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CONISTON,
 August 9, 1909.



Some Thoughts on Church Reform.

BY THE REV. F. L. H. MILLARD, M.A.

THERE seems to be little doubt that the Church of England needs reform. This is admitted on all hands, but there is no general agreement as to where or how that reform should begin. Indeed, the moment you begin to touch the subject of reform, it puts forth so many dangerous bristles—a very hedgehog of discussion—that you feel little disposed to proceed; there is, in fact, no direction in which you may turn where the way is not barred by these walls of bristles.

Yet the urgency of reform becomes more and more evident the more Church matters are dealt with. There is hardly any part of Church organization which does not call out for almost immediate reform. Church finance is in a state of chaos; patronage as administered is a scandal and shame; clerical incomes are, in their irregularity, a subject to make angels weep; organization is mainly conspicuous by its absence, and is often rendered impossible by the cumbrous size of the diocese over which one man has to preside. Whether it is towards clergy pensions, the status of the unbeneficed, the position of the laity, the work of foreign missions, the use of the Prayer-Book, the ornaments of the church and the minister, the

supply and training of the clergy, or the increase of the Episcopate, it is all the same. Reform is imperative, yet it is hedged about with such difficulties that men fear to tackle it. How can the Church be induced to make up her mind so that even one of the many desirable reforms may be accomplished? For it is certain that until that mind is made up effective and sufficient reform will not be possible. From time to time, in grave ecclesiastical assemblies, the consideration of various points of Church reform recurs, and mild resolutions are passed, followed leisurely by some infinitesimal adjustment, after which things relapse into their normal state of inaction, and the present amazing anomalies are permitted to continue, a bar to progress, a stumbling-block to the faithful, and an object of ridicule to those outside the pale.

A northern prelate, writing brilliantly in the *CHURCHMAN*, tells us what the Church of the future is to be when the happy reunion of the sects with the Church has taken place. It is easy to see visions and to dream dreams, but "the Church of the Future" will not be worth dreaming about unless "the Church of the Present" is made more what it ought to be.

A southern prelate, in his primary charge, deals with this same subject, and emphasizes the need for caution at the present moment if reunion is to be effected without prejudice to principle. The vision of the former prelate, splendid and compelling as it is, must not be translated into reality at the cost of stability. While all men eagerly desire reunion, it would be fatal to pursue a policy of sacrifice, if in the end only a semblance of that which we seek were to be obtained.

For, after all, what gain would it be for the sects to unite with the Church so long as we are in our present condition of hopeless want of method and organization? If they came to perpetuate such a system of anomalies, it would be to make confusion worse confounded; if they came to reform, it would be to introduce such strife as would at once cause the reunited portions to fly apart again with redoubled energy.

Before we can hope for reunion, the Church of England

must know her own mind ; she must put her own house into order ; she must be something which all others can join with confidence and reasonable understanding, knowing where they are, and exactly what they are coming to. Her doctrine must be defined, its limits clear. Her organization must be, if not perfect, at least adequate, and capable of ready adjustment to the needs of the time. She must be able to interpret her own rubrics, and organize her own finances. A Church with a nebulous doctrine, and hazy, indefinite conception of the truth will, even if it attract outlying bodies, never be able to weld them into a homogeneous whole, or keep them united when once joined together. A Church whose financial system is one mass of anomalies will never satisfy the members of other bodies, whose very existence is bound up with a business-like organization of financial as well as other matters.

It is, therefore, imperative that, before we frame schemes for reunion, we should carry out schemes for reform. For it is evident that before we can unite the scattered forces of religion in this country, we must ourselves be once more what we claim even now to be—a reformed Church.

