

THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
TO THE MASSES.

CERTAINLY this is an age of extraordinary religious activity and incessant religious enterprise. From General Booth, who invites you to contribute towards a gigantic sum for a new Congress Hall, down to the small child who assails you in the street for a penny contribution to his missionary card, every such beggar is a witness to the existence of abundant energy and zeal which spread through every religious body, and stimulate and strengthen every religious undertaking. Nor can it be said that, amongst all these efforts, missionary enterprises are forgotten. On the contrary, there probably never was a time in which so many agencies were at work in order to bring the power of the Gospel to bear upon those who are indifferent to religious obligations. And these agencies are about as varied as it is possible to imagine. On the one hand, you have such a work as that of the London City Mission, the aim of which is to cover all London with religious visitation; and on the other hand, you have some enterprising gentleman who hires a small room in a back street, paints up a big name upon the door, and sets up in life as a missionary to his neighbours on his own account; combining in his own person the duties of committee, treasurer, secretary, collector, and evangelist, and being at the same time the honorary officer and the paid servant of the high-sounding Society which he has founded. And yet, in spite of all the influence and power of the Church, in spite of all the unusual religious activities of the day, there are still multitudes living amongst us who have no regard for God; and who, so far as any outward expression goes, seem to be absolutely without care as to whether there is a God or not. Nor are these persons by any means confined to one class of

society, as it is nowadays much the fashion to assume. They abound amongst the wealthy and the educated, as well as amongst the poor and the ignorant. Every station in society is saturated with the poison of their indifference; God's House, and God's Name, and God's Day, are to them idle and meaningless phrases.

Now to all of these of course the Church has a message to deliver. It is ridiculous to think and speak as if the Gospel was only intended for, and only neglected by, the poorest classes; whereas it is too sadly true that the wealthy and the educated often require quite as much the missionary enterprise of the Church to be exhibited on their behalf. And to those of us who live in the midst of the masses of the poor, it does seem strange to find that this subject is so seldom discussed, as if it were assumed either that only the poor were indifferent to religion, or that the wealthier classes were beyond the reach of religious influence and power. We are thankful to notice that the venerable Bishop of Lincoln has recently spoken in terms very clear and strong of the duty of the Church towards the higher classes.

If, therefore, in the present paper, this portion of the subject is left out of consideration, it is not because there is no need that it should be thoughtfully discussed, it is not because it can be conceded that the poorer classes have a monopoly of indifference and irreligion, but because the experience of ministerial service for the past sixteen years of a not inactive life has brought the present writer more closely into contact with the condition of the masses of the poor amongst whom he has lived, and has led him often to consider how far the Church has failed to reach and influence them, and what is the hope and prospect for the future.

It must be sorrowfully admitted, we fear, that so far as the influence of religion is to be measured by the habitual attendance at public worship, the notorious absence of the great bulk of working-people from the services of the Church indicates a deplorable amount of religious indifference amongst them. Account for the fact as you please, make whatever excuses and allowances you can for the neglect, yet the fact remains; and it is a fact which ought to be clearly recognised and deliberately faced.

Surely it is of little use to talk and write, as many do, about the increasing power and growing influence and activity of the Church, if all the while we close our eyes to the awful apathy which steals like a subtle poison over the spiritual senses of large masses of the population, and steeps them in coldness and neglect. It is the simple truth that, in this East End of London, you may pass through street after street, and visit

house by house, and find only the smallest possible proportion of the people who make any pretence whatever of attending any place of public worship. And if you pay a visit to the churches and chapels, you will find the testimony of the streets fully corroborated by the appearance of their congregations. A few years ago, the clergy of the East End of London joined in a memorial to the Bishop of the Diocese, drawing his attention to the facts, which, indeed, are apparent enough to all.

Now it must not be assumed that these absentees are altogether hostile, or indeed wholly indifferent to religion. No doubt there is a certain amount of active scepticism, and secularism, and unbelief, but it is quite certain that the amount and the power of this influence have been largely exaggerated; and even where professed scepticism exists, it very commonly has its origin in some distorted and imperfect estimate of what Christianity really is. But there are numbers of men amongst the working-classes who would indignantly resent the charge that they were not Christians, and who, nevertheless, do not pay to Christianity that tribute of respect and adherence to which we are bound to attach the utmost value and importance.

