

ourselves, and to help others to stand firm also; it is by such study that we throw freshness and power into our teaching, the freshness which springs from the acquisition of knowledge, and the power which is derived from a clear apprehension and a vigorous grasp of truth.

E. BAYLEY.

ART. II.—THE CITY CHURCHES.

AMONG the many anomalies which strike the eye of the intelligent foreigner, who makes the manners and customs of English life his study, not the least is our national want of adaptability to a change of circumstances. Having once got into a groove, it seems as if we cannot get out of it. An "institution" remains so, and is regarded almost with veneration, long after the circumstances which called it into existence, and which indeed alone rendered it needful, have passed away. We seem to be somewhat deficient in the faculty which enables us to take note of the march of time; and we cling to the past not merely as a matter of sentiment and of reflection, but to an extent which materially cripples the energies of the present. The result is serious enough when it interferes with the welfare of large bodies of our fellow countrymen, whose interests are systematically sacrificed, because we fail to recognize accomplished facts, and prefer the ostrich-like expedient of wilful blindness, when we are desirous of shutting out an unpleasant object. No one, indeed, will accuse the present age of overmuch reverence for the opinions and habits of thought which characterized those periods which preceded it. Yet, in spite of a general tendency to change, if only for the sake of change, we constantly come across instances of obstinate tenacity, in quarters in which we should least have expected to find them. "Vested interests," of course, have much to do with the problem. But in this latter half of the nineteenth century, vested interests alone could not stay the hand of the reformer, if the whole case were thoroughly realized. It is this want, or rather slowness of perception, which forms part of our national character, and against which we require to be, from time to time, put upon our guard.

The difficulty which is experienced in dealing with the question of City churches is precisely a case in point. Few, but those to whom the subject has come home are aware of the utter waste of power involved in the existing state of things. Yet the abuse, for such it really is, has gone on in all its glaring proportions during the whole lifetime of the present generation.

We propose to give the leading facts of the case, and then to examine its bearings as they affect the interests of the Church in general, and of the metropolitan population in particular. Ample statistics are now at the disposal of any inquirer, drawn partly from the returns of the recent census, and partly from investigations which have been carried on at the instance of a private individual, and tabulated in the *St. James's Gazette*. The state of things which they disclose is not only a scandal in itself, but it is one which ought to be abated at the earliest possible moment.

The present population of the City is in round numbers 53,000. It has fallen to that figure from 76,000 in 1871, being a decrease of about 50 per cent. within the last decade. It may be added that the depletive process is likely to continue, from the same cause which is also steadily thinning the number of residents in Lincoln's Inn and the Temple. Space is becoming so valuable, and rents range so high, in these business localities, that it does not answer to sacrifice to the purposes of residence buildings which are so much more valuable as shops, offices, or warehouses. The time will probably come when the City will be deserted by all but those who are in charge of the valuable property contained within its borders. On Sunday even now it is very doubtful whether anyone who can possibly be spared remains within them, most of those who are still resident preferring other quarters of the town on that particular day, whether their object be that of attendance on public worship, or the less laudable one of simple self-amusement. The provision made by the Church for the spiritual needs of this comparatively scanty population is out of all proportion to its requirements. Within the City boundaries there are still sixty-one churches affording accommodation for 32,455 worshippers. Within the same area there are, including synagogues, twenty-one Nonconformist places of worship, with an estimated accommodation for over 17,000 persons. In other words, taking the places of worship of all denominations, room is provided for about 50,000 individuals out of a population the total of which falls short of 53,000. An ordinary parish is considered to be amply supplied with church accommodation if half its population can be seated. Deducting those who are too young and those who are too old to attend any religious service, the sick, and the requisite caretakers of young children and of houses, this proportion is found in practice to be adequate, even among what is termed a church-going population. Figures, however, prove abundantly that such an epithet would be most inappropriate if applied to the population of the City of London; by a census of the congregations throughout the City, taken on the morning of the 1st of May in the present year, startling facts are revealed. The 32,000 odd

sittings provided by the Church of England were occupied on that day by 6,731 individuals. Of these however 571 were officials and their families, 706 were choristers, and 227 almoners bound to attend the services as a condition of receiving their doles; this leaves a balance of 3,853 as the number of the ordinary worshippers. We may add that this balance would be reduced to 3,000 were school-children present at the service deducted from it. Nor can it be pleaded that an unusually large proportion of the City population are to be found among the attendants at Nonconformist places of worship. Of the congregations at the synagogues no census could of course be taken on a Sunday; the other sixteen places of worship had a total attendance of 4,400, reduced after the deduction of officials, choristers, and children to 3,373. The proportion of those present to the available sittings is undoubtedly larger than that which obtains in the churches. But the sum-total comes to a little over 11,000 souls in a population a little under 53,000. In nine churches the number of the general congregations varied from twenty-five persons in Allhallows, London Wall, to two at St. Nicholas Cole Abbey. Such facts speak for themselves.

