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THE

CHURCHMAN

MAY, 1882.

ART. I.—OXFORD, AND THE REFORMS PROPOSED BY THE UNIVERSITY COMMISSION.

1. *University of Oxford Commission.* Blue Book, 1881.
2. *A Letter to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, on the Statutes of the University of Oxford Commission.* By the Right Hon. MOUNTAGUE BERNARD, D.C.L. Rivingtons, 1882.

NO words are more familiar to the Oxford resident than the question, "How are things at Oxford?" almost the first question which a stranger introduced to him at a dinner-party or lawn-tennis-party will ask. But familiar as the inquiry is, probably few of us have yet invented an answer to it. There is, of course, the vague, half-medical formula, "much as usual," or, "as well as could be expected." But beyond this it is hard to proceed until the scope of inquiry is more restricted. Of what length and variety of treatment the subject admits may be seen from the bulk of the Blue Book to which we refer above. Nearly 6,000 questions, with answers thereto, are spread over 400 pages, and they cannot be said to exhaust the subject. To refer a lady to a Blue Book would appear to be pedantry too gross even for an Oxford Don. Yet it may be safely affirmed that the Commissioners have padded their more abstruse and recondite investigations with matter by no means unreadable. Our friends who wish to know how things are at Oxford cannot fail to be entertained. What we learn, what we teach, what we do, what we leave undone, wherein we are better than the Germans, wherein worse—all these things are set down, and, above all, what we are worth, even to the last penny. It almost seems as though the Commission thought it unwise to abolish celibate restrictions, without adding for those to whom it might concern the exact income of every marriageable man

at Oxford, opposite his name, so that no false hopes might be excited, nor disappointment laid to their charge.

The Blue Book declares what we are; Mr. Mountague Bernard in a brief, clear pamphlet, shows pretty exactly what we are to become. His account of the work of the Commission is so lucidly written, that even a moderate acquaintance with Oxford will enable the reader to understand the general tendency of the proposed changes. It is not our purpose here to travel over the ground already occupied by Mr. Bernard, but to refer to him as an authoritative exponent in trying to estimate the probable effect of the statutes made by the Commission, particularly in so far as they concern us as Churchmen.

We must begin with a brief retrospect. Oxford has been visited by two *reforming*[1] Commissions in the present century, or rather in the latter half of it, the Commissions of 1854 and 1877. The bare statement of this fact implies either that the earlier Commission did its work very imperfectly, or that ideas of University requirements have changed very rapidly. Perhaps there is truth in both explanations, but it is not less true that the reforms of 1854 produced many unforeseen and undesirable results, and left too little power of correcting them in the hands of the University or the Colleges. Hence arose the necessity of a fresh Government interference with its expensive machinery, cumbrous delays, and with inevitable suggestions of political motives.

For what did the Commission of 1854 find? It found a certain number of Colleges and Halls, which were unquestionably the property of the Church of England. How they became so is another matter, but, speaking generally, this was their condition. It is not in itself unreasonable that a college should belong to a particular denomination. There is nothing at the present moment to prevent Romanists, Presbyterians, or Baptists from founding a college at Oxford. Colleges, if they have any value, are valuable as homes—homes in which religious and moral supervision is exercised over young men at a time when they specially need it. But what was unreasonable, was this—the Colleges had practically suffocated the University. No one could belong to the University without belonging to a College; no one could enter, reside, study, take a degree, or teach as a member of the University unless he were also a member of a College. Thus, the University as well as the Colleges had become the exclusive possession of the Church of England, and as it happened, the prevalence of Toryism and Tractarianism at Oxford made its exclusiveness all the more manifest. It was not easy to justify the banishment of Dissenters from a seat of

[1] There was also a Commission of Inquiry in 1872.

learning which had once been not only national but cosmopolitan.

But so inextricably was the idea of College and University bound together, that the Commissioners hardly paid sufficient attention to this point. Had they done so, had Dissenters been allowed an equal share in university education and government, and had university instruction been made a reality, the result might have been different. But the panacea of the day was competitive examination. More attention was paid to abolishing restrictions of birth or poverty, from all emolument than to the direction or extension of university education, and with what results?

(1.) A number of prizes of extraordinary value was thrown into the market in the shape of Fellowships and Scholarships. Whereas in old days, *theoretically,* a poor boy known to some fellow of a college was brought up from his county or diocese, and if he showed a taste for study became a student for life, or till he took a country living, now any boy who could come out first on a given set of papers obtained a prize of between £500 and £400 value, with the hope of securing in four years, as reward for a similar feat, an annuity of £300 a year, coupled only with the disadvantage or advantage of celibacy. For such a prospect it was worth while to spend a year or two more at school, and one wholly unforeseen result was an extension of school-life; the clever boys were kept on to win scholarships, and the athletic to perfect their cricket. For just about this time the idolatry of muscles crept in.