Anyone who would take the trouble to walk down the Mile End Road during service on Sunday morning, would very quickly be convinced that there are numbers of working-men who are not accustomed to attend Divine worship. There are, indeed, few sights in London more striking than the appearance of this East End promenade on a fine Sunday morning; thronged as it is with working-men, who are taking their morning stroll, and amongst whom is a very small proportion of the other sex. Yet not all these are wholly indifferent to religion. Some, perhaps, would be found at a religious service later in the day; some will stand and listen with respectful attention to the wayside preachers who try to arrest them, and will often resent the interruptions of cavilling and captious scepticism: whilst a very large number of those who seem indifferent, will welcome the aid of Christian sympathy in time of sickness, and will send for the minister to speak to them on their dying bed.

The truth is, that a certain amount of vague, hazy, indefinite religious belief is very widely spread amongst the masses of the people, leading them to recognise the power of religion, and even to admit its value; but this indefinite knowledge and belief has never been crystallized into clear, dogmatic faith, nor has it laid hold upon the affections and the life. It is strong enough to produce a sort of respect for religion, but it is not strong enough to subdue the heart and force the will into obedience to its laws.

For those of us who believe that real religious influence must be deep and searching, who seek for the signs which speak of the conversion of the heart to God, nothing can well be more painful than this state of things which represents the spiritual condition of the masses of the people in the most enlightened Christian country in the world.

To what causes are we to attribute a result so terrible? and what has the Church of England done, and what may she still do, towards remedying them?

Of the causes which have been, in our judgment, a hindrance to the progress of religion amongst the masses, several may be mentioned.

(I.) Poverty is a hindrance. It is very easy for comfortable respectability to see the advantages of the trials of poverty, and the danger of wealth; but there is another side to the question. A gentleman of wealth and position, who has worked zealously amongst the East End poor, was heard to say the other day at a public meeting, that whilst we had very high authority for the fact that it was difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, he had learned that it was a terribly hard thing also for the poor. If to the rich young ruler there was present the temptation to trust in his wealth, it should not be forgotten that to the patriarch Job, when stripped of all his wealth, there came the temptation in his poverty and his misery to "curse God and die." Few persons, except those who have really lived amongst the poor, are able to understand how the very condition in which they live may become a positive hindrance to the entrance of religion, and embitter their thoughts and harden their hearts against the God whom they regard as responsible for that condition. We may add to this the very practical difficulty, that attendance at public worship, seems to demand an amount of outward respectability and cleanliness to which the poorer classes are unaccustomed. Sunday clothes appear to them to be absolutely indispensable to public worship, and Sunday clothes they do not possess; or if by chance they do, the clothes are too often in temporary charge of the pawnbroker.

(II.) The neglect of the Church in past generations in making adequate provision for the pastoral charge, and for the religious training and religious worship of the poor, must also be regarded as one of the factors in the result. The enormous increase of the population since the beginning of the present century has far outstripped the energy and zeal of the Church in providing for its wants; and the result is that a large number of the present generation has grown up under influences, the least likely to produce a care for religion or a regard for worship. And even now that this difficulty has been to a con-

siderable extent removed, and it is very generally admitted that church-building and parochial subdivision, have reached their limit in the more densely peopled part of the Metropolis, it cannot be said that efficient provision has yet been made for the due discharge of the pastoral office. It is not enough to build a church and to provide it with a small endowment, in the hope that in a poor and neglected neighbourhood such a desire for church-worship will be at once awakened, that all parochial work and pastoral agencies will be developed from the congregation itself. It would be about as wise to build a man-of-war and send her captain to sea without guns and without crew, and still expect him to have a prosperous voyage. In these East End parishes the Church is even now woefully under-manned, and the parochial system, so beautiful in theory, has never yet had a chance of being fairly worked. The present condition of the working-classes has arisen, in great measure, not because the agencies of the Church are inefficient, nor because she has been unsuccessful in the work which she has done; but because the zeal of her members has not been adequate to the extending needs, because of her neglect to use the means at her command—a neglect the extent of which and the results of which are, even yet, very imperfectly understood or appreciated¹

(III.) From this neglect has sprung a further cause of the widely spread indifference, in the ignorance of what Christianity really is, in the utterly croneous view of what the Bible teaches, and especially in the false impressions about the