Let us now turn to the endowments attached to the incumbencies of the City churches. These amount, if we take the returns of the *Clerical Directory* as our guide, to £41,814, or if we adopt the calculations of the *Clergy List*, to £36,385. It is, perhaps, needless to say that the stipends are often in an inverse ratio to the amount of the work to be done. There are evidences in the returns that exceptionally earnest and exceptionally able ministrations do attract, even within the City, respectable though not overflowing congregations; but there are not many men whose ministrations are of such a character who willingly accept City livings. There are traces, on the other hand, that some at least of the incumbents take a very different view of their duties. Many—we believe we might say, the majority—of them are non-resident; one usually resides at St. Leonard's, another at Canterbury, a third at Bath. Of the Canons of St. Paul's but one resides; a large proportion of the City churches may indeed now be said to be served on Sunday by the Underground Railway. No one can read the returns to which we have called attention without feeling convinced that the present and future spiritual needs of the City of London would be amply provided for by the retention of from six to ten of the existing ecclesiastical fabrics, with endowments amounting to one-fourth the sum now literally squandered upon ministrations to empty benches. The surplus which would thus be applicable to the needs of those who are now "perishing for lack of bread" would be largely increased if the sites of the disused churches could be sold, and the proceeds of the sale carried to the same account,

a point with which we shall have to deal further on. What now stares us in the face is the fact that Church accommodation in the City is at present ridiculously in excess of the requirements, that the number of clergy is also excessive, that many of them are underworked and overpaid, that, as a body, they do not reside among their congregations, and that in some instances they are little better than sinecurists. Nor can it be said that these evils are merely the result of a system of private patronage. There are but six private patrons within the City; the gross value of the preferments at their disposal being under £3,000 a year. Among the public patrons are to be found the names of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Bishop of London, the Deans and Chapters of St. Paul's, Westminster, and Canterbury, the Corporation of London, four of the great City companies, five colleges, and various bodies of trustees. Any defect accordingly in the system does not arise from that fertile source of evil, the barter of a cure of souls for a pecuniary consideration.

Let us turn now to the obverse side of the picture. North, south, and east of the City, with its numerous churches and ample endowments, lie districts covering many square miles of brick and mortar, inhabited by a population already dense, and becoming, in many instances, denser day by day, with scanty church accommodation, with no endowments worthy of the name, with populations too poor adequately to supply their own spiritual needs, and consequently in a chronic state of spiritual destitution. To what an extent this is the case may be gathered from the fact that there are whole districts at the East end of London in which the census returns do not disclose the name of a single domestic servant. This means that the whole population consists of families dependent upon the weekly earnings of one or more of their members. It is needless to say that under such circumstances they can have but little to spare from the daily household calls made upon such incomes, and certainly nothing that would be adequate to the maintenance of any decent form of religious worship. It must never be forgotten that in this respect a National Church stands, and always must stand, at a pecuniary disadvantage compared with the Nonconformist bodies. It is her special duty and privilege to care for those for whom no one else cares. Nonconformist congregations, although rarely wealthy, are still more rarely indigent. The "waifs and strays" of the population, the "hard bargains" of the ministerial life, the poor in the strictest sense of the word, are, and ought to be, the peculiar province of Church work and Church superintendence. Upon the City such districts as those we have named have a special and an undeniable claim for assistance. Many of the toilers who crowd the alleys which

branch out of the Old Kent Road, who are huddled together in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields, who have populated whole districts at Hackney and Islington, if they do not actually earn their daily bread within the sound of Bow Bells, spend their lives in the production of commodities which find their market in the City of London, or in ministering indirectly to the material wants of those who do spend their lives there. Many of them, again, have actually been driven out of its limited area, in which they could have carried on their humble callings with far greater profit and convenience to themselves, by the ever-increasing exigencies of our modern commerce, which yearly demands the surrender of fresh space at the hands of our labouring poor. Some of them are compelled to go still further afield, and to seek at New Cross or in Shaftesbury Park that suitable and wholesome accommodation which can be obtained nearer to their work only at a cost which their earnings do not allow them to meet. We doubt whether the enormous displacement of the population which has taken place within the last twenty years, has ever been fully estimated by those who have not given special attention to the subject. Certain it is that the managers of the Bishop of London's Fund have found this amongst the most difficult of all the many difficult problems with which they have been called upon to grapple. There is now within the bills of mortality a population of about 3,000,000, increasing, we believe, at an average rate of some 40,000 a year. If this be so, at least ten new churches should be built, and a fresh endowment of £4,000 a year provided, giving to each new district 4,000 parishioners, with the moderate provision of £400 a year to meet the out-goings for spiritual ministrations and for the necessary repairs of the fabrics. We need not say that the greatest difficulty is experienced in keeping the supply abreast of the demand, and that the difficulty is felt most where the line of demarcation is drawn most sharply between districts inhabited by the rich and those which are monopolized perforce by the poor. In the former, even if the endowment be small, a willing congregation can largely supplement it, either by private contributions or by a weekly offertory. In the latter no such means or appliances are available. Indeed, the shoe probably pinches more tightly here than in the matter of raising funds for church-building purposes. There are hundreds of well-meaning persons who will contribute liberally towards the erection of a church, in which, so to speak, they have a visible return for their money, from whom not a sixpence can be extracted towards the permanent support of an incumbent, who cannot live upon air, yet without whose ministrations the church itself is useless. It is one of the foibles of the age that money can almost always be obtained by persistent begging for the

