of whose management little is known externally, the bulk of the nominators as trustees will be laymen. Sometimes the trust of a Church is thoroughly representative of its congregation: these are summoned to fill up any vacancy in the trust; the members of the trust nominate the minister, and submit his name to the diocesan.

In other cases, the trustees fill up vacancies in their body by co-optation. Of all of them it may be said that they are a reflex of the revival of Churchmanship in England, showing an earnest desire to secure the best man possible for the vacancy at their disposal. A good specimen will be the parish church of Leeds. The trustees are twenty-five in number, chosen for their well-known character and position from the lay-Churchmen. The care they have taken in the selection of their nominees is proved by the mark their vicars have made on the Church of the nation. The success seems to suggest an extension of that mode of patronage.

6. *Private patronage* next comes under consideration; and as it embraces as much as all the *rest put together*, its distribution is a most important factor for the well-being of the Anglican Church. The number of benefices in the hands of private patrons is, as has been said, over six thousand. The theory of the system is this: Most of the old Churches of England have been built by the owners of the adjacent property, and it would seem natural that such owners should nominate the minister. He would be more than anyone else interested in the welfare of the neighbourhood; and the fact of his building the church proved his estimate of his responsibility. His nominee was often a son. An eminent writer

expresses his astonishment how often, in investigating past history, he finds the parochial clergy to have been high-born.¹ According to his means and his estimate of responsibility, the builder of the church has set aside land and tithes for the vicar's maintenance. That circumstance explains the diversity in income in various country parishes.

An immense amount of these benefices and their possessions became absorbed by the religious houses, who sent out "fratres" to officiate in the parishes. On the dissolution of these houses and the sale of their lands, the purchaser of the estate became the patron of the benefice on the estate as of old, and so it has continued since.

Such an arrangement is natural; the very stake that the proprietor holds must create some interest in its welfare, and in the moral condition of his tenants, their contentment with their surroundings, of which a respected parish priest would be no inconsiderable factor. The patron's conduct beyond this will depend, as with all patronage, on the religious convictions of the patron. If he entertains a high sense of his responsibility, he will exercise his patronage with great care, make much inquiry as to his applicants possessing the high qualities demanded by the clerical office; if he doubts his own ability, he will consult his bishop. A few specimens of such exercise shall be given—all actual facts:

(a) A patron of rank, now living, has been known, when a clergyman has been strongly recommended to him, to attend his church more than once, under an assumed name, and make inquiries on the spot.

(b) A living of very small value was vacant; the patron offered it to a clergyman whom he respected, adding, "If you will accept it, I will augment the income to you personally, will incur all your parochial and school expenses, and my gardener shall save you that expense."

(c) The patron of a vacant living said to his steward: "Look out for a man who will care for his people, not a hanger-on upon the richer residents about; take the farmers into your confidence." The steward did so, and they unanimously asked for a clergyman who had been serving as a curate near for fourteen years, of blameless life, always on the spot, and universally respected. The patron appointed him.

(d) A patron went to his bishop, saying: "I have a living in my gift. There is a neighbouring curate for whom I have conceived considerable respect; does your lordship know much of him?" The bishop went to his papers, and, producing a letter, said: "That letter was written to me by a clergyman

¹ Rev. Dr. Jessop of Norwich.

who has known him for years ; it gives his history before ordination. Since his ordination he has justified it." The patron read the letter, and after further conversation nominated the subject of his inquiry.

(e) A veteran clergyman wished to retire ; he wrote to his patron, asking permission to nominate a relative as his successor, not solely from respect to the veteran's services, but on the merits of the nominee. The patron instructed his steward to go round the whole neighbourhood, make inquiries as to the relative's character, manner of life, and preaching power. After some interval the relative, who knew nothing of the inquiries, was informed of his nomination.

These specimens might be multiplied a hundredfold, and they indicate a wholesome sense of a grave responsibility.

Where this high tone is absent, the patron views the matter perhaps *socially*. As the clergyman will be his immediate neighbour, the patron not unnaturally seeks one who will be desirable socially. Sometimes he adds conditions which may be called, to speak euphemistically, questionable—*e.g.*, "Is he a good shot ? as I like the vicar to join me in a day's shooting." Or he will go lower in his estimate of clerical fitness, and inquire as to the pecuniary resources of his nominee, and will seek one who will spend money on the house and church—*i.e.*, benefit the patron's property, or, at all events, not trouble the patron by reminding him of his responsibilities, and bid him discharge them by opening his pocket.

The worst form is when the patron offers it for sale, either public or private. By that act the patron shows that he ignores all responsibility ; the sole desideratum in such a patron's mind is—the *amount of money* the applicant is prepared to give. It is sometimes said in justification of this practice that it resembles the sale of a medical practice. It does not ; the cases are not parallel. A practitioner purchasing a practice gets thereby introduced to a connection, but after that introduction he stands or falls by his merits. The patients may give him a trial out of respect to his predecessor, but if after trial he disappoints expectation, the connection leave him. Cases are known where a practitioner has bought one practice after another and has lost all. But the parishioners resident on a bought living have no such escape. The purchaser is a fixture, the infliction has to be endured, and the church suffers.

It may be cheerfully admitted that numbers of occupiers of purchased benefices justify their presentation. They have been well educated, and have kept their future vocation steadily in view. All honour to such men ; but much greater honour is due to those men who, when gifted with means, have

taken a clerical charge on which a poor man could not exist. Such men have supplemented the starving by their own means, and have adorned their ministerial office by an almost gratuitous service.