The valuable work of trying to focus the thought of Churchmen on general questions of reform is being admirably carried on by the Church Reform League. What, however, is above all things needed is that the whole attention and energy of the Church should be concentrated, not upon general questions, but rather upon one subject at a time, in order that each reform may in turn be acknowledged by the whole Church and carried out. For it is impossible to effect many reforms at the same time without running the risk of revolution, and revolution is not reform. Let there be a general consensus of opinion as to the need of some *one* definite reform expressed through Church councils, and voiced in every parish, and then let the Church, as a whole, set to work deliberately and determinedly to carry that reform into effect. It is no good sweeping every part of a room at the same time ; you must be content to take first one corner and then another, or the room will be simply smothered in

dust, and cleaning impossible. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that satisfactory and effective reform can be carried out by small societies tinkering here and there, and stray individuals attempting the work which ought to be done by the whole body. But English Churchmen seem ever to desire to run their own particular fad instead of combining together to accomplish some one definite purpose at a time. We have become so used to independent action, largely, it may be confessed, through the working of the parson's freehold and the independence of the Bishops, that we have lost the movement of the Church as a whole. There can be no doubt about the great advantage of the independent position of the Anglican clergy, which comes from their endowments, and enables them to speak and act in a way Nonconformist ministers seldom dare. But that very independence entails a danger, the danger of each priest becoming more or less of a law to himself, and so seriously interfering with the co-operate action of the Church as a whole. The clergy, it is true, recognize the existence of certain anomalies, but are so divided as to the best methods by which to remedy those anomalies as to become incapable of united action ; and their incapacity is emphasized by the fact that the Church has lost all power of dictating any line of action. Even the Bishops are unable to keep their differences to themselves, and seek to be leaders of opinion against their brethren who hold different views. A perusal of their various charges reveals such large, far-reaching differences as to make us cry out with pain as we read them. It is, therefore, futile for us to talk about the union of the sects with the Church until we begin to obtain some degree, not of uniformity, but of corporate action. "Those alone can rightly pray for the peace of Jerusalem who are at peace among themselves."

It becomes, then, the primary duty of the Church earnestly and prayerfully to set to work to *lay hold of one generally acknowledged necessary reform after another, and achieve it.*

There is nothing the Church cannot accomplish, if only her members are united.

And now we may ask, What are the most pressing reforms generally acknowledged, which ought to be pushed forward at once? Suppose a vote were taken of all Churchpeople throughout the country, which of many desired reforms would come uppermost?

I have no hesitation in saying that the following would be the order: (1) Patronage, (2) Endowment, (3) Finance, (4) Increase of the Episcopate. When these are got out of the way, the revision of the Prayer-Book and the vestments of the clergy would probably have their turn.

The most crying need of the Church is, then, the reform of patronage. Until this is settled, thousands of good people will stand in a position of alienation. Let the Church as a whole concentrate her attention on this. Let her insist on the establishment of a Board of Patronage in every Diocese, before which every nomination to a benefice or preferment of any kind must be laid. Let that Board draw up certain rules and regulations for the direction of patrons, and insist upon the Bishop refusing to institute any man nominated in contravention of the rules adopted. On that Board a preponderating voice must be given to the laymen, and the Bishops must act as voicing the desire of the Church, rather than as rulers responsible to no one except themselves. The effect of such a reform, which might easily be carried out by a united Church, would be to revive immense confidence and interest among the rank and file.

When once the question of patronage is disposed of, the question of endowment could be tackled. Here is another serious blot upon the wealthiest religious organization in the Empire. The law of endowment must be altered; the payment of clergy must be regulated. It is ridiculous—nay, more, it is iniquitous—that one man should receive £2,000 a year for similar, or even less, work than that for which another receives £200. The pooling of all clerical incomes, and payment according to a scale fixed by such considerations as length of service and responsibility of position, would possibly be one

of the directions in which the reform of our present system would move. A living wage would at least be provided for all, on the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

This would pave the way for the reorganization of Church finance as a whole, and the experience already gained would prove invaluable in solving the immense difficulties with which this question is surrounded. How to save the enormous waste that goes on from the overlapping of numerous societies, and from the multiplication of societies and agencies; how to do away with unsatisfactory methods of raising money, and substitute satisfactory methods in their place; how to husband the immense resources of the Church, and utilize her wealth for the benefit of the whole; how to group her societies and agencies for work, and to concentrate her activities in various directions, so that her wealthy sons and daughters may know exactly where to leave their money—how to do all this, and more, would be to solve perhaps the greatest problem of all, and the doing of it would arouse into activity many latent forces, and enkindle much enthusiasm.