completion of any edifice, however costly and ornate, while solicitations are in vain for the at least equally important object of securing for those who cannot afford to obtain it for themselves the inestimable blessing of a resident and adequately remunerated pastor.

The broad facts of the case are accordingly these. There is within the metropolitan area a large admitted amount of spiritual destitution for which no adequate provision has as yet been made, or, to judge by the urgent appeals constantly made on behalf of the Bishop of London's Fund, seems likely to be speedily made. Meantime, the City, with a population steadily decreasing, possesses sites and endowments which would probably suffice for the ecclesiastical requirements of some fifty new parishes, with an aggregate population of, say, 400,000 souls. Common sense would certainly point out that, under such circumstances, means should be found to redress so glaring an anomaly. Of course, there is something to be said on the other side. There are many worthy people, whose feelings deserve consideration, to whom the removal even of a useless church and the sale of its site seems little less than an act of sacrilege. There are some, even among the City churches, which deserve preservation on the ground of their architectural merits. It is true that few, if any, of them can be proved to have survived the Great Fire of London, and that the majority date from a period not very famous for beauty either of form or shape. But we do not deny the existence of fabrics which, on antiquarian grounds, it would be desirable to preserve, even if their endowments were diverted to other purposes. This, however, is a matter of detail for which it would not be difficult to provide. The main point at issue, as has been well stated by a contemporary, is that "it is clear that the provision now made is far in excess of the requirements; that such excess, like the fatal superabundance of the old City Churches, produces actual mischief; and that, meanwhile, there are districts, for which the Bishop of London's Fund pleads every year, starved in respect of parochial resources." In other words, at present churches are multiplied where they are not needed, congregations are recruited by methods which demoralize those who are thus enlisted, while the officiating clergy are many of them themselves demoralized by want of adequate work, and by the deadening process which always attends the performance of duties of a purely perfunctory character. Value is not, and cannot be, given in return for the stipends received, while within a few miles services are demanded of others for which a mere pittance is offered as an equivalent. *Labor ipse voluptas* is a motto which speaks the language of a noble and ennobling creed. But even if the contrast exercises no deleterious influence upon the exertions of those who are

actually engaged in the work, it is otherwise with the public at large. They, at all events, see clearly the absurdity and unfairness of perpetuating such a state of things, nor are they drawn closer to the Church of England by its continuance.

It was considerations of this character which led to the passing, in the year 1860, of the Act which was intended to facilitate the union of City benefices. That Act has, therefore, now attained its majority, and we venture to hope that rarely indeed has any enactment been so barren of beneficial results. By a return made to the House of Commons in the year 1879, it would appear that ten churches only had then been pulled down under the Union of Benefices Act, to which we believe an eleventh has since been added. Even so the proceeds of the sales of nine only of the sites have amounted to a sum little short of £80,000, giving us a tolerably correct idea of what might have been accomplished had the provisions of the Act been carried out in a more vigorous and comprehensive manner. Of this sum, and of the endowments, a large proportion would appear to have been retained within the boundaries of the City, by appropriation to the purposes of the united benefices, created by the demolition of the old fabric, and the consolidation of the two parishes. What remained would seem to have been appropriated fairly enough to the spiritual needs of destitute parishes. But when we find among the items such figures as that of "£4,000 towards defraying the cost of a vestry and muniment-room for St. Dionis Backchurch," we shall not be at a loss to guess how easily any surplus melts away under the influence of local interests. The difficulties in the working of the Act have been on various occasions brought to the notice of both Houses of Parliament. A Committee of the House of Commons has, we believe, investigated the matter upon more than one occasion. In 1871 the whole question was referred to a Committee of the House of Lords, presided over by the late Lord Chelmsford. Much valuable evidence was taken, that given by the Rev. Michael Gibbs being specially noteworthy for the fulness and clearness of the information conveyed in it. Beyond, however, a report couched in general terms, no practical step resulted from the inquiries made. Later still, in the session which has just ended, a motion was made for the issue of a Royal Commission to take the whole subject into consideration. Many of the figures to which we have referred were quoted in support of that motion, which was ultimately withdrawn by its proposer at the suggestion of the leaders of the House on both sides, that what was really needed was not so much inquiry as further legislation.

