

Masheders are familiar names in my immediate neighbourhood, but the bearers recognize no kinship. The 'split' in the family took place too long ago for them to recall it. As I write this I am staying for a night in Ellesmere in Shropshire. I see two signs up within fifty yards of one another: one bears the name of Povah, the other Povey—no doubt they are related. These are the things that give an interest to our parish registers. They link the present with the past. It is not merely the lineament of some face of to-day that is recalled, as we scan these faded characters, but the dimmer outline of an age which is past beyond all recall.

I have merely to add, that the only satisfactory plan of preserving our registers I can suggest is to print them. I am now, with the assistance of a local committee, printing my own. We have 180 subscriptions of a guinea each, and we hope to clear £50 for some parochial object, after all expenses are paid. I would earnestly impress upon every clerical guardian of these priceless treasures to set about their publication at once. County families, local magnates, public libraries, genealogists, and antiquaries at a distance are always ready to subscribe, some for more copies, some for less; and with a strong circular sent through the length and breadth of the parish, the thing is easily done. Would that my brethren would make the experiment!

C. W. BARDSLEY.

ART VI.—THE BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL'S "CAN THEY BE BROUGHT IN?"

Can They be Brought In? Thoughts on the absence from Church of the working classes. By JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D., Lord Bishop of Liverpool. W. Hunt and Co. 1883.

THE absence of the "working classes" from public worship has lately been much discussed. A voluntary census in some of the largest towns, a year or two ago, attracted attention; and many thoughtful Nonconformists, as well as Churchmen, were startled at the statistics then published. Figures, no doubt, are oftentimes fallacious; and the figures of Nonconformist census-takers which bear upon the influence of the National Church, should, just now, be very carefully considered. Nevertheless, in the face of keen criticism, the voluntary census movement has proved, on the whole, a statistical success. In many towns the clergy and leading Church workers have carried out a census of their own; they have ascertained the religious profession of their parishioners (whether Nonconformists or Church-people), and also the average attendances in the sanctuary. As a rule, perhaps, the statistics of the voluntary

census, whether carried out by friends or foes of the Establishment, may be accepted as sufficiently accurate. One result is plain and positive, the absence of the working classes from public worship is extremely serious. Again, apart altogether from the recent amateur counting in churches, or voluntary voting-papers distributed from house to house, Churchmen come to the same conclusion. In the great centres of population more churches are undoubtedly needed; but, at the same time, it must be admitted that of the churches built to meet the needs of the working classes, no small proportion are almost useless. A district parish has been made; a building has been consecrated, and a pastor provided; outside are working men in thousands, but the church, at any service, even on a Sunday evening, is nearly empty. The statements made by Mr. Hubbard and others, the other day, in the London Diocesan Conference, as to the religious condition of the metropolitan working classes can scarcely be questioned; and the able paper by Mr. Kitto, "The Church and the Masses," in the January CHURCHMAN, tells its own tale. From another great diocese has come an earnest appeal, based upon a statement of serious and most pressing wants. The diocese of Rochester, says its honoured Bishop, is still a Missionary diocese, and sorely needs both money and men.¹ Masses of the population are, if not neglected, at least pretermitted, not provided for. The Bishop of Liverpool, in the pamphlet before us, gives similar statistics, and pleads in the same strain.

Before turning to the case as presented by the Bishop of Liverpool—the needs of the present—it may be well briefly to look back to the neglect of the past. How is it that such a large proportion of the English people are unprovided for by the National Church? The question is often asked; and yet it needs only an elementary effort to afford the answer.

