

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON GENERAL LOCAL AND PAROCHIAL INSTITUTIONS.

There are many other topics which might have been introduced to extend this outline of our village history, and almost every preceding chapter might have been considerably expanded by the introduction of more detail and disquisition. We might have travelled all through the Deanery by virtue of its name to bring in large and fresh contributions. The science of botany, for example, in itself both recreative and practically instructive, might fairly have been pressed into our service, for its quota of information, and a moral teaching which possesses many natural inherent charms,

“Fox-glove and night-shade side by side,  
“Emblems of *punishment* and *pride*.” -- *Lady of the Lake*.

And thus I am reminded again of the incompleteness of my work. But still I think my readers will be satisfied, at least with the amount and variety of matter introduced to their notice, in their appreciation of the Greek saying, “A “great book is a great nuisance.” I would only now desire to make a few reflections and remarks on some of those integral parts of our parochial system, which in the foregoing pages have occupied our attention as matters of fact, and which have their application, more or less important, to every parish in the land.

1. First, in regard to the family, who for five long centuries held the position of country squire or gentleman (*armiger vel generosus*) in this place, with unquestionable benefit to all around them. I may call that position the domestic Institution of a Resident Gentry. The Finchams were a fine example of it in past times. I contemplate their history with the deepest interest, perhaps with a too partial eye. Not many, I suspect, among the families of Norfolk can lay claim to so lengthened a line of honorable succession, and unbroken residence upon the domains of their ancestors ; -- not many whose family and fortunes suffered so little, amidst the vicissitudes and dangers of the times through which they passed. Of their *life*, I have discovered nothing which is inconsistent with blamelessness and honour ; -- of their *religion*, and its unsoundness, only what was incident to the times in which they lived ; -- of their *habitation*, nothing to be regretted more than its conversion from the lord's mansion and homestead to the tenant's farm-house and yard ; -- and of their ancient *name*, no blot to make its most virtuous holder ashamed of it. May their unrecorded faults be left behind them in the grave !

But what is the lesson which these thoughts suggest ? They suggest to my mind the very great importance of the residence, as far as may be, of country gentlemen upon their estates. If -- as having a considerable stake in the country -- the representatives of good families -- who, from descent, education, revenue, and position, ought to take a lead, to guide opinion, to be the foremost promoters of improvements -- they are nevertheless, from whatever cause, unknown, and personally without either credit or influence, how great is the loss to the country and the people ! and how great the injustice that is done to both ! But, assuming that a country gentleman is a man of generous and openhearted sentiments -- ready to promote all real improvements

-- "given to hospitality" -- "a lover of good works" -- and I will add, in the language of the Church, "religiously and "devoutly disposed," -- what a blessing to the parish, to the neighbourhood, to the country ! Who will grudge him his estate ? who will refuse him a cheer ? what minister of righteousness and peace but will "wish him good luck in the "name of the Lord" ?

But I said, "residence as far as may be." It is not possible, we know, at all times and in all places. We would rather prefer to have the man than his guinea, where indeed it is true that

"The man's the gowd, for a' that" ;

for the one will surely come with the other, -- but if the landlord must be absent, the collector is sure to come, and a word to him on rent days, or a stroke of the pen without trouble on any other day, may in some degree make compensation. In some country places this is well and handsomely done.

Candour, however, gently whispers in our ear that there is a reciprocity of duty ; -- all in the parish, from the clergyman to the lowest pauper, owe respect to educated rank and talent and exalted character. "Render therefore to all their dues." If otherwise -- if our Esquires be not honoured and supported -- they will not have much pleasure in their rural possessions, and will retreat to the personal enjoyment of other attractions. To help to a right appreciation of the consequences of a forced absenteeism, we may turn to the list of honorable names which grace the first pages of this book, and for a moment imagine every Hall or House there mentioned to be *empty*.

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2. I would next make reference to some of those religious and charitable Institutions of our Church, which have been formed for the extension of Christ's kingdom both at home and abroad, and which are among the signs of her vitality, and have strong claims on all her members. The wisