

THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1919.

THE MONTH.

**Crowded
Weeks.**

It is not often that so many important "happenings" are crowded into the brief space of four weeks, or even less, as have taken place since the last notes of "The Month" were written. First there was the session of the Representative Church Council—disappointing in some things, but momentous in the issues arrived at; then came the presentation to the two Archbishops of what is generally known as "The Memorial of the Nine Bishops"—with not very satisfactory archiepiscopal replies in regard to the points at issue; next was the Bishop of London's address to the Clergy Home Mission Union on "Problems of Reunion"—interesting, if nothing more, when considered in relation to our Wesleyan Methodist brethren, but rather wide of the mark when judged by present-day facts; and finally the Church Pastoral-Aid Society's deputation to the two Archbishops on the Evangelistic work of the Church—leaving much, very much, to be desired. In the face of these doings no one can say that either the authorities, or the rank and file, of the Church have been inactive; whether the activities have been fruitful in the best results is, however, another matter. Each of these four events is big enough to have an article to itself: all we can do in these Notes is to indicate some of the leading features.

**The New
Constitution.**

Whatever view we may take of the question, there is now no doubt that by the decisions of the Representative Church Council the Church of England stands committed not merely to the principle of Self Government, but also to the plan formulated by the Grand Committee, which carries us a long way. The proposals of that Committee were based upon those of the Archbishops' Church and State Committee. They were certainly an improvement upon the original scheme—

as well they might be—but in the main they were essentially the same. It is of the highest significance that the scheme, as amended, was carried with only one dissentient—the Bishop of Hereford, who offered a root-and-branch opposition—but before anything effective can be done the sanction of Parliament must be obtained. To judge from the comments which are made in some quarters it is evidently anticipated that this will be an easy matter. We do not, ourselves, however, take quite such an optimistic view. We believe that they are right who say that Parliament—and especially the House of Commons—will scrutinise the details of the scheme very carefully, and when it is seen that the real conduct of Church affairs passes out of the hands of Parliament into those of the new Church Assembly, it is at least possible that some very awkward questions may be raised. We do not forget, however, that, in theory, at any rate, the supremacy of the State is safeguarded, and this is, indeed, the one feature of the scheme which reconciles to it many who are just a little suspicious about the placing of so much power in the hands of a new and untried body of Churchmen. It may be noted, too, that whatever be the measure of authority with which the Church Assembly is invested, it will be derived from the State. This, of course, presents no difficulty to us, but we can well imagine that our “Catholic” friends may feel a little uneasy about it. We do not wish, however, to be misunderstood. We do not expect from the scheme all, or anything like all, that its most ardent supporters think it will accomplish—and we gather that the Archbishop of Canterbury warned the Council against being too sanguine in regard to the outcome of some of the proposals—but it will undoubtedly enable the Church to carry through its administrative work much more simply and much more effectively than is possible under present conditions. This will be no small gain, for it is impossible to resist the conclusion that for want of some easy and ready method of adjusting the Church’s machinery to present-day circumstances, those responsible for the administration find themselves severely hindered. The new constitution, provided for in the scheme adopted by the Representative Church Council, sets up a Church Assembly, consisting of Bishops, clergy and laity and this body will be given legislative powers of the widest possible kind. There are not a few Churchmen who hold that the liberty allowed is too wide, and that the House of Commons

should impose some limit. In any case the proceedings of this new body will need to be watched carefully, so that in the event of changes being proposed which would materially affect the character of the Church of England or involve any serious departure e.g. from the Reformation Settlement, action may be taken in time to secure for the proposal the special attention of Parliament. For it must be remembered that the power of the new Church Assembly will not be absolute. Its legislative proposals must be submitted to an Ecclesiastical Committee of the Privy Council which will report upon them to Parliament. In the event of the Committee passing them, they will be "laid on the table," and on the expiry of forty days, unless objected to in the meantime, they will receive the Royal Assent. It is this interval which offers there a safeguard against reactionary legislation, but in the majority of cases there will probably be no opposition, and no need for any. Indeed so reasonable and so effective were these provisions felt to be, that they received comparatively little attention at the meeting of the Representative Church Council. Other questions however, connected with important details of the scheme were keenly debated.