The Church's endowments are those of a population of some four millions; they were sufficient, no doubt, for a period when the country was mainly agricultural. But the population over which the Church, as the National Church, by profession takes charge, is now twenty-six millions. And of these twenty-six millions "the masses," we may say, reside in urban

¹ The diocese of Rochester is the third largest in the kingdom in point of population (1,800,000 souls). An appeal for the Diocesan Society says: "Those who intimately know the low, coarse, wicked lives which thousands upon thousands lead in our crowded cities—those who recognize the fact that drunkenness and indifferentism are the two great enemies of the present day—must feel that the coming question of the immediate future is, How can we support, render most efficient, and push forward in an eager and aggressive spirit the Home Missions of England, that we may recapture for God and His Church the strongholds within which Satan has entrenched himself."

parishes. While the population of agricultural districts has remained stationary, the population of manufacturing towns, as a rule, has largely increased, and in certain centres the addition has been enormous. As regards the Establishment, then, this is the state of things; its country parishes have the money, while its town parishes have the masses. Some exaggeration in this statement may be pardoned; it is well to mark the contrast. To put the case in another way. The ancient parishes were endowed; they have tithes, glebe, etc. For the statutory parishes, however, nothing of the sort was provided, and there are myriads of the people in the mining and manufacturing and commercial centres, as well as in the suburban districts of the metropolis, for whom no endowment whatever exists in any shape or form. One result of the Evangelical revival was the building of chapels of ease and churches; private Acts of Parliament were obtained; and after the year 1818, the real *terminus a quo* (Parliamentary impediments being removed), the Church building movement grew strong. But the arrears were heavy, and could not be overtaken. The endowments of few town churches were sufficient to bear division, and it was difficult to raise money at the same time for building churches and for clergy endowment. Another result of the Evangelical revival was the utilizing of schoolrooms, and in populous places the Gospel was preached in buildings of various kinds, usually "licensed." Nevertheless, the Church of England has been and is, in the towns, both undermanned and (if the word may be excused) undermoneied. While in the rural parishes, as a rule, one finds a church quite large enough, and a Rector, or Vicar, with sufficient stipend, in the great towns, very often, an Incumbent is sadly overworked, his ecclesiastical income is miserably small, and over the population committed to his charge he cannot possibly exercise due pastoral influence. How dependent upon voluntary support the Established Church is, with regard to the masses, may be understood from a single statement. The Incumbents to whom grants are made by the Church Pastoral Society have under their charge an aggregate population of more than four millions and a half. In other words, each of the Incumbents aided by that excellent Society, has a parish or district of some eight thousand souls. Their average income, it may be stated, is £330 a year, while one hundred and fifty-six of these aided parishes have no parsonage-houses.¹

¹ The Church Pastoral Aid Society was established in the year 1836, a period when, on the lowest calculation, 3,000,000 of the inhabitants of England and Wales were utterly destitute of the means of grace. In many of the new parochial districts which were formed the minister's stipend was paid by the Society for several years.

The problem before the Church, therefore, at the present time is twofold: first, How to provide churches, clergy, and Church workers, in proportion to the growth of the population; and secondly (in some respects the more perplexing portion of the problem), How to get hold of the working-classes so as to induce them to "assemble themselves together." All will admit, of course, that "our land will yield her increase" only when of the tens of thousands of our artisans and labourers, the question needs no longer to be asked, "Can they be brought in?"

We come now to the pamphlet of the Bishop of Liverpool. A man of great ability, as everybody knows, whose statesman-like gifts would have made themselves felt had he sought to be a Ministerial administrator, Dr. Ryle is peculiarly well qualified as a Bishop to give advice upon this great question: "Why are the working-classes absent from Church; and how can they be brought in?"

The pamphlet consists chiefly of the address which the Bishop delivered at the Derby Congress;¹ but from lack of time many things were then left unsaid, and several pages, dealing with two special suggestions, have been added to the address. The two fresh suggestions are these: (1) The Church must have a great increase of living agents in the large overgrown parishes where working-men chiefly reside; (2) the Church ought to provide facilities for an organized system of aggressive evangelization in her large parishes.

