She urged him to write a poem of considerable length; and as moral satire was equally congenial to his taste, and in accordance with his views, she suggested as his theme, "The Progress of Error." He acted on her advice, and speedily followed up "The Progress of Error" with three other poems of the same serious nature: "Truth," "Table Talk," and "Expostulation." On sending "Table Talk" to Mr. Newton, he said:—

> It is a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry, that I may decoy people into my company; and grave, that they may be the better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that his disguise procures, to drop a word in favour of religion. In short, there is some pith; and here and there are bits of sweetmeat, which seems to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call "a trifle."

He was fifty years of age when his first volume of poems was published.

CHARLES D. BELL.

(*To be continued.*)

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

AMONG the many anomalies which are still prevalent in the Church of England, not the least are those connected with the law as it affects the sale, purchase, and exchange of livings. Ecclesiastical patronage, as it now exists, may be divided into two classes, public and private. The number of benefices in the gift of private patrons about equals, and its value somewhat exceeds, that of those to which presentations are made by the Crown, bishops, chapters, colleges, and other public bodies. Benefices within the latter category are not very frequently exchanged, and can never be sold, except under the special provisions of Acts of Parliament; it is, therefore, among those which are in the gift of private patrons, that the most serious abuses are now found to exist. So serious, indeed, have they been, and so numerous have been the complaints arising from them, that upon the motion of the Bishop of Peterborough, a Committee of the House of Lords was appointed to examine the bearings of the whole question in 1874. Some abortive attempts at legislation resulted, we believe, from the report of this Committee, but so little was really done that, in 1878, at the instance of the Archbishop of York, a Royal Commission was issued, with full powers to enter upon the whole subject, and made its report in

the following year. As the conclusions arrived at by the Committee of the House of Lords and by the Commission were substantially identical, we may consider that, between the two, we have now all the information before us which can be elicited, and are in a position to form an opinion as to the changes which it is desirable, and in some occasions even imperative, to make by legislative enactment. The guiding principles upon which the subject, as it seems to us, should be approached, are embodied in the words of the Report of the Committee, which are adopted in the third paragraph of that of the Royal Commission:—

> The Committee are of opinion that all legislation affecting Church Patronage should proceed on the principle that such patronage partakes of the nature of a trust, to be exercised for the spiritual benefit of the parishioners; and that whatever rights of property originally attached, or in process of time have attached to patronage, must always be regarded with reference to the application of this principle. All exercise of the rights of patronage without due regard to the interests of the parishioners, should, so far as possible, be restrained by law; and the law should also aim at imposing such checks on the exercise of his choice by the patron, as should prevent, as far as possible, the appointment of unfit persons to the cure of souls.

We believe that the above paragraph speaks the feelings of every real well-wisher to the Church of England, and that the only difference of opinion will arise as to how principles, sound in themselves, should be carried into effect.

It is well to clear the ground at the outset, by saying that no case seems to have been made out for the abolition of private patronage. On the contrary, its existence enlists in the ranks of beneficed clergymen many who are valuable additions to the body, just as the power of purchase, under proper regulations, greatly facilitates the entrance of recruits, whom it might otherwise be found difficult to obtain. What is really required, is not so much an interfence with the state of patronage now generally existing, as the prevention of abuses. Many advowsons originally grew up from grants of land made to the Church by proprietors of manors. Some still remain in the hands of the representatives of the original grantors. Yet, from whatever source they may have originally sprung, they have always been property limited by a trust. The law stepped in and forbade the appointment of any presentee unless he were a clerk in holy orders; the law enjoined that certain questions with respect to his fitness should be decided, not by the patron, but by the bishop of the diocese; finally, the law forbade the patron to appoint at all if he happened to be a Roman Catholic. Property, subject to such limitations, is not, and never has been, regarded as absolute ownership. The legislature has, therefore, precedent as well as policy in its favour, should it see fit, in the interests

of the parish, to make still further provisions. That there has been an improper traffic in livings it is impossible to deny. We have only to turn to the advertisements which regularly appear in the columns of certain journals, to be cognizant of this fact; indeed, it would not be too much to say that a whole class has sprung up, with whom this nefarious barter forms an important part of their business. The obvious remedy for such an evil is the prohibition of sales by auction, with their attendant scandals, and the enforcement in every case of sale or exchange, of a written instrument, to be officially registered in the diocesan chancery. Then, again, with regard to the offence of simony, now largely mixed up with all such transactions. The term itself, in its legal sense, is at present not coextensive with the popular idea of its meaning. A new and clear definition of the offence itself is urgently needed, as is also a statutory declaration upon the part of the patron, as well as of the presentee, upon every avoidance of a benefice, that the offence has not been committed. Furthermore, there are traces of such wide-spread evil, with regard to the sale and purchase of next presentations, that the time seems to have come when they should be prohibited by law. The point, we know, will be hotly contested, but it was decided unanimously by the Commissioners, after full consideration, to recommend the enactment of such a provision; and their conclusion was substantially that of the known majority of the Committee of the House of Lords, though by an accidental circumstance, the resolution which affirmed it was lost by a single vote. Our suggestions up to this point are, we are well aware, direct limitations of the rights of patrons, but they are the minimum of what may fairly be demanded in the interests of the Church, while we believe that their enactment would not diminish the value of benefices so much as the uncertainty which at present exists as to the future position of this class of property.