¹ The special difficulty of the East of London, which distinguishes it from every other part of the metropolis and from every provincial town, is the enormous mass of population, considerably exceeding half a million entirely separated from persons of wealth and leisure, and without any mixture of persons of higher social position either living amongst them or within reach of them. In the Report to which reference has been made, it was remarked that whereas in the East End of London the Church of England must be regarded as being engaged in a gigantic missionary enterprise to re-evangelise the masses, and it might be expected that special and extraordinary help would be given for the purpose, so far was this from being the case, that even the supply of clergy was smaller in proportion to the population than in any other portion of the metropolis. In the East End the proportion was one clergyman to 4,250 souls, while the average of other parts of the diocese of London was one clergyman to 2,444 souls. It is satisfactory to add that since that report was made a suffragan bishop for East London has been appointed, and a fund has been raised for providing more workers in East End parishes, so that there is now one clergyman for 3,600, and the Committee of the East London Church Fund express the earnest hope that, with increased liberality on the part of the public, they may be able to provide one clergyman for every 3,000 souls. But even when this result is secured, a much larger infusion of religious life is needed than the clergy alone can supply.

character of God. The holiness and justice and love of God, the most elementary truths of our Christian faith, are absolutely unknown to many; and if known, are so distorted and disfigured as to be scarcely recognisable. There are multitudes who seem to regard God very much in the light in which we would suppose that a thief looks upon a policeman, armed with the terrors of the law, and on the look-out to detect and to punish any breach of it. It need not here be pointed out how such a view of God is antagonistic to all religious feeling, and destructive of all religious belief.

(IV.) Another difficulty springing to a great extent from the same cause, is a want of familiarity with the Prayer Book. Only a few days ago I was inquiring why it was that a very respectable young man did not attend the services, and was informed that it was because he could not find his place in the Prayer Book, and did not like to betray his ignorance. This may appear to my readers to be almost childish, but it is nevertheless a real hindrance to many.

(V.) Another cause of absence from Divine service is the wide-spread distaste for the quiet and cultivated worship of our Church which is so well adapted to meet the wants and to satisfy the spiritual requirements of the educated and the religious. I yield to no one in my warm appreciation of the Liturgy of the Church of England, which is a very storehouse of religious truth and devotional training for the children of God; but it is intended for those who have been trained in worship, and it is admirably adapted to meet the wants of those who have a desire to worship. Would it seem to be in any way depreciating its value, if the suggestion is made that it is not adapted to the requirements of those who do not know what worship is, or have been long unused to offer prayer to God? A strong digestion and a healthy appetite may appreciate and enjoy the luxuries of a sumptuous banquet, but you would scarcely expect a feeble invalid, only just recovering from prolonged sickness, to eat these dainties with the same relish.

It may fairly be doubted whether even the majority of our average congregations really appreciate our Church service as much as they think they do, or value it as highly as it deserves, or use it as devotionally as it demands; but it is quite certain that to uneducated people, who have been unused to any religious exercises, and to whom devotion is almost or altogether unknown, to such persons the ordinary Church service is a weariness rather than a delight, and the unvaried repetition of a service which they do not understand repels rather than attracts. It would be unreasonable beyond measure to propose that the Church of England should

mutilate her services or spoil her Liturgy in order to suit the tastes of those who care for neither. But surely it cannot be necessary for us to be so bound up within the cast-iron conventionalities of a rigid uniformity, that we dare not go so far as to present to the irreligious and the indifferent any other form of worship or any other method of instruction than that which we are bound to give to the earnest and devout.

To the above-mentioned causes may be added the following :

(1.) The natural impatience of religious restraint, which is common to all, induces a feeling of rebellion against and hostility to every religious system and organization. This feeling attains its climax in silly prejudices against an established Church, and in most extraordinary misconceptions as to the manner and the amount of the payments made to the clergy. The clergy are too often regarded as the paid advocates of a system which they are bound to uphold because from it they derive their support. And all these misconceptions are diligently fostered by political organizations which do not hesitate to employ language which would lead working-men to believe that religion in general, and the Church of England in particular, are opposed to the material interests and prosperity of the labouring classes.

(2.) Whilst it is impossible to believe that intelligent scepticism and reasonable unbelief can be regarded as a very important factor in itself, yet it cannot be forgotten that there is in these days a largely developed tolerance of unbelief, spreading down from the more educated classes of society, and permeating the literature of every class. Now, even when this has not sufficient force and power to induce a man to adopt unbelief as his creed, it is often strong enough to unsettle the foundations of faith. Amongst so many conflicting views and opinions, it seems to him to be, after all, extremely doubtful who is right. Christianity no longer appeals to him with convincing power as the voice which speaks from God ; it is at the best an open question. And so a sense of insecurity is produced ; the tendency of which is to make the man close his ears and his heart against any appeals made to the conscience and the life.