Under the first heading the Bishop writes thus:

No man, however zealous, can do more than a certain amount of work. To suppose that the Incumbent of a parish of 10,000 people in a mining, manufacturing, or seaport district can keep pace with, or overtake, the spiritual wants of his parishioners, so long as he is single-handed and alone, is simply absurd. The thing is physically impossible. When he has every week read the Services and preached sermons, married, baptized, and buried according to requirement, visited a few sick, and superintended his schools, his week will be gone. There will be hundreds of houses which he has no time to enter, and even thousands of men and women whom he does not know, and who hardly know his name. Can anyone wonder if the isolated Incumbent of such a parish breaks down in health and heart, and resigns or dies? Have we any right to be surprised if the working-classes in such a parish live without religion, and are a prey to drunkenness, gambling, extravagance, improvidence, Sabbath-breaking, unchastity, and general immorality? What else can be expected from human nature, if half-educated men and women are never visited, and are left to themselves? What right have we to be surprised and indignant if many of them join some Nonconformist body, or go

¹ In the November CHURCHMAN were mentioned the three divisions of the Bishop's paper, as read at the Congress.

over to the Church of Rome? Why should they care for a Church which does not seem to care for them? To frown on seceders in such a case as schismatics is senseless and foolish. If the Church of England really wants to get hold of, and keep hold of, the working-classes in such a district as I have described, she must send more living agents among them. If she does not begin here, she will certainly lose them, and in many cases has lost them already. If she does not go down to the people, the people will not come up to her.

When I speak of living agents, I mean Missionary Curates, Scripture-readers, lay-agents, Bible-women, and voluntary lay-helpers. To begin spiritual operations by building churches in huge, overgrown, neglected parishes of working folks, is useless waste of money and time. It is beginning at the wrong end. You may build the churches, as certain well-meaning men did in Bethnal Green, forty-five years ago, and find them, by-and-by, as empty as barns in July. The right course is to walk in the steps of the Apostles, and begin with living agency.

"This then is our first step," says the Bishop; "we must send living agents from street to street, and lane to lane, and alley to alley, and house to house, and room to room, and garret to garret, and cellar to cellar, until there is not a working man or woman in the parish who has not been looked in the face, or shaken by the hand, and until not one can say, 'The Church of England does not care for my soul.'"

In unfolding his second suggestion the Bishop speaks with laudable plainness, especially in regard to neglected parishes. "The extremely critical position of our beloved Church in many of our large parishes," says his lordship, "makes plain-speaking a positive duty;" and, certainly, of all administrative blunders few are worse than to shut one's eyes to damaging defects, or apply mere surface treatment to serious sores.

The parochial system of the Church, unquestionably, is an admirable and beneficent system when it is properly worked; but when it is worked badly, or not worked at all, the parochial system becomes a most damaging institution, a weakness, and not a strength to the Established Church:

Now it is nonsense to deny [says Bishop Ryle] that there are some large parishes in almost every diocese in England where the parochial clergyman, from one cause or another, does little or nothing. The parishioners are not visited, and are like sheep without a shepherd. The bulk of the people never come near the church at all. Sin, and immorality, and ignorance, and infidelity increase and multiply every year. The few who worship anywhere take refuge in the chapels of Methodists, Baptists, and Independents, if not in more questionable places of worship. The parish church is comparatively deserted. People in such parishes live and die with an abiding impression that the Church of England is a rotten, useless institution, and bequeath to their families a legacy of prejudice against the Church, which lasts for ever. Will anyone pretend to tell me that there are not many large English parishes in

this condition? I defy him to do so. I am writing down things that are only too true, and it is vain to pretend to conceal them.