(2.) The successful prizeman, if he obtained a fellowship without condition of taking holy orders, looked round him, and saw little reason for stopping at the University. Oftener than not he obtained his fellowship at a college of which he knew nothing. His old friends went down, in the new society he was a stranger. If he stayed at Oxford he might hope to obtain a tutorship, but after that —— ? An old tutor, pointing once to a broken-down carriage by the road-side, said bitterly: "That is what the old coaches come to." Naturally the layman went to try his fortunes in London. If he failed there, he might still fall back on a tutorship. Thus by another unforeseen result, the education of Oxford remained principally in the hands of clergymen.

But the clerical fellows under the new regulations were the strangest product of the legislation of 1854. There was some reason in the idea of a body of members of the Church of England, most of them clergymen, electing to a clerical fellowship one whom they had watched during his undergradute career, of who seemed likely to be useful to the college as a placeand religion, education, and learning. The power of election might be abused—no doubt it was abused—but the system was not

logically indefensible. But what could be said in favour of electing to a clerical office by competitive examination? The examination could be no test of the candidate's fitness to be a clergyman, especially since theology formed no part of it. The system acted purely and simply as a bribe to clever men to promise that they would take holy orders. Not unfrequently scholars allowed their conscientious scruples to be overruled by tutors anxious to gain prestige for their college, and undertook clerical obligations far too hastily. Sometimes during the course of an examination for two fellowships, one lay and one clerical, a lay candidate was informed by the examiners that he was defeated in his own field, but would be elected if he promised then and there to take holy orders.

Hence colleges began to fill rapidly with tutors who were clergy only in name, and who were anti-clerical in spirit and in their aims. Such men were foremost in clamouring for a repeal of the Tests Act; some of them took advantage of the Act which allowed clergy to retire from holy orders; not a few have been active for the abolition of clerical fellowships. The system had become a grave scandal and a danger to the Church of England.

The government of colleges by 1877, had passed into the hands of bodies of which half might be Nonconformist, and the other half clergy who disowned their cloth. With the repeal of Tests the Church of England lost endowments which had been prizes for education of her lay members. But here, too, the effect of the competitive system was visible. Insincere subscription of the Thirty-nine Articles among lay Fellows had become quite as common as insincere ordination vows among the clerical.

Of course we are not to be understood as asserting that this insincerity was universal. Such an assertion would be quite as untrue as its contrary. But this much had become manifest. The principle of giving fellowships as a reward of competitive examination was inconsistent with the idea of their being the exclusive property of the Church of England.

But other objections of a very different character were urged against the reforms of 1854. Was it reasonable, or even beneficial, that a young man of two or three and twenty should receive so large a prize as £300 a year as a reward for a single examination? If any one thinks so, let him try to expound his reasons to an intelligent foreigner. He is not likely to repeat the experiment. Again, competitive examinations soon ruled all the studies of the place. College tutors taught with a view to these examinations, and were thereby hampered, and unfitted for serious study of any one subject. Professors, who were supposed to give themselves to exhaustive inquiry in some particular field of learning, could not obtain an audience—unless, indeed, they happened to be examiners. A professor has been known, who ordinarily had

but one or two pupils, and who sometimes saved himself the trouble of lecturing by lending his notes to the undergraduate who formed his class. That professor was appointed examiner, and his room was thronged with an attentive audience, treasuring every syllable that fell from his lips. He gave notice that he would lecture on the kind of questions usually set in the schools, and there would have been no room to contain his class, had not the University called him to order.

These were the chief difficulties, then, which the Commission was to face—(1) the want of harmony between the teachings of professors and college tutors; (2) the want of a sufficient career at Oxford to tempt laymen to become tutors; (3) the question of clerical endowments.

The two first points may be dismissed briefly. Faculties of studies have been instituted, which are to exercise certain control over public lectures delivered in those studies, and the system of appointing examiners has been so altered as to give more influence to the professors. Secondly, laymen are offered tutorships, to which the pension is no longer a college living, and a dazzling range of University readerships and professorships is opened to allure them. But it is the third point with which we are chiefly concerned. Here the difficulties were great. On the one hand, there were grave objections to clerical fellowships awarded by competition; on the other hand, the Tests Act and the University Commission Act of 1877 required that religious instruction should be provided for members of the Church of England.

The difficulties are well described in a Letter to the Commission, by the present Dean of Westminster (Blue Book, Part ii. p. 141).