The Lay Franchise. The strongest interest of all was shown over the qualification of the lay elector. Stated broadly the original proposal of the Archbishops' Committee was that the elector must have the status of a communicant, i.e. have been confirmed, but the Grand Committee gave the franchise to all baptised persons who signed a declaration that they were members of the Church of England and of no other religious body; and it was around these two proposals that the battle was fought in the Representative Church Council. The motion submitted to the Council was for the adoption of the Grand Committee's Report. To this the Earl of Selborne moved an amendment the effect of which would have been to restore the original proposal for a confirmation franchise. The debate occupied the best part of two sittings and some remarkable speeches were made, not the least of such being contributed by the Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Gloucester, who admitted that they had changed their views. The Bishop of Oxford and Lord Hugh Cecil supported the confirmation franchise, strongly, keenly and earnestly, but the

weight of argument was felt to be on the other side. The very able speech by Sir Edward Clarke in support of the baptismal franchise, and the clear exposition of the issue given by the Dean of Canterbury, contributed in no small measure to the defeat of the amendment and the retention of the Grand Committee's baptismal franchise. The analysis of the voting should be put on record. Seven Bishops voted for and seventeen against the confirmation franchise; of the clergy 37 voted in favour and 62 against; and of the laity 65 voted for and 80 against. The baptismal franchise was, therefore, retained by 159 to 109, a majority of 50. It was felt by many that the real "test" was the declaration of non-membership of any other religious body, and a proposal to omit it was defeated. We are not at all sure, however, that this proposal, which had the support of Sir Victor Buxton, was sufficiently considered; for it certainly seems that while the Council in upholding the baptismal franchise opened the door very widely, they immediately proceeded to close it again by requiring the declaration of membership of the Church and of no other religious body. This will clearly rule out all sincere Nonconformists, whereas the tone of much of the discussion which has taken place on this question for months past has been that Nonconformists who claim an interest in the affairs of the National Church ought not to be refused the right of voting if they desire to exercise it. The point is not free from difficulty and it was probably from a desire not to endanger the unity of the Council that the amendment was not pressed. It will, however, be quite open to the Church Assembly to propose the abolition or variation of the declaration.

Two other points of popular interest remain to *Age and Sex*. be noted. In the original scheme, as passed by the Archbishops' Committee and the Grand Committee, both electors and elected must be twenty-one years of age, and could be (except for membership of the Church Assembly) of either sex. The Representative Church Council varied these proposals in important directions. The age of electors was reduced by three years, so that a boy or girl of eighteen years of age may exercise the franchise, which is hardly a proposal which will commend itself to the more thoughtful section of Churchpeople, although we are not aware that it will do much harm. The age for the

elected is retained at twenty-one, but the Council, differing from the Committee, has decided that membership of the Assembly shall be open to women. We are aware that opinions differ considerably upon the wisdom or otherwise of this decision, but, for ourselves, we view it with the utmost satisfaction. The refining, elevating and inspiring influence of religious women will not be without their effect even upon Church assemblies; and in regard to the justice of admitting women to membership on an equality with men we are fully convinced of the strength of the claim. Moreover they will contribute much to the usefulness of the discussions, for "the woman's point of view" has long been too much neglected among us. Care, however, will need to be taken that the right kind of women are elected. There should be no room for women who are under priestly rule and domination, but women of wide culture, strength of character, and open vision—and it would be easy to name a dozen such representative of different schools of ecclesiastical thought—will lend weight and dignity to the Church Assembly—at least that is the view of the writer of these Notes.

The Memorial of the Nine Bishops. The Memorial of the Nine Bishops against the changes in the Communion Service agreed upon by the Convocations was presented to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Thursday evening, February 27, at the close of one of the sittings of the Representative Church Council. The deputation which waited upon the Archbishops was an exceedingly strong one. The Memorial was presented by the Duke of Northumberland, who, in doing so, made an excellent speech, and among those who spoke in its support were the Bishop of Liverpool, the Bishop of Manchester, the Dean of Canterbury, Sir Edward Clarke, the Dean of Carlisle and Lord Midleton; whilst the large and representative attendance of clergy and laity testified to the deep interest taken in the matter. It cannot be said, however, that the result was very satisfactory. The attitude assumed by the Archbishops, whether intentionally or inadvertently we do not know, seemed to be adverse to the deputation; and it is only sober truth to say that not a few members of the deputation felt that they were in an unfriendly atmosphere and were chilled accordingly. It was unfortunate from every point of view and has

increased the difficulties and anxieties of the situation. Many of those who heard the speeches of the Archbishops, and the many more who have since read them in the official report, could not fail to be impressed by what can only be called the captious character of the replies. The Archbishops seemed more anxious to dwell upon what they regarded as the mistakes of the Memorial than to offer any word of reassurance or encouragement. It was not an occasion for scolding, but rather for patient and sympathetic consideration by the Archbishops of the very strong case submitted to them in the name of 3,128 clergy and 102,548 laymen. The point upon which the Archbishop of Canterbury seemed to lay great stress—that the Memorial did not accurately represent the position with regard to the Words of Administration—was hardly worthy of so much attention, seeing that a little reflection would have shown that the statement in the Memorial was absolutely correct when it was drawn up, and that it was not publicly known until a few days before the presentation of the Memorial that a Joint Conference of the two Convocations held in private had reversed the previous decision and that this reversal had been adopted by the Convocations. By this time, however, the signatures to the Memorial were practically complete. Moreover at the best the point was only a subsidiary one and in no way affected the main purpose of the memorial. The one point which was really satisfactory in the Archbishop of Canterbury's reply was his statement that the question of the proposed changes in the Communion Office has been referred by the Joint Conference, which dealt with every other aspect of Prayer Book revision, to a special Conference for consideration. We quote his Grace's words:—