But what does the Church of England do for such parishes as these? I answer, *Nothing, nothing at all!*—It is precisely here that our territorial system fails and breaks down altogether. So long as the parochial minister does his duty up to the bare letter of legal requirement, it is a ruled point, both in theory and in practice, and a matter of ecclesiastical etiquette, that nobody must interfere with him? His people may be perishing for lack of knowledge! Infidels, Mormonites, and Papists may be going to and fro, and beguiling unstable souls! Dissenters of all sorts may be building chapels, and filling them with the families of aggrieved and neglected Churchmen! The children of the Church may be drawn away from her every year by scores! But no matter! The Church cannot interfere! The Church of England looks on with folded arms, and does nothing at all. Can anyone imagine a more ruinous system? Can anyone wonder that some irritated and disgusted Churchmen become confirmed Dissenters, and that others despise or loathe the Church which allows such a state of things to go on, and that thousands relapse into a state of heathenism?

One matter may here be touched upon. As the law now stands the Bishop is not without power to effect a plainly needed division in an overgrown parish. The difficulty is, of course, the finding the funds. It may be better, however, in certain cases, to cut off a portion of the parish, according to law, whether the indolent or incapable Incumbent agree or disagree; and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are by no means unready to strengthen local efforts. Granted, however, that some thousands of the parishioners may be placed, legally, under another Pastor, what advantage then would the people in the untouched portion of the parish have obtained? None at all. The old Vicar would be their Vicar still. Clearly, something else is needed. Now the Bill brought in last year by the Bishop of Exeter, and approved by Convocation, may do good service; it is, at all events, a step in the right direction. This measure (The Pluralities Act Amendment Bill) was adopted in the House of Lords, but, like other good and timely measures, was not even discussed in the House of Commons.

Upon one point we thoroughly agree with the Bishop of Liverpool. "The 'Incumbent's Resignation Act,' which enables a clergyman, after a commission of inquiry, to resign his living, and retire with one-third of the income for his life," says the Bishop, "is open to grave objections. To ask the old incumbent of a living worth £300 a year to resign, and finish his days on £100 a year for himself, wife, and family, is senseless and unreasonable. Nor does the defectiveness of the Act end here. The patrons of the living after a resignation are hampered and limited in their choice of a successor by one-third of the

income being taken away. A well-devised superannuation fund is greatly wanted in the Church of England."

Bishop Ryle suggests the institution of an order of diocesan "Evangelists." "Let the Bishop of every diocese," he says, "be empowered to call into existence a new class of ministers, to be named 'Evangelists.' Let him be empowered, with the advice of a select Council of presbyters and leading laymen, to arrange with any Incumbent of a large overgrown parish to separate from such parish a district of 3,000 or 4,000 people, and place them under the charge of an Evangelist, to work in any way that he can. Let the Evangelist be licensed to the Bishop, and responsible to him and his council only, they undertaking to superintend and maintain him. Let the Incumbent of the mother Church be set free from any responsibility whatever for the separated district."

Now this suggestion, of course, is open to objections; but the objections are certainly not insuperable.¹ The beneficial results of the London Diocesan scheme are well known; and in the diocese of Rochester Evangelists, both clerical and lay, are working with great success. For ourselves, we have long been of opinion that fresh legal powers are needed for a Bishop in regard to overgrown or scandalously neglected parishes. Without a new Act of Parliament, however, much may be effected by amicable arrangement with Incumbents who are overworked; and although we have no personal knowledge of the diocese of Liverpool we shall be much surprised if this pamphlet—an earnest and stirring appeal—does not soon bear fruit in gifts for Scripture-readers, Mission Curates or "Evangelists," and other workers, paid and voluntary, who are "attached."

That the Church needs money in the large towns, and needs it sorely, is admitted on all sides. The Bishop of Lincoln pleads for increased support, and he points to Nottingham, as needing both new districts and mission clergy. Some portion of his Lordship's most recent appeal, containing a reference to the funeral of M. Gambetta, may well be quoted here. The Bishop said:

¹ "Some man," says Bishop Ryle, "will object that the scheme I propose would break up the parochial system, and greatly damage the Church of England. I do not believe it a bit. I believe, on the contrary, to begin with, that it would do immense good among the laity. It would rally them round the Church of England, and show them that they were not entirely forgotten. It would keep them within the pale of the Church, and preserve them from being carried off by Dissenters and Plymouth Brethren. But I go a step further. I believe it would do good eventually among the parochial clergy. They would see at last that the diocesan Evangelist did not come into their parishes as an enemy, but as a friend. They would gradually learn to value his aid." Other objections the Bishop answers with his usual skill.