It is not, however, patrons alone who must submit to see their private interests made subservient to those of the parishioners. We cannot see why a clerk, who has ceased, from age or infirmity, to be able to perform the duties of the office, should not be called upon by the proper authority to retire, like any other public functionary. Still less can we think it is just that he should be able to assert his right to be presented, when he is either too young or too old to exercise the functions of the ministry in the particular post which he is designated to fill. A proper scheme of retirement, somewhat upon the lines of Bishop Wilberforce's Act, would be the appropriate remedy in the one case, and the delegation of more stringent powers to the diocesan himself, or to a diocesan council, in the other matter. Nor could we ever understand why the cure of souls alone, of all other

public functions, should be made liable for the payment of the debts of a private individual. The sequestration of a benefice means nothing short of the abstraction of funds contributed for a public purpose, for the benefit of the creditors of a private individual. Tithes and dues continue to be paid, but the services which they were intended to ensure are no longer rendered. Some relief has been afforded to parishioners by a recent Act, which enables the bishop to fix the stipend of the curate or curates-in-charge, with reference to the needs of the parish; but the scandal still remains, that the profligate or the spendthrift may fritter away, for the space of a whole lifetime, an income to which he is entitled only upon conditions which he has rendered himself incompetent, by his own act, to fulfil. In this case we have a choice of two preventive measures. If benefices could not be the subject of sequestration at all, the credit of the incumbent would be destroyed, and extravagance would thus receive an effectual check. Or, the act of insolvency might be rendered *ipso facto* an avoidance of the benefice, and a new presentation would be the inevitable result, unless some special circumstances could be brought forward to take the case out of the ordinary provisions of the new Statute. These are, no doubt, limitations of the rights at present enjoyed by incumbents. But they are limitations in the direct interest of the parishioners, and ought to be submitted to—in our opinion—as such.

We now come to two or three subsidiary reforms, which are also urgently needed. Certain incumbencies, called donatives, entitle those who own them to appoint a clerk without presenting him to the bishop, or the production of any evidence of identity. Resignation takes place to the patron, not to the bishop. Upon a vacancy, they can be sold, or left unfilled altogether, at the discretion of the patron. We agree with the House of Lords' Committee and the Royal Commissioners, that: "Privileges in themselves so anomalous, and so obviously capable of being abused for corrupt purposes, should not be enjoyed by a small number of patrons; and that all donatives should be converted into presentative benefices." It would seem only reasonable that some opportunities should be given to parishioners to state their objections, on specified grounds, to an impending appointment. These grounds should be confined to allegations of physical or moral incapacity. Notice might easily be given of such objections. The bishop, through his archdeacon or rural dean, would have full power of ascertaining whether they were reasonable or not; and, with his sanction, the case might be decided, if necessary, by a court of law. As a matter of fact, we doubt whether such an appeal would ever be necessary, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred.

There may be those to whom such precautions seem needless;

if so, they cannot have read the evidence which is in print. It is simply a shame and scandal to the Church, not only that a regular traffic in the cure of souls should be carried on, but that the basest expedients should be resorted to in order to evade the requirements of the law. There are men in holy orders who do not hesitate either to sign, or to obtain, false certificates of character; to hold livings simply for the purpose of making merchandize of them; to prostitute their profession for the sake of reaping unholy gain. It may well be asked what is likely to be the influence of the Church in a parish which finds itself in the hands of one of these harpies. Short, even of these flagrant abuses, irregularities continually take place. We give an instance, in which all the parties concerned were thoroughly respectable. The patron of a benefice, which we will call Whiteacre, was about to sell the next presentation, when the incumbent suddenly died. A clerical agent immediately suggested that a purchaser should be found, nominally for the benefice of Blackacre, which happened to be "upon his books." The nominee of the purchaser was then to be presented to Whiteacre by the patron, who was in turn to have made over to him the proceeds of the sale of Blackacre, a living of similar value. In other words, the owner of Whiteacre sold the benefice while it was vacant, in defiance of the law; yet the transaction, although clearly simoniacal, was so managed that no legal notice could be taken of it. We give the instance simply as a specimen of the laxity of conscience which prevails upon such matters. The following may be taken as a specimen of another kind of inconvenience. An inefficient clergyman was induced to resign his benefice, to the great advantage of his parishioners, by the promise of a pension for life from the patron, who was wholly ignorant of the fact that such an arrangement was illegal. Here it is obvious that the public interest demands the sanction, under proper provision, of proposals so beneficial to all parties concerned.