The system of purchase once obtained in the army. The "great Duke" said he should have lost every one of his battles in the Peninsula but for the *non-commissioned* officers. The commissioned officers showed pluck and bravery (Englishmen in that respect are never wanting), but were utterly ignorant of their profession. Napoleon I. said that the English cavalry officers had not the slightest idea how to handle their men. Most of the commissioned officers had purchased their positions, and the system has been abolished. A similar reform would seem advisable in the Church.

The purchase system is open to two grave objections :

First, the system shocks the religious sense of mankind. The general mind confounds it with the sin of Simon Magus. That is not the case; but the very confusion shows its repulsiveness to all except vested interests.

Secondly, it negatives all promotion by merit. Bishops and deans and canons are nominated after grave deliberation. Their personal life, their intellectual gifts, their theological attainments, the probability of their adorning their dignified position—these are the considerations that have weight and suggest their promotion. In a presentation that is offered for sale there is no consideration of any of these merits. The sole inquiry of the presenter is, Can you give so much money?

On reviewing the whole subject, all these varied forms of patronage, and the criticism to which they are open, it must be admitted by any fair mind that the methods in the aggregate, take them all round, have *worked well*, and work now better than ever. Like the British constitution, the system has grown with the growth of the nation, sometimes apathetic, though "having a name to live," and then roused up by causes manifold to zeal in fulfilling its high mission. The writer of these lines is therefore no advocate of any revolutionary changes. He would leave the various forms of patronage still to enjoy their privileges, and let the Church present those manifold varieties of thought and action that have ever characterized the English Church. Still, the Church is not faultless. He would respectfully commend to the consideration of Churchmen the following reforms. They have been so generally proposed that they almost answer to the requirements of the canon law, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*"

1. The abolition of the sale of next presentations, a practice never contemplated by the Church.

2. The sale of advowsons to be allowable only to the holders of considerable property in the locality. This was the plan advocated by Archbishop Magee, and it received general commendation. It is in harmony with the true principle of private patronage, viz., that the possession of property creates responsibility.

3. That private patrons should more frequently take their bishop into council, and if they have no nominee in view especially desired, then hand over the patronage to the bishop. Many men would object to an increase of episcopal power, but few to the extension of their patronage.

4. That no clergyman should be instituted to a benefice over £100 a year in value, unless he has served an apprenticeship as curate of at least ten years. There may be cases when to fill up an appointment is very difficult, and a younger man would accept the charge as a stepping-stone. But it would be a wholesome rule to restrain the putting a novice to the sole cure of souls. Who would place a beardless subaltern in the charge of a regiment?

Various other schemes are suggested by some agitators of a very drastic character. A few words may be said of two.

There is a craze at present for young men, and some would-be reformers advocate the expulsion of veterans, however worthy and wise, from their ministerial charge. It may not be amiss to remind these innovators of a certain chapter in history, when a Hebrew king refused to be guided by the tried counsellors of his father, and handed himself over to the suggestions of his youthful friends. Subsequent events showed that it would have been a blessed thing for that king and his people if the veterans had remained at the helm.

Another scheme suggested by a few is of a still more revolutionary character: they would make all ministerial appointments of a temporary character. Such advocates of "thorough" are under the impression that there is a plethora of clergy.¹ They are under a delusion. Already there are abundant causes deterring our educated youth from entering the ministry of the Church of God. The proposed scheme would be one more deterrent. If these continue for twenty years there will be, as in France and Switzerland, churches without pastors.

It would be a more excellent way for such men of exacting demands to contribute their own sons to the sacred office, especially if of affluence. Such men could magnify their office in many ways—in one especially. Being exempted from the

¹ See an article in the February number of this magazine on "The Supply of Candidates for the Ministry."

res angusta domi, they could hold a cure impossible to a penniless man, but offering noble opportunities to a devoted soldier of Christ.

The whole Church may well breathe "the prayer divinely taught," "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

NOTE.—Lord Cranborne's Bill, now before Parliament, will, as to its first part, at least, be welcomed by earnest-minded Churchmen. But their legitimate aspirations will not be satisfied till it can be said of every clergyman that he owes his position as a "steward of the mysteries of God," not to some money transaction, but just as his bishop does, to his intrinsic merits, personal, intellectual, religious.

RICHARD W. HILEY.



ART. IV.—THE ELLAND CLERICAL SOCIETY.¹

THE Society which bears this name was founded in 1767, mainly through the exertions of the well-known devoted and energetic Vicar of Huddersfield, the Rev. Henry Venn, in order to afford to the Evangelical clergy of the last century, comparatively few in number, and widely scattered, as they were, opportunities to meet together from time to time for spiritual counsel and fellowship, and mutual edification. It was under considerable difficulties, owing to the lack of facilities for travelling which existed a century ago, that these gatherings were held. How much they were needed and valued by those who attended them may be inferred from the following words which occur in the prayers which are still used at the opening and closing of the meetings of the Society, as they have been from its commencement :

"We bless Thee that Thou hast put it into our hearts to meet together for the purpose of furthering one another in the work of the ministry. We thank Thee for the liberty we enjoy, and that things are so peaceably ordered by Thy Providence that we can thus assemble together, none making us afraid. O our God, what would our forefathers have given for so great a privilege!"

"O merciful Father, how much are we indebted to Thee for these pleasing and profitable interviews! We adore Thee for making them so often the happy means of renewing our friendship, gladdening our hearts, and strengthening our hands in

¹ The writer of this article, who has been a member of the Society for twenty-nine years, desires to express his acknowledgment of the aid he has derived from "A Review of the Origin and History of the Elland Clerical Society," compiled by the late Canon Hulbert, and published in 1868.