If I may sum up in a few words my view of the situation, I should say that the reason why the Church of England has failed to attach the masses to the observance of religious duties, is because she offers to them that of which they have never felt the want, and because she has not learned to provide for them that which they do want and are ready to accept.

The more difficult question is now to be considered. What is to be done under existing circumstances ? What is the National Church to do, in order to carry out that work for

which her very position and influence mark her out as pre-eminently capable and responsible? What is her mission to the masses?

There are some persons who seem to think that the time has come when the Church, with regard to the myriads of our great cities, will have to admit that all her past work has been a failure, will have to abandon all her pastoral agency and all her parochial machinery, and give herself entirely to such evangelistic work as will prove attractive to the people. But surely this would be a terrible mistake. How many there are to whom the quiet worship of our own beloved Church has been a strength in times of weakness, a comfort in days of sorrow, and a defence and protection in the hour of peril and temptation! It would be worse than foolish if any encouragement should be given to the clergy to abandon their office as pastors in order to take up the work of evangelists. We go even further than this; we say that one means at least for winning the masses of the indifferent would be to strengthen the parochial organization and develop the parochial machinery so that it may become a more efficient agent for carrying the message of the Gospel to the poor. For, under present circumstances, at least in populous parishes, it too often happens that the clergyman is more than overwhelmed with the ordinary duties which his work as a pastor demands, and has neither time nor energy left to undertake the missionary work of the Church. And yet it is abundantly evident that the Church must carry on an evangelistic and aggressive work, as well as continue and complete her pastoral functions. Her mission is that of her Divine Master, "to seek and to save that which was lost," "to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and we dare not take the responsibility of abandoning the careless to their fate because they will not use the means of help provided for them. We must go out to seek; we must compel them to come in.

It will follow from what has already been said, that in order to carry on this work, it is not enough to build churches, or to educate the young, or to multiply Church services, or to perfect in every department the ordinary machinery of the Church. You cannot hope to secure an unspiritual person with a spiritual bait. But beyond doubt there is needed, over and beyond these agencies, some deliberate and organized attempt to do that part of the work which has to some extent at least been overlooked in the past. We have done well in so far as we have provided for the spiritual advancement and growth of all who come for such help; but we have yet as a Church to take the further step of going out into the world around us and speaking to every soul, so that "whether they hear or whether

they forbear," they may at least be constrained to acknowledge that a messenger from God has been among them.

In dealing with this question there are one or two cautions which must not be forgotten :

(i.) That whilst we use faithfully whatever means may be put into our hands, the power and success comes from God the Holy Ghost. One is apt to get a little impatient of new schemes and plans and organizations and committees. There is too great a tendency in these days to place undue reliance upon such external machinery, and it may reasonably be questioned whether we are anxious enough to seek the power of the Holy Spirit and to honour Him in His work. And yet it is absolutely certain that when you have been brought face to face with the spiritual needs of a fellow-sinner, you have no message to deliver and no power to carry it home to the heart but from God the Holy Ghost. I never feel so acutely my own utter helplessness as when I am thrown into such circumstances and have to speak God's message to an individual soul. I can manage very well to hold my place in committees; I can sit in my study and arrange plans and form schemes; I can even go into the pulpit and try to deliver God's message to the congregation at large with much more ease than I can ever feel in trying to meet the spiritual needs of one individual. This is the work which throws us back most upon God; this it is which takes us to our knees in prayer to Him; and this it is which makes us long that God's people would go out into the world's highway and compel the wanderer to come in to be taught by the Spirit of God Himself.

(ii.) There is need of caution again, lest we should be misled by the current phraseology of the day into supposing that the souls of men can be brought to God in masses. I do not deny that there is a certain power of attraction in mere numbers, and crowds will rush where crowds have been before. I do not doubt that the omnipotent grace of God is abundantly sufficient to bring men by multitudes to the feet of Jesus. But a pretty large experience in this matter induces me to believe that the mission of the Church is that of the individual to the individual. Souls are won, when kindred souls are touched with fire divine, and are constrained to speak as those who themselves know and believe. It is quite possible for us to attach too much importance to the collection of men together in large masses, and to give too little weight to the patient tender love which seeks out the lost sheep one by one, and strives to lead them back to the fold of the Saviour, who has loved them. Now here, as I believe, we have the most important answer to the question, What can this Church of England do to win back the masses of the ungodly to the Lord?