There are some, however, who would declare that before these desired reforms must come that of the increase of the Episcopate. It is not possible, indeed, to underestimate the importance of this necessary reform, and I should be the last to postpone it for one single moment. The present disorders in the Church, the growth of Nonconformity, the strife over religious education and the schools, is, in my opinion, largely due to the fact that the Church, ever since the beginning of the eighteenth century, has been hopelessly under-officered. If, as the population increased with the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century, the subdivision of the Dioceses had proceeded *pro rata*, so that to-day we had one hundred instead of thirty-seven Dioceses, the whole aspect of the country would have been different. The history—the miserable history—of educational strife since 1870 would never have been written. Bishops would be, as they should be, our real Fathers in God, and their power would have resided in their spiritual and intellectual

greatness, and not in their temporalities, the length of their purses, and the extensiveness of their patronage.

I heartily throw in my lot with those who are doing all they can to impress upon the minds of Churchpeople the need of immediate action in the matter of the increase of the Diocesan Episcopate ; but, at the same time, it is impossible to withhold from oneself the admission that in the existing state of things, while questions of endowment and matters of finance are in their present condition, we are going the wrong way about to raise the money for endowments of new Sees. What is needed is the adjustment of our finances, the cutting down of establishments, rearrangement of the offices and emoluments of the Church, quite as much as, if not more than, the raising of huge sums of money for fresh endowment.

It is calculated that in the Northern Province at least six additional Bishoprics could be provided almost immediately if the power of readjustment and rearrangement were granted to the Church and properly used.

The great thing, however, is to get the mind of the Church concentrated upon one reform at a time. Let us decide which reform is to be adopted first, and then let us be fully determined that nothing shall prevent us from carrying it out. Let us rest neither day nor night till it is accomplished.

At the annual general meeting of the Church Reform League, held on June 18, the Archdeacon of Suffolk, in the course of an admirable speech, uttered the following words, with which I may well conclude this paper. He said :

“ Another reason why Church Reform moves so slowly is because the great central body of Churchpeople acquiesce in things remaining as they are. There is no doubt about that. We do not make enough noise. We want a little of the Welsh element in our characters, or a little of the Irish element. We ought not to take these things lying down. Look at our numbers ; look at our influence ; look at our homogeneity. These are quite sufficient to make us feel that, if we only asserted ourselves, we should have our way. I think that must

be the general feeling. I would say we must not trust too much to the extreme wings of the Church. I do not think we shall ever get them to see things exactly as we want them to. For some reasons of their own they wish things to remain as they are ; they do not want any change, because if this was changed, or if that was changed, something else would change which they would not like. But the great central body of Churchpeople, lay and clerical, have volume enough to break down all obstruction and carry out the reforms that are needed. You must not depend merely upon the clergy doing it, and you must not depend upon your representative laymen doing it. It must be a matter for the rank and file, and everybody must know what we think and what we intend."



Hints on the Use of the Voice.

BY THE REV. CANON GIRDLESTONE, M.A.

I. THE ORGANS OF SPEECH.

THREE rules were once given for speech-making : first, have something to say ; secondly, say it ; and thirdly, sit down when you have said it. I am not sure which of these excellent rules is the hardest to obey, but I venture to offer a few practical hints on the second. The voice is a precious gift, and the vocal organs are marvels of structure, providing for every variety of human speech, and expressing every kind of emotion and desire. Nations, families, and individuals have their special voices, which cannot be readily imitated. Jacob could copy the roughness of Esau's hands, but he could not speak as Esau spoke. Saul recognized David's voice, though he was at a distance ; and although the risen Lord was able to disguise His voice for a special purpose, one word spoken in His natural tone brought conviction to Mary Magdalene.