Another point I want to emphasise. All that we have been doing is simply to bring proposals together towards something which has ultimately got to be faced in its entirety, and then we have to see what the desire of the Church is, as far as we can ascertain it, for adopting, or not adopting, the changes which are suggested. When we found how strong the feeling was to which you have given expression to-day, we at once stopped going forward with regard to it. The whole thing has been stopped; we have said we must wait until we can confer face to face with those men of strong Evangelical opinions who can best help us, with devout spirit and with prayerful co-operation with ourselves, to try to reach a solution in this matter. No formulating of any proposal on this subject can be adopted by Convocation until a Conference, or conversation, of that kind, to endeavour to ascertain the position all round, has been deliberately, quietly, and prayerfully attempted. We have tried our level best to consider the Evangelical, as well as the High Church, feeling; and at that stage it is no doubt useful to have such a Memor-

ial as you have put into our hands, provided we take care that we do not seem to regard the proposals which have been made as something which are in themselves obviously and indisputably wrong and bad, such as would dismay our brethren in America, not to say anything of our brethren in Scotland, and a great section of our own perfectly moderate and reasonable Churchmen in England.

It would thus seem, from the Archbishop's statement, that the Memorial already has had great weight—"the whole thing has been stopped"—and we sincerely trust that when this new Conference is held to consider the proposed changes in the Communion Service against which the Memorial is directed the influence of such a wide and influentially signed protest will be such as to carry conviction that these alterations cannot be made without the gravest possible danger to the peace and unity of the Church of England.

We wonder how far the general cause of Reunion is helped by such addresses as those which the Bishop of London has been giving lately—one at a Wesleyan Brotherhood meeting and the other at a meeting of the Clergy Home Mission Union. Of the Bishop's good intentions there can be no question; reunion, as he has so often assured us, is "a passion" with him, but it must be reunion on his own terms. As a result of Conferences at London House, at which prominent Wesleyan as well as prominent Church of England laymen were represented he has evolved a plan for reuniting the Wesleyans to the Church. The main points of the scheme have been thus described:—

On and after a certain date a Bishop is to attend the Ordination of Wesleyan ministers, and will join with the presbyters of their Church in the laying on of hands. Thus every new minister will be in episcopal orders. Of those who are already Wesleyan ministers it is expected that the younger progressive ones especially will seek to be episcopally ordained at once, and they will acquire full rights "as priests in the reunited Church," having signed a protestation that their action is not intended to express an adverse judgment on their past ministry. The older men, who refuse to be thus episcopally ordained, are to be allowed at once to preach in our churches, and "we shall be invited, if the Wesleyan Conference is agreeable, as no doubt it will be, to go and preach in their churches." Thus the reunion of the two Churches will have begun, and by the time the last Wesleyan minister who refuses episcopal Ordination has died out, it will be completed.

The Bishop of London is, as usual, very optimistic over the proposal. But it should be said that the Wesleyans of whom he speaks as being keen on this and that, were as far as we understand, wholly unrepresentative and without authority. We shall know better where we are when the Wesleyan Conference

has declared itself on the proposals. Meanwhile we are inclined to ask whether it is quite wise to set one's face so persistently, as the Bishop of London does, against interchange of pulpits? What is needed just now is some clear and definite recognition of the validity of the regular Nonconformist Ministry, and the interchange of pulpits favours that idea. Until there is such recognition it does not seem to be possible to advance far along the road to reunion. Of course everything depends upon what we mean by reunion. If we mean absorption then no doubt we do well to keep up an attitude of exclusiveness until we can persuade Nonconformists, either singly or in a body, to come over. But is that what is usually meant by Reunion, either on our side or the side of Nonconformity?

**Evangelistic
Work.**

The reception by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society's deputation on March 6 was frankly disheartening. Representatives of the Society waited upon their Graces respectfully to urge that, in accordance with the terms of the Report on the Evangelistic work of the Church, they should issue a Call, summoning the Church to the Evangelisation of England, and to offer the assistance of the Society in the task. The burden of the Archbishop of Canterbury's reply was that no such call is necessary: the Church must go steadily forward in its persevering work. If this represents the settled policy of our Church's leaders—which we can hardly believe—it fills us with despair, for if there is one subject above another in regard to which the whole Church needs to be called to action it is the Evangelisation of England. But we hope that wiser counsels will prevail and that such a call as the Archbishops' Committee recommended, and the Church Pastoral-Aid Society asked for, may yet be made. Moreover it has not escaped notice that the Archbishops allowed the deputation to depart without one word of appreciation of or sympathy with the great work the C.P.A.S. is doing in about 700 of the poorest parishes of the land.