In former years it was too much the fashion to leave to the clergy all directly spiritual work. It is only within the present generation, and principally in consequence of the resolute stand made by the Church Pastoral Aid Society, and the Scripture Readers' Association, that the mind of the religious public has been turned into a more wholesome direction.

Perhaps there is nowadays a little tendency to oscillate too far in the opposite direction, and to assume that laymen, simply because they are laymen, must of necessity be better qualified than the clergy to preach, and to perform other clerical functions. But at any rate this much may be fairly claimed and conceded, that it is alike the duty and privilege of all men—aye, and of all women too—to use the personal influence which they possess in bearing their testimony for Christ; and so to take upon themselves that which, after all, is the most difficult of all spiritual enterprises, and is most conducive to the extension of the influence of Christianity in the world. To invent plans and form schemes is not of much use. Bring the love of warm, living, human hearts into contact with the cold indifference of carelessness and neglect, and you will have taken an important step towards evangelizing the masses. The weakness of the Church of England lies in the fact that her members have been content to undertake almost any other work than this, and have left their love for God to be inferred rather than have it written prominently upon their whole life. The world will not be won for Christ until every Christian is a soldier, and every soldier goes out into the field to fight and work for the souls of men. We do sadly need more self-sacrifice in our efforts; and the Church must learn that in the work of her own members lies the surest promise of success in missionary enterprise. So many persons seem afraid—I myself have before now experienced the same fear—of making use of the opportunities which are clearly presented of speaking for the Master's cause. If only the communicant members of our Church could be fired with a generous enthusiasm and stimulated by a holy courage to give themselves to this service, it seems to me that a great change must soon be effected in the society in which we live.

It cannot be too often or too plainly asserted, that the strength and influence of any church will be in direct proportion to the personal zeal and self-sacrifice of its members in undertaking to carry on the special and distinguishing duty of the Church—conveying the blessed message of the Gospel of peace to the hearts of the people. It has been too much the custom of the laity of our own Church to compound with their consciences for the discharge of this duty by subscribing to some society which appoints paid agents for the service.

But surely no one should expect to evade or escape his own personal responsibility by delegating its performance to another. I believe that there are hundreds of the clergy who would be ready to acknowledge that whatever success there has been in their ministry, has been due, under God, to the fact that they have been anxious to claim and to welcome the personal service of the poorest members of their congregation in forwarding the work of Christ. My own observation has been for many years past directed to this special point, and I do not hesitate to lay down most clearly what is the deepest conviction of my own mind, that whether it be amongst the poor or amongst the rich, that congregation will be the strongest, alike in its own spiritual attainments and in its influence upon others, in which a keen sense of personal obligation and personal responsibility is cherished and maintained. This it is which constitutes the power of many a Dissenting congregation, whose success we may be sometimes inclined to envy; and this also is, in a greater measure than is generally understood, the secret of the influence of the Salvation Army. Without the least desire to underrate the importance of gathering people together for the definite purpose of having the Gospel preached to them, I would still urge that personal efforts are needed in preparation for a public service, if a congregation of the kind of persons with whom we are now concerned is to be gathered together; and what is of even more difficulty and of more value, there must be a direct personal appeal from the individual to the individual in order that the message of the Gospel, when it has been delivered, may be pressed home.

Let us proceed now to discuss the way in which the energies of Christian people may be directed with the view of attracting the indifferent, or, as I would prefer to call them, the non-worshippers, to the religious gathering. In the first place, however, let us carefully distinguish between that which is of the very essence of the Gospel, and that which is, if I may so speak, accidental and variable. A clear understanding upon this point will enable us to get rid of some prejudices to which many persons cling with the tenacity of a superstition.

(a.) It is not essential to religion that we should refuse to hold a service of any kind except at the conventional hours of 11, 3, and 6.30, or 7 o'clock. The Church of England has not only survived the introduction of the evening service, but has been strengthened by it; and there is no reason why the same result should not follow from a much wider recognition of the needs of those classes to whom we direct our appeal. We must make up our minds to invite the people at a time which is most convenient to themselves, and when we know they can come.

(b.) Nor is it absolutely necessary that our missionary efforts should be confined to the four walls of a consecrated building. There used to be a prejudice, which I confess to have long shared, against preaching in theatres and music-halls. Let us be bold enough to recognise the principle that if the masses will not come to church, we must go to them wherever they are to be found, and collect them into any building which they are willing to enter.

(c.) Nor is the Liturgy of the Church of England an indispensable part of every missionary effort.