The fact is not to be forgotten, as among the most striking phenomena of the present day, that on that great Christian festival of the Epiphany, in the capital city of the nation whose Sovereign was formerly styled the most Christian King, and which was itself called the eldest daughter of the Church, and at the funeral of one of its greatest citizens, who was followed to the cemetery of Père la Chaise by almost a whole population, there was not a ray of light gleaming from the Star of Bethlehem to enlighten the darkness of the tomb; not a single sunbeam of the Gospel of Christ to gild the black pall and bier of the dead, and to cheer the gloom of that national mourning; not a single whisper of Christianity was breathed in all those funeral orations over the corpse, not a single syllable of reference to the awful realities of death, resurrection, judgment, and eternity. Why do I mention all this? Because if we, in our English towns, do not encourage efforts to Christianize the almost heathen masses of our own vast populous cities—if we do not encourage home missionary enterprises by spreading the Gospel of Christ, and the knowledge of God's Holy Word, and to inculcate the belief in His omnipresence and omnipotence, and in the responsibility of all men, and in a judgment to come, and in future rewards and punishments, then our Nottinghams will become like that great and illustrious Continental city to which I have referred, and the perishable things of earth will be our all in all, and national restlessness, confusion, and anarchy will be the result.

The Bishop of Rochester issues an appeal for ten new churches in South London; and he asks his diocese to contribute at least £10,000 a year for diocesan Mission Work.¹ The Bishop of Liverpool makes certain statements; taking a broad view of the facts of the case, he offers suggestions: if these remedies "could be vigorously applied," says the right rev. prelate, "I should have no fears for my beloved country or my Church. If they are not applied, I see nothing before us but ruin." Now, in the forefront of his remedies comes the question of money. If the Church's wealthy children among the laity will not come forward and enable her to multiply her living agents, she will be ruined. Certainly there is no point on which Church folk need educating more than on that of giving. It is one consequence of an Establishment, and a very

¹ The Rochester Diocesan Society, at present, provides 19 Clergy for Mission Districts, 24 Scripture Readers, 46 Mission Women, with other "living agents." MANY MORE CLERGY ARE REQUIRED.

A deeply interesting little pamphlet has lately been sent to us by Mr. Grundy, the able organizing Secretary of the Rochester Diocesan Society, viz., "Bishop's Visits to the Mission Districts." It seems that at the November meeting of the Council, Canon Money forcibly impressed the desirableness of making a thorough investigation into the working of the Mission Districts, and the Bishop at once proposed to visit them himself, and report orally to the Council. The account of the Bishop's visits, as we have said, is full of interest. Bishop Thorold is an able administrator, judicious, unsparing in labour, and of a loving missionary spirit. May God touch the hearts of many wealthy Church people who read this report!

evil consequence, that people think too much of the endowments.

Again, reforms are needed. In our great towns, the interest of the working classes in their own church ought to be more largely fostered.¹ In these democratic days it seems specially necessary to increase the number of voluntary Workers. The Church, we think, is too aristocratic, and the Incumbent is too much of an autocrat. Reforms are needed. As Bishop Ryle well says, the "Church is sadly wanting in elasticity and power of adapting herself to circumstances. Its organization is stiff and rigid like a bar of cast-iron, when it ought to be supple and bending like whalebone." The leading journal² lately pointed out some flaws in our system. "There is no Church," said the *Times*, "there is no Government, there is no institution in the world that so little adapts its means to its ends, its resources to work, its men to its positions, as the Church of England. The fact is proved, the want supplied, and the evil mitigated by the surrounding atmosphere of Nonconformity, everywhere pressing in to fill the void." Again. "The good work to be done," says the *Times*, "is as plain and as universal as the sun in the heavens."

