

Diocesan Synod.

(Extracts from the Bishop's Address).

THE MAORI MISSION.

There are clear and distinct signs of renewed spiritual life amongst the Maoris in the Diocese. This is being manifested in many ways. For one, in the reduced amount of drinking. Drinking, where it is still bad, is due in a great measure to the unlawful sale of liquor on the part of the hotel proprietors, and to the lax supervision of the police in that particular district. There are glaring cases of this, where reformation is urgently needed. Where liquor laws are observed, and where police supervision is good, the evil is greatly reduced. Whether our liquor laws, as they obtain to-day, are the best for the country and for the highest development of our race, is for the country to decide when the question once more comes before the people of this Dominion. Then, as faithful Church people, we must cast our vote deliberately and prayerfully, not in our own interests, nor in the interests of any section of the community, but in the interests of the people as a whole. This is the burden of responsibility that rests upon each one of us, a responsibility far greater than many who go lightly to the poll seem to realise. But whatever the issue, whatever the legislation passed, we do claim, we have a right to claim, that those laws are enforced. It is the failure on the part of the Government to enforce these laws that has made our Maori brothers fall easy victims to the drink habit, and which compels all who care for the welfare of our people, especially for our Maori people, to seek for other and more stringent remedies.

Christian Influence.

What we want in the Dominion is a strong public opinion that will not allow the few to enrich themselves, by unlawful means, at the expense of the many. To create and maintain a strong, healthy public opinion is the work of the Church. We are not here to act as police, nor to exert any force, save the force of public opinion that will react upon legislation and compel the Government to pass righteous laws and to see when passed that they are enforced. Unfortunately, there is not a strong public opinion on these great moral questions. Had there been, no Legislature, in a country that stands for Christianity, nominally at any rate, dare pass such laws as the Matrimonial Causes Act; yet it was passed

and scarcely a paper in the country (I refer to the secular press) lifted up its voice against it. That alone shows both the lack and need of a strong public opinion, and this the Church has failed to create. Why? Not because Church people are too Christian, but because we are not Christian enough, because we have not enough of the Spirit of Christ to care for what He cares for, to love what He loves, to oppose what He opposed. The Church is here to express the mind and spirit of Christ. What the world wants to-day, as Bishop Gore is constantly reminding us, is the moral witness of the Church. The world can hardly believe, not because it cannot accept this dogma or that dogma, but because it is not attracted by representative Christianity. It is waiting to see the Christ revealed in us. It is not increase in numbers that is so needed to-day. There are too many nominal Christians already. What is needed is a faithful manifestation of the character of Christ to a world that is not attracted by Him, because they have not seen the Christ in us who profess Him.

Hopeful Signs.

There is the more positive side of this growth and development, which may well be a cause of deep thankfulness. This is manifest in various ways—in the better up-keep of the Churches, in the spiritual atmosphere of the services, the increased number of Communicants, the desire of our Maori people for fuller ministrations of the Church, above all in the offer of some of the best of our young Maoris for the Ministry.

The Maori Ministry.

A year ago the outlook was indeed gloomy. We then needed seven or eight Maori Priests to fill vacant Native Pastorates. These we still need; but instead of having no Maori Students in training at St. John's College we now have four; three others are waiting to enter next year; while at Te Aute we have four boys who have definitely decided to enter the Ministry and are having special training. There are several others in various settlements with whom I have had interviews, whose thoughts are turning to the Ministry. Nor is this spiritual manifestation limited to the Church of this Province. There is in the hearts of men to-day a deeper hunger after GOD. The same story reaches us from different parts of the world. Men want GOD; and we know that only the revealed religion of our Lord Jesus Christ can satisfy this deep craving of humanity. The human soul can only rest in Him "in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

REGISTRATION OF CHURCH MEMBERS.

I would call attention to the Canon bearing upon this subject where it is clearly laid down that only registered members, that is, members of the age of 21 years and upwards, are entitled to vote at Parish meetings. There has been, and is, a good deal of laxity in this respect in some of our Parishes, a laxity which might lead to serious difficulty if a crucial question arose at a Parish meeting, which had to be put to the test, and it was found that a very small proportion of those present could record their votes. Such a position has arisen in my own experience.

The paucity of registered members arises not from any desire on the part of Church members to evade the Canon, but from lack of knowledge. I would, therefore, ask the Vicars of all Parishes and Parochial districts to make the position known to their Parishioners; and, further, I would ask all Churchwardens to take immediate steps to enrol all eligible members, both male and female, so that each Parish and Parochial district may have a complete list of its members who are entitled to vote. We may not be in agreement as to the present basis of the franchise being the best working basis. I do not think anyone considers it ideal, but there it is on our Statute Book and we should be loyal to it until a better way is found. My own opinion is that the Communicant basis, as it obtains in the Church of the Province of South Africa, is the best workable basis; it is clear and definite. The South African Church clearly defines in the terms of the Prayer Book what is meant by a Communicant: "A Communicant is one who Communicates at least three times a year, of which Easter should be one." With our increased and increasing number of Communicants we might well adopt this.

PERSONNEL OF OUR VESTRIES.

There is another Canon in the keeping of which there has been, and is, a good deal of laxity. I refer to Clauses 5 and 6 of Canon V. Here it is laid down that both Churchwardens and Vestrymen shall be Communicants of the Church. Both clauses of this Canon date back to 1859, clearly showing what the early fathers of our New Zealand Church thought and felt in their day on this subject. They were not mere idealists; nor are our Church laws mere ideals. They are laws to which we have subscribed and which we are called upon to obey. Whatever practical difficulties there may be in the way of conforming to these laws there must have been far more in the days when the Canon came into being, when Communicants