(d.) Nor is it requisite that every evangelist should be an ordained minister of the Church of England.

It must always be remembered that while in our ordinary congregations we join in worship with those who are accustomed to worship and have learned how to worship; in missionary enterprises we have to deal with those who do not want to worship, who have not been used to prayer, and oftentimes do not even know how to pray. From this it follows that in our ordinary services prayer and praise will be the most prominent feature; but in evangelistic efforts it is upon preaching that we must depend in order to teach the necessity of prayer and to awaken a desire to pray.

Now within the last ten or twelve years the clergy of the Church of England have made great efforts in the direction of missionary enterprise. Few persons who live in large towns can be unacquainted with the work of the Special Missions, which are a feature of our own time. These Special Missions are an attempt on the part of Christian people to attract the careless and indifferent living within a given area to special services conducted by a special preacher selected for the purpose. And the plan of operation is (1) to awaken an interest in the coming mission by bringing it before all the people in the parish, and giving a personal invitation pressed home again and again to every individual; (2) this preparation leads up to the Special Mission Week, during which the ordinary services of the Church are displaced, and the efforts of all are concentrated upon evangelistic work; and (3) the mission, if it is to be successful, is followed by an endeavour to gather in to classes and services, for instruction, any who have been awakened and impressed. And universal testimony goes to prove that God has abundantly blessed these special seasons, wherever this work has been undertaken with a zealous endeavour to win souls to Christ. Surely then these efforts serve to show the direction in which further successes may be gained. If a missionary work of this character, spasmodic, irregular and intermittent, has secured such large results, and has awakened many who were before indifferent, is there any reason to suppose that evan-

gelistic efforts of the same kind carried on without intermission, side by side with the ordinary pastoral work of the Church, would not produce results still greater, and more important? Of course it may be said that one reason of the attraction which such missions possess is, that the time is limited, and that during that period there is a concentration of spiritual power and energy upon the particular field of operations. Give full weight to the force of this argument, and yet it may fairly be answered that until the experiment has been fairly tried, it cannot be assumed, without proof, that similar efforts long continued would not produce similar results.

But here a question arises which is forced upon us by the circumstances of the time, and which demands a clear and distinct expression of opinion. Is it absolutely necessary, in order to attract the non-worshipping class, that we should copy the sensational advertisements, the military organization, the extravagances, the follies and the irreverence of the Salvation Army? And to this question I answer most emphatically and unhesitatingly, NO! The end does not and can not justify the means; and the means which are employed by the Salvation Army are such as to my mind no end could justify. There are many of the more intelligent of our working-classes who would be repelled rather than attracted by attempts like these. By all means let us be content to learn from the Salvation Army or from any other source what is good and useful in the movement, but do not let us be misled by the appearance of an ephemeral success to adopt means which may serve to bring into ridicule and contempt the name which we hold most dear. When the Salvation Army claims by such means to have reached a class which no other organization can touch, it arrogates to itself a position which the facts do not justify. There is much mission and evangelistic work being carried on in a quiet way, which has no *War-Cry* to sound its successes, and which is conducted by men who would shrink from making a public parade of those who have been won from ungodliness and indifference. It is well known that the lowest classes of society are to be found in the common lodging-houses of the metropolis, and these homes present what is to outward appearance the least hopeful sphere for missionary enterprise. And yet in numbers of these houses, regular services are held every week, and much zealous Christian effort is called forth. I have in my mind a particular instance, in which some years ago, a Sunday evening service was commenced by a few zealous laymen in a large lodging-house, and addresses given to the men assembled in the common living-room. At first there was much difficulty from the ridicule and indifference of the men; but as time went on, Christian energy and faith and perse-

verance won their way, until amongst the roughest and the most degraded a quiet, orderly service was conducted without hindrance. Every one who has been engaged in such work could tell many a tale of the good results which have been gained.