The school and the field of true faith is all the world, and knows no demarcations or prohibitions. An artificial and cumbersome establishment, standing upon gone-by ages, and inheriting innumerable anomalies, hindrances, and scandals, may be too sacred a thing to be rudely handled. But it cannot cover the ground, or reap the harvest. Part—indeed, the greater part—must be left to those who, if less privileged, are less trammelled, and who have the power not of authority, but of freedom. In such a case there must be some jarring, some antagonism. How shall it be cured? How shall the Established Church acquire for itself that full liberty of action which it continually sees employed against itself? It must condescend to gather all the lessons it can from the organization and tactics of those whom it only too naturally regards as its rivals, if not foes. How do they get possession of the ground? How do they advance everywhere, and hold the ground they win? They do it by the use of common-sense.

¹ The Right Hon. G. J. Goschen, M.P., a year or two ago, made use of these words: "Would that more power could be given to parishioners to associate themselves with the management of the Church, which, whatever the definition of the law may be, is after all *their* Church! Would that the laity might be given some voice in parish business connected with the church, its services, and its charitable work! The despotic sway of the parish incumbent is opposed to the whole spirit of the age. It is, in my judgment, dangerous to the interests of the Church. But a distinct and visible connection of the national lay element with the local management of the Church would strengthen the foundations of religion, soften sectarian distinctions, and open up a fresh and most ennobling influence in local life."

² *Times*, Feb. 14, 1883, quoted by the Bishop of Liverpool.

Several suggestions, of course, have been made in regard to the working classes. The lay Diaconate, as the readers of THE CHURCHMAN are aware, seems to us an urgent reform. How otherwise can money and men enough for the Church's need be got? We have pleaded, also, for a diocesan system of mission-preaching; in parishes where Missions are sorely needed they are never held. Again, as regards our services, simplification and elasticity are needed; but upon these and other matters of Church Reform we do not now touch. We desire, with all earnestness, to recommend the Bishop of Liverpool's pamphlet; and the prayers of all true Christian people in this land may well be sought, that with more of hope the question may be asked about the myriads of our working classes—How shall they be brought in?

Reviews.

The Honourable Henry Erskine, Lord Advocate for Scotland, with Notices of certain of his Kinsfolk and of his Time. Compiled from Family Papers and other sources of information. By Lieut.-Colonel ALEX. FERGUSSON, late of the Staff of Her Majesty's Indian Army. Pp. 560. Blackwood, Edinburgh and London.

IN the year 1806, Thomas Erskine, the leader of the English Bar, was elevated to the Peerage and the Woolsack. Henry Erskine, after filling a corresponding position at the Scotch Bar, had been made Lord Advocate. As to which of these two brothers was the more highly gifted, not a few of their friends would have found it difficult to give an opinion. Thomas, perhaps, was the more eloquent, while Henry excelled in wit. Both were great lawyers, and gave ample proof of genius. Henry was born in 1746, Thomas three years later. The eldest son of the family, David Henry, Lord Cardross (the eleventh Earl of Buchan,) was born in 1742. Earl David, on one occasion, was speaking of the brilliant talents of his family, and the Duchess of Gordon inquired whether it was not the case that the family talents had come by the *mother's side*, and so were all settled on the *younger sons*. The "mother," of whom the brilliant Duchess spoke, was a woman of extraordinary intellect, highly cultured; the father, the tenth Earl of Buchan, was an amiable much-respected man, of no particular power. Certainly, the history of the "long descended" Erskines is curious, and presents many points of interest. A glimpse of the ancestry of *Harry Erskine* is given in the book before us. A learned professor, on looking over the display of great names which is laid before the reader—Visconti, Della Seala, and Doria, Bourbon, Lenox, Mar, and Royal Steuarts, Stair, Fairfax (and not the least honourable), Sir Thomas Browne—has remarked that if there be any faith to be placed in the