> In a small college [says the Dean] it may very easily happen if no provision (*i.e.* that some member of the governing body shall undertake the care of religious instruction) is made, that at no distant date, neither the head nor the Fellows of the College will be in holy orders. Small societies with full power of electing to vacancies in their own body, are apt to take, for a time at least, a somewhat uniform tone and colour. Those who have had much experience in elections to fellowships will not place much confidence in the result of competitive examinations, as a remedy against this danger. . . . The result might be a complete exclusion from the college of all but laymen.

The Dean then proceeds to estimate the consequences—(1) entire want of interest in religious instruction among the fellows; (2) the appointment of a non-resident chaplain on a small salary to conduct services and to give such instruction; (3) desertion by undergraduates of the hirelings ministry; (4) mistrust of colleges by parents; (5) the foundation of active proselytizing colleges by Romanist and Nonconformists. We have stated

very briefly some of the chief heads of a letter which deserves to be read *in extenso*. These dangers, then, were clearly set before the Commission of which the Dean ultimately became a member. But with what result? Mr. Mountague Bernard tells us that, "where the taking of holy orders is in future to be a qualification for obtaining or holding a fellowship, this qualification will be explicitly connected with a specific purpose—that of providing for the chapel services and for religious teaching—and will be coupled with another qualification, that of fitness and willingness to undertake these duties, and in particular the latter of them. And the Commissioners have consequently acted on the principle that the restriction on free choice, which the qualification of holy orders import, should be extended no further than the purpose itself may for each college reasonably be deemed to require."

In other words, a vast amount of property intended to encourage learning among the clergy of the Church of England has been taken away from her, not because it was impossible to utilize it, but to provide a career for laymen of any denomination or none. Further, religious instruction in each college is to be the duty of as few men as possible—in most cases of one man only. He may be a Ritualist, and set up a confessional within the college walls as the best method of discharging his duty. He may be a rationalist, and undermine the faith which he professes to teach. He may be orthodox, but narrow-minded. Still it matters not. One side of the question, and one only, will be heard in small colleges.

The one religious instructor, whoever he is, in small colleges, will be the sole authorized exponent of Church principles there, possibly the sole representative of the Church of England on the governing body. We can easily imagine him without any fault of his own securing a precarious existence for his lectures, contemptuously tolerated if he neglects his duty, fiercely opposed if he tries to discharge it faithfully. The conditions will not indeed be altogether new, but whereas the isolation of a clerical tutor has hitherto been accidental, it will henceforth be the rule, almost the statutory necessity. Men have been raised up from time to time who have fought the battle steadfastly, before now, but they have been men of exceptional character. Henceforth two or three such men will be required every year. Even granting that they could be found, there is very scant security that they will be appointed to the posts for which they may be peculiarly fitted. No Board of Guardians electing a chaplain to a Union could be in half the perplexity which awaits Fellows of Colleges electing their clerical instructor. Fellows, some of them Nonconformists, some Agnostics, some Æsthetic, agreeing only in contempt and dislike of orthodoxy

are to select a clergyman in Priest's Orders, on what principle or by what methods the future alone can determine. Will they institute theological examinations? Who, then, is to appoint the examiners? Or will they be guided by testimonials? And if so, will Dr. Liddon or Professor Jowett, Mr. Haweis or Bishop Ryle, have the greater weight?

The desire of securing religious instruction is creditable to Lord Salisbury, who appointed the Commission, but he really prevented his desire from becoming effectual, when, in deference to Oxford prejudices, he removed the name of Dean Burgon from the list of Commissioners. Mr. Burgon was the only person at first nominated who both knew the conditions of modern Oxford life, and was sincerely eager to restore to the Colleges, at least in some measure, the purpose of their foundation. With his removal the battle was lost, and it is now impossible for sincere Churchmen to be satisfied with the existing provisions for Church teaching. But though our Church has been spoiled of her old endowments, she has not yet been deprived of the munificence, piety, and faith from which those endowments originated. Nor need she abandon her hold upon the Higher Education of England, though we must reserve for a future occasion the fuller consideration of this point.

M. A. Oxon.

Art. II.—HIGHER EDUCATION IN WALES.

Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales: Report of the Departmental Committee.

IN the March number of the Churchman I called attention to the account which the Committee give of the provision which at present exists in Wales, for Intermediate and Higher Education. I now proceed to consider "the conclusions" at which the Committee have arrived, and "the recommendations" which they have made on the subject.*

As to their conclusions, they report that the means of ad-

* An article has appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for April, from the pen of Mr. Lewis Morris, one of the members of the Departmental Committee. Mr. Morris gives a clear exposition of the scheme of education recommended in the Report. He states that it "had not raised any strong adverse feeling on the part of any section of the community." Since he wrote, an influential meeting has been held at Bangor, in which strong exception was taken to some of the recommendations of the Report. I believe that exception will find a wide response in the Principality.