Open-air preaching is a simple and obvious way of reaching with the message of God's Word those who will not enter any public building or take part in any religious service. It is found as a matter of experience that men who are loitering along the road will be attracted by the preacher's voice, and stay to listen to the message which he delivers, while these very same men will not compromise themselves even to so much of a profession of religion as appears to them to be involved in entering a church. For the two summers during which the outside pulpit of Whitechapel Church was available, we had there outdoor services every night, and never failed to obtain a congregation of the kind which we desired. On Sunday evening this address was given after the ordinary evening service; and, at its close, those present were invited into the church to spend some further time in act of worship. By this means many were induced to follow into the church to take part in the service held there. And many of the clergy in the East End of London make such outdoor efforts a part of their ordinary work in preaching the Gospel to the poor. The machinery for such efforts is of the simplest and least expensive kind. In a main thoroughfare, in which persons are always to be found passing by, it is only necessary to have a few willing helpers to sing one or two good stirring hymns, and speak to any who may seem to be impressed, whilst the appointed speaker preaches in clear and simple language the Word of God. If a clergyman cannot be spared, there are laymen who may be found ready to undertake the service; and it would be well that laymen should be taught to speak in this way to their fellow-men. If the service is held in a back street, for the benefit of the inhabitants themselves, it will be needful to announce beforehand, by means of a small handbill left at the houses, when and where the service is to be held. I am most thankful to have, in my own parish, a band of laymen ready to take any part which may be assigned to them in open-air efforts such as these.

It is one step beyond the open-air service when a congregation can be gathered into a church or mission-hall or any other public building for religious addresses. In some parishes the church itself will be available for this purpose after the usual evening service, and it is found that it is quite possible for such an extra service to collect an entirely new congregation. It has been already mentioned how this was done in

Whitechapel as a sequel to the open-air address: and only this very week I was told of a congregation of nearly 600 persons drawn into another church out of the public thoroughfare by means of a band of workers sent out with invitations to the passers-by.

Most of our readers may have heard of the successful efforts made at the Victoria Music Hall in South London, where, on every Sunday evening, a very large congregation is drawn to a religious service conducted by clergymen and laymen of the Church of England. For some time past a similar effort has been made in one of the largest public halls in the East of London. The plan of operations here has been to send out during the preceding week, by means of a large band of voluntary visitors, a special notice of the service for the coming Sunday. These notices are distributed at every house, and an endeavour is made to secure that a personal invitation is given, and thus the hand-bill becomes the means for making an approach to the people in their own houses with a religious object. In this way a stream of Christian effort is directed towards the people which cannot fail to produce some effect, quite independent of the immediate result in securing an attendance at the service. The same notice is distributed at the open-air services, and to passers-by along the main road. On Sunday evenings at seven o'clock, the special choir and other appointed workers meet, and whilst some of the choir occupy the hall to sing hymns during the assembling of the congregation, the remainder go out into the streets, and having attracted the attention of those who are passing by, invite them to the services. By these means a large congregation has been obtained, and the numbers have a very distinct tendency to increase. Bearing in mind the class of persons for whom this evangelistic effort is intended, singing is made a special feature of the service. A small band of instruments assists the voluntary choir in conducting the singing, and the selection of hymns used contains only eleven of the simplest and best-known of our ordinary Church hymns, which are repeated night after night with growing interest and effect. In addition to the hymns, there have usually been one or more sacred songs sung as solos. The people have also been taught to join in the General Confession and the Lord's Prayer, and for the rest extempore prayer has been employed. But in order to teach people how to pray, it is very important that the prayer should be simple in thought and language, and if possible it is well to try and make the people take in and use for themselves the prayers which are offered. Short sentences of petitions, slowly said, with many pauses, are best adapted for this purpose. The address at these services is of course the distinct and

special feature. A sermon would be out of place: it would not be understood. The current phrases of ordinary religious speaking are to many persons quite meaningless. The simplest truths about religion, set forth in the simplest language, but clear, definite, dogmatic, earnest. The vocabulary of the poor is very limited, their ideas are often still more limited, their knowledge of simple religious truth is too often the most limited of all. This must be remembered, and we must not be afraid to speak the things which we believe as if we believed them, and with the force and earnestness which carry conviction. One has sometimes heard the most solemn and startling truths uttered in a way which almost suggested a doubt as to whether the speaker could really understand or believe what he was saying. If you announce that the house is on fire, in the same calm, quiet tones in which you inform me that dinner is ready, you must not be surprised if your very tones suggest a doubt to my mind as to the truth of your information. It is not enough for us to preach the truth, but it must be set forth in such a way as to carry conviction to the mind.

