

Bishop Dudley's Bohlen Lectures.*

This book is a very interesting sample of the drift that is carrying onward those who, a few years ago, were distinctively "Evangelicals," fresh from Alexandria. The lectures are written in a delightfully vigorous and clear style; and, with the popular and animated delivery of their author, must have been very pleasant to listen to. They are remarkable for four things. 1st. Their thorough acceptance—in words at least—of the Œcumenical Creeds and dogmatic definitions. 2d. Their wonderful haziness as to matters of doctrine outside of that line. The Bishop says: "The definitions of the false Athanasius (he means the Athanasian Creed), the Westminster Confession, the decrees of the Council of Trent, the Thirty-nine Articles, are all, it seems to me, the no less natural effort to express the traditional aspect of the eternal realities agreeably to the philosophic conception of the day, and in the language

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of the different schools." This putting of the Athanasian Creed, the Westminster Confession, the Trent decrees, and the Thirty-nine Articles, all on the same level, would have made the Old Evangelicals turn pale with horror. Some of the fogginess is bestowed, most significantly upon the doctrine of the Atonement. The stress laid upon the preaching of the Personal Christ, is well enough. The third remarkable thing is, the recognition of the rights of what is commonly called Ritualism, in every thing except one point. The strongest Sacramental teaching of the Church is reiterated by the Bishop, with manly straight-forwardness. He says: "We need liturgical enrichment, for we need liturgical freedom, which is wealth." And again: "Ritual legislation, rubrical revision, I believe to be the crying need of the Church to-day; and I hail with thankful delight the appointment and the assembling of that Commission of learned men to whom this matter has, by the Church, been given in charge." He recognizes the lawfulness of the choral service, and of nearly every thing commonly called "Ritualism," even including the "mixed chalice" and "what are called the sacrificial vestments." As to these last he says: "If it please the priest or his people that he wear them, who shall object?—for *most assuredly we have no law to guide*, and the people—I mean the people who are not of us, but whom we are sent to win,—find just as little, and just as much, cause for wonder in the alb and chasuble, as in the surplice, and possibly a colored stole evokes their surprise no more than a black one." When it is remembered that these lectures were delivered only last February, in Philadelphia, by an Alexandria graduate, in the Church of the Holy Trinity, the words which we have italicized slash like a scimeter through the ridiculous and unconstitutional legislation of the Convention of Pennsylvania on Ritual two years ago,—a legislation so null and void that they have never dared to attempt to enforce it, and an Evangelical Bishop thus laughs it to scorn under their very eyes.

The *fourth* remarkable thing is the delicate sense of equilibrium shown in two special points of discrimination. The Bishop discriminates strongly in *favor* of theatrical amusements and dancing, which, in view of their attempted canonical legislation on these subjects, will make some of the more rigid Virginians gnash their teeth. But he makes up for it by discriminating *against* Eucharistic Adoration. So

long as he "slights" this, perhaps his advocacy of theatres and dancing will not be thought quite unpardonable. But his language here is as severe against the old disciplinary Canons of Virginia, as it was in the other place against Pennsylvania. He says: "I must here again express my satisfaction, that on the statute-book of the Church *are found no enactments against particular transgressions*, other than those plainly laid down in Holy Scripture, in the inculcation of principles rather than of precepts, in the effort to develop self-determining manhood rather than to essay the continuance of a childhood to be directed and guided at its every step." This affirms the nullity of the Virginia canons, and that to try to pass them is "to essay the continuance of childhood!" We could make many more extracts, of striking, racy, epigrammatic, or startling character; but what we have already said will, we trust, induce the thoughtful ones to read these lectures carefully as a remarkable "sign of the times."