We have now considered the question as it affects the patron, the clerk whom he presents, the parishioners over whom the presentee has to exercise the cure of souls, and the public in general. It remains to discuss how any changes in the law would affect the position of the diocesan. That which he at present occupies is decidedly anomalous. He can refuse to present, but only upon grounds indefinite and unsatisfactory. He can ask for testimonials, but his powers are so limited in this respect, that often, when they are attained, they are scarcely worth the paper upon which they are written. He can take action in case of gross moral delinquency, but if he does, he does so at his own risk. The cost of such proceedings is so enormous that the prospect of incurring them may well terrify

one who is not ordinarily, in the present day, possessed of a large private fortune. These are defects which seriously militate against the due exercise of episcopal authority. We are quite aware of the jealousy which is felt in many quarters of adding to the power of the bishops. But we confess that, if the bishops are fit, in any worthy sense of the word, for the important position which they now hold, we think that their hands ought to be strengthened in the following respects:—

1. We think that they should have the power of rejecting a clerk, in addition to the grounds now held to be valid, for want of physical capacity to undertake the duties of a particular cure, for extreme age or youth, and for immorality, not purged by long subsequent good conduct.

2. It should not be incumbent to receive testimonials, unless signed by at least three beneficed clergymen in the last diocese from whence the presentee comes, the signatures being countersigned by the bishop of the diocese, as a guarantee of the fitness of those who have signed to give an opinion upon the question. It would also be a great convenience if these testimonals took the shape of replies to a form of specific inquiries.

3. Some funds should be called into existence, out of which costs of prosecutions instituted officially by the bishop might be defrayed. It is not impossible that such a fund might be created by the imposition of a moderate fee upon the registration of every sale, purchase, or exchange of a benefice. This would be little felt at the time, and would rapidly accumulate, so as to form a guarantee against the ruinous cost which has often at present to be incurred.

It is extremely to be regretted that nearly three years should now have been permitted to elapse since the Report of the Royal Commission was made to Her Majesty, without any action upon it having been successfully attempted by the Legislature. Nothing tends so much to weaken the vigilance and blunt the energy of those who serve upon such Commissions, as the uncertainty whether their labours will not, after all, be fruitless. In the existing state of things, we are afraid that considerable difficulty will be experienced in carrying any Bill which has the interest of the Church at heart, through the ordeal of the House of Commons. The best, if not the only chance of success for such a measure would be its emanation in the first instance from the Upper House. The question has now been thoroughly threshed out there, and the lines of future legislation have been clearly laid down by the recommendations of a Committee of its own appointment. The principles embodied in them have been, as we have already pointed out, substantially endorsed by the Royal Commissioners. Were a measure carrying out their practical details passed

through the House of Lords by any member of the Episcopal bench, with the assent of Her Majesty's Government, that Government could hardly decline to take charge of its fortunes in the House below. No favour is craved for the Church. All that is asked for is simple justice,—a justice which has now been twice recognized by independent bodies deputed to examine into the character and reasonableness of the demands put forward. Of one thing we may be certain. In the face of the evidence which has now seen the light, the question will not be allowed to slumber. An attempt was made during the past session to bring the subject on the *tapis*, from a quarter from which it could hardly be suspected to emanate—had the object been to strengthen the Church of England. It will be well in this case, not only to be wise, but to be wise in time. If the friends of the Church be not prepared to grapple in earnest with the abuses which cripple her energies, even if they do not paralyze her action, the task will be attempted, and perhaps achieved, in a very different spirit by her foes.

MIDLETON.

ART. IV.—THE JORDAN VALLEY.

1. *The Rob Roy on the Jordan, &c.: a Canoe Cruise in Palestine, &c.* By J. MACGREGOR, M.A., Captain of the Royal Canoe Club. Sixth Edition. London: J. Murray. 1880.
2. *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine and the Confines thereof, with the History of the Old and New Testament acted thereon.* By THOMAS FULLER, B.D. London: Printed by J. F., for John Williams, at the Signe of the Crown, in Pauls Churchyard. 1650.
3. *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine, undertaken with special reference to its Physical Character.* By H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., Canon of Durham. Third Edition, Revised. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. 1876.

THE Jordan Valley, combined with the Red Sea, is a cleft of extraordinary depth between the table-lands of Abyssinia and Arabia. Of the three lakes through which, or into which, the Jordan passes, the Waters of Merom are 160 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee 318 feet below that level, and the Dead Sea 1,390 feet below the same. There is nothing like this in any other part of the world. The expanse of the Dead Sea—as Professor Haughton remarks, in his recent Lectures on Physical Geography—is "the lowest surface of water that exists in the earth;" and he invites