It is, indeed, self-evident to anyone who will take the trouble to compare the large provisions of the Act of 1860 with the scant results which have been achieved under it, that this is the

gist of the whole matter. At present, four consents are necessary for every proposal to unite the two benefices—that of the Bishop of the diocese, of the patron, of the incumbent, and last, but by no means least, of the vestries of the two parishes. The result is an almost certain disagreement at the outset between the parties interested, and an amount of preliminary correspondence the bulk of which would startle a novice in such matters. Time is wasted, temper is tried, efforts are made, often to no useful purpose whatsoever. So long as the Act remains of a purely permissive character, it seems likely also to continue nearly a dead letter. The eleven schemes which have been successful represent a very much larger number of failures, owing to the obstacles which have been placed in the way. As matters stand at present, they are practically at a deadlock. No one cares to take the initiative with a certainty before him of endless trouble and vexation, and something more than an uncertainty of a successful issue. The diocesan, who ought to be the mover in such attempts, becomes fairly overwhelmed by a task which interferes so seriously with other legitimate calls upon his attention. The patron cannot be expected to take the labouring oar in a matter in which he is probably the least interested of the four parties concerned. The incumbent naturally shrinks from embroiling himself in the controversy which is sure to arise upon the details of the scheme. Finally, the vestries are only too apt to consult what they regard as their own interests, the conclusion at which they ultimately arrive being usually to throw as many difficulties as possible in the way of any scheme which may be proposed. Meanwhile, the interests of the Church at large grievously suffer.

Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur achiui.

It is high time that an end should be put to this maze of circumlocution. Lord Granville's suggestion in the House of Lords during the last debate on the subject deserves attention as being at once feasible and practical. He pointed out that the question was one rather within the province of the Episcopal Bench than within that of the Administration. He virtually pledged the Government to the support of any well-considered measure, the object of which should be to deal effectually with approved anomaly. We believe that he hit the right nail upon the head. What is really required is an amendment of the Act of 1860, simplifying the mode of procedure, dispensing under proper limitations with the numerous consents now necessary, and providing a self-adjusting machinery for the carrying out of the Act. Vested interests must of course be respected. Subject to these certain broad principles of action should be laid down which would render consolidation imperative where a waste of

ecclesiastical power was found after due inquiry to exist. We are quite aware that in some quarters such a proposal will be stigmatized as almost revolutionary in its character. That an important change would have been introduced into the present method of dealing with ecclesiastical abuses we freely admit; the question, however, is whether the time has not now come for such a change, and whether it can be much longer delayed without serious injury to the best interests of the Church. "Come over and help us," is the cry which grows louder and louder from the over-taxed and under-paid clergy who are responsible for the spiritual superintendence of the populous suburban parishes. Is the answer to that appeal to be a simple "Non possumus," when the means for responding in a very different manner are actually at hand, if we have but the courage and the will to grasp them? We say nothing of the terrible responsibility involved in depriving those of religious ordinances to whom it is in our power to extend them. That branch of the subject is too fertile a theme for the limits of our present purpose. We put it as a simple question of urgent need upon the one hand, and of wanton, we might almost say, scandalous, waste upon the other. Difficult as the task may be of dealing with an abuse of long-standing, it is seldom that a reformer has to face an evil at once so notorious and of which the remedy is so self-apparent. We have endeavoured to point out the extent of the mischief, the effects of it upon the interest of the Church at large, the injuries which it inflicts alike upon clergy and congregations, the difficulties which at present stand in the way of a cure, and the mode in which those difficulties may be removed. We believe that an effort should be made to deal with them, and that such an effort, if well directed, would be successful. At all events, it ought to be made, and it cannot be made too early. Little favourable as the present times may seem to be for projects of Church Reform, it is hardly credible that Parliament would refuse the powers necessary to put an end to a state of things which while indefensible on its merits, offers no reasonable battle-ground for a contest between Churchmen and Non-conformists. The facts of the case are only too fully before us. They need neither further investigation nor a protracted discussion; all that is required is the simplification of an existing Act of Parliament, and the moulding of its provisions so as to render them compulsory, rather than permissive, in their operation.

MIDDLETON,