Those who really believe in the power of the Gospel will not find it difficult to understand what is the value and effect of such irregular evangelistic efforts as those here described. For wherever the Word of God is faithfully delivered, we believe that it has in it a living force, "sharper than any two-edged sword," to find its way to the hearts of men. We are ready, therefore, to rejoice whenever we find that an opportunity is given for preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

By such services also we are doing something to break down the habit of non-attendance. It ought to be remembered that whilst the force of habit and custom draws in to Church the respectable classes, the same power keeps many persons away. This habit needs to be overcome. Those who have come once to these services, will be the more inclined to come again, until it may be that the custom of indifference is gradually transformed into a habit of diligent and close attendance. But in missionary efforts, which are known to be closely connected with the work and organization of the Church of England, there is a special value. For our regular Church system has a place into which to invite those who are at all impressed, and has a religious training which it can offer; and the efforts of all the workers at the missionary services will be constantly directed towards this end, so that a link will be formed between the simple evangelistic service and the ordinary opportunities of Church worship.

It is not necessary now to speak of the spiritual benefits which are necessarily conferred upon all who take part in such efforts in behalf of their brethren, because this is not the

special point in view; but I wish to show that there may be, and there ought to be, a continual passing forward of recruits, gathered by the missionary exertions of the Church, to strengthen and to replemish the number of her zealous and faithful members. The mission-service is not an end, but a means; and its work is not effectually done until it has carried those whom it has reached up to a higher stage of Christian life and progress in connection with our Church.

No doubt there are great difficulties in carrying out such schemes as these:

For (1) it is not every clergyman who possesses the qualification necessary for the work. A man may be most faithful and successful as a pastor who has very little power as an evangelist. But if the pastor himself cannot undertake this service, it may be possible for him to find out and appoint to the work some one who is qualified to discharge it.

(2) Not every parish is large enough to supply the band of workers needful to make these efforts a success. No doubt. But such an effort rightly guided will soon be able to depend upon its own success for a due supply of willing workers. It demands no great exercise of mental capacity or spiritual power to deliver notices of invitation to a service; and many will be found ready to undertake this work, or to join the choir, who perhaps could hardly be entrusted at first with the more important departments of the work.

(3) Finance is always a pressing difficulty. In this I speak from my own painful experience. There are many Church people who will gladly subscribe to a movement like the Salvation Army, or to any similar effort of smaller pretensions, who would not feel called upon to spend a penny towards advancing the same cause in connection with their own Church.

And yet it is obvious that, if efforts are to be made in the direction which has been indicated, there must be no grudging of the necessary expense.

For difficulties like these, the remedy may perhaps be that the machinery for the work should be not necessarily parochial. Personally, I am by no means wedded to the necessity of diocesan organization; but surely it would be quite possible to form a scheme by means of which a larger area than that of an individual parish should be grasped for efforts like these, and in behalf of which there should be a concentration of force, and energy, and power. In the East End of London, a committee has been formed by the Bishop of Bedford, specially to carry on this work wherever an opening for it can be gained; and for the short period during which it has been at work it has been most successful.

But whether the organization be diocesan or parochial;

whether the funds come from a central body or are provided for each separate local effort; whether the plans of service which have been here suggested are thought satisfactory or not—of this at least I am quite sure, that if the Church of England is to continue to provide for the masses of the people that form of religious teaching which every member of our Church believes to be the purest and the best, we must not be content to neglect a most important part of the Church's duty, which is of vital interest to the extension of true religion. When the Established Church abandons to others the work of making known the message of salvation to the outcast and the indifferent, she will have already entered upon the period of decadence, and will have lost all her claim to the support and the sympathy of the earnest and devout.

JOHN F. KITTO.

ART. II.—FAITH HEALING.

AMONG the varied phases of active religious life in the present day, we see one which is founded on a single isolated Apostolic utterance; which includes in tenet the highest manifestation of Divine power committed to renewed man, and which abrogates the office of physician. The supporters of this doctrine, there is reason to believe, are increasing in numbers. They are not limited to any particular denomination, although all hold decidedly evangelical views. It may be said, too, that the adage "Extremes meet" is fulfilled in them, inasmuch as the poor and ignorant, as well as the affluent and in a strictly religious sense highly cultured, approach to the same end—arrive at the same conclusion.

It will be apparent from the heading of this paper that we refer to certain who advance the doctrine of healing by prayer of faith, to the exclusion of remedial agencies—"Faith Healers," as we shall term them. Virtually such. For although it may be plausibly urged that anointing with oil is a medicinal agency; although in remote times it did enter somewhat largely into use, chiefly for outward injuries and diseases, as well as for supposed invigorating and beautifying properties; although, moreover, at the present day a general inunction of the body by oil in certain forms of fever has found advocates in the medical profession—it yet may reasonably be assumed that, by the cultured¹ advocates of "faith healing," the act is regarded in the same light as those by which the Great Physician

¹ We use the word in distinction from the "Peculiar People" sect.