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THE CHURCHMAN

June, 1919.

THE MONTH.

To enter upon a criticism of the May Meetings is regarded by many almost as sacrilege, a kind of laying violent hands upon the Ark, and yet there are one or two points in connection with some of those just held that require the frankest treatment. In the first place, we fear that the general level of the May Meeting speaking this year has been very far below that of twenty or even ten years ago. In those days the May Meeting of a society was a great function: the best possible speakers were invited, and the occasion was used not only for rehearsing what God had done for the Society during the year that was passed, but also for stimulating friends and supporters to further effort and further sacrifice by presenting at least some idea of the greatness of that need. This gave point and purpose to the gathering. This year, however, there has seemed to be a tendency to regard the May Meeting as a somewhat conventional assembly, as a something to be got through somehow and, therefore, anyhow. It aimed at nothing and, consequently, it achieved nothing. Now this is a very serious matter, and if nothing is done to arrest the decline it will not be long before the end of the May Meeting, as a living force and power in our midst, comes into sight. Too much thought and care cannot be given by Committees and secretaries to the choice of speakers. The dominating view seems now to be that only "safe" men, men who can be relied upon to say the "correct" thing, should be chosen; whereas we need for the May Meeting platform men of courage, men of freedom, men of vision, men, in fact, with a message. There are such men—aye, and women, too—to be found even in these days of conventionality and compromise, and we should like to see them made more use of. Another point: the May Meeting speaker, whatever

his position, ought to see to it that his message has a particular and definite relationship to the work of the Society or organisation in whose behalf he is called upon to speak. Once more: a May Meeting speaker's address should be quite fresh and adequately prepared. On more than one occasion, of late, we have heard speeches which had a very suspicious resemblance to old sermons and addresses hurriedly furbished up for the occasion and joined to the immediate purpose of the Meeting by the feeblest of links. We offer these observations in no spirit of captiousness, but rather because we believe so thoroughly and so soundly in the usefulness and effectiveness of the May Meetings as a force in the religious life of to-day, that we view with the deepest regret anything that might tend to militate against the strength and reality of their witness.

Bishops and Reunion. The Bishops are far from speaking with one voice on the Reunion question, but it is to be noted with thankfulness that the number of those who favour the large-hearted, broad-minded view is steadily increasing. The Bishop of Birmingham has corrected the idea that he is opposed to the interchange of pulpits: all that he objects to is that there should be no settled rule on the subject, and his hope is that the Bishops will be able to issue some united declaration. This fact should assure us of the Bishop of Birmingham's friendliness; but he goes further, for, in reference to the Peace celebrations, he says:—"I cannot help wishing that there were some means provided, on such national occasions, for all Christians to join in the most sacred and uniting of all our services, the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood." With this statement may be joined one by Bishop Jayne, late of Chester, who took the opportunity in his farewell letter to his diocese to deal at some length with the general question, and referred especially to the Kikuyu United Communion. Quoting a passage from Tait's *Life* concerning the Inaugural Revisers' Communion, he said:—"I maintained at the time of the original Kikuyu Controversy, and still more firmly hold in the light of our enlarged missionary experience, and the lessons of the war, that these words apply with even greater force to the gathering at Kikuyu, from so wide an area and under such careful conditions and qualifications required of the devoted labourers in the Lord's

harvest who were assembled. It may be that light will be vouchsafed from such quarters for guiding us in instances of exceptional inter-denominational Communion. Speaking for myself, had I been within range of the original Kikuyu Communion, I should gladly and thankfully have availed myself of the great privilege due, I am convinced, to the prompting of the Holy Spirit of God." Such an avowal is most encouraging; we cannot, at this moment, recall that any other diocesan bishop has spoken out quite so clearly and directly upon that question.

But against these utterances must be set others, **Bishop Gore's Inquiries.** of a less favourable character. The Bishop of Oxford is convinced that the interchange of pulpits would not promote but defeat the ends of religious unity. The Bishop is believed to be keen on unity as he understands it; what then is his policy? He makes the following contribution to the discussion:—

I am persuaded that we shall make no way towards religious unity unless we accept the fact that we ought to be united in one visible body and that we are in fact divided in this world: that the question is—Are our divisions due, or how far are they due, to things in our judgment essential or to things relatively indifferent? That is, each corporate fragment of Christendom must ask itself what is the essential Gospel, whether of idea or fact or sacramental rite, which every official messenger of the Church must be prepared to proclaim and which the Church corporately must regard it as its religious duty to maintain at all costs. Then we shall know how we stand.

But is it not rather late in the day to propound such questions? Is it really true that we do not even yet know "how we stand"? Cannot the Bishop tell us his views on intercommunion? He presented a certain Memorial to Convocation a few weeks ago; he was present at the first meeting held to draw up the document; cannot he tell us plainly whether or not he agrees with its terms?

The Memorial to which we refer was signed by **The Memorial to Convocation.** fourteen representative clergymen of the "extreme" party, including Dr. Darwell Stone, who acted as Chairman of the Memorialists. It contained the following among other conclusions at which the signatories who met at Pusey House, Oxford, had arrived:—

1. No concession, even of a temporary character, can be made with regard to any matter of principle.

2. We ought not to take part in united services either in our places of worship or in those of the non-Episcopal bodies.

3. It is not possible for us in any circumstances to preach or minister in the places of worship belonging to non-Episcopal bodies, at any of their services, though we may, at their invitation, expound our beliefs to them subject to the consent of the Bishop and the parish priest.

4. There are no circumstances in which we can invite members of non-Episcopal bodies to minister or preach in our Churches.

5. It is not permissible to admit members of non-Episcopal bodies to Communion, except in the case of a dying person who has expressed a desire for reconciliation with the Church.

6. Obstacles to Reunion, in addition to the question of Orders, include :

(i.) Any serious divergence of belief on central doctrines of the Christian Faith, or as to the nature of the Church and Sacraments.

(ii.) Any serious divergence as to the administration of the Sacraments.

(iii.) An unwillingness to assent to any form of Creed.

The signatories commended these conclusions to the "careful consideration" of the Upper House of Convocation. It is extraordinary that at this time of day a body of Church of England clergymen can be found to put their signatures to such a document as that.

The Dean of Canterbury, when speaking at the
 Dean Wace's
 Answer. Annual Meeting of the National Church League on
 May 13, referred to the Memorial in scathing terms, and no more effective comment could be made upon it than is contained in his speech. He said that "a number of conclusions were embodied in the petition, and included among them was one of the most shocking statements he remembered reading in modern times. The petitioners stated that 'It is not permissible to admit members of non-Episcopal bodies to Communion except in the case of a dying person who has expressed a desire for reconciliation with the Church.' That was a perfectly terrible statement, and put forward by men who are desirous of reunion and discussing methods by which it would be brought about. . . . What we wanted above all things was not interchange of pulpits—that seemed to him a trifle—but intercommunion. To approach the great Nonconformist bodies on the supposition that you cannot recognise the validity of Holy Communion which was not celebrated by an episcopally ordained minister was to dissipate all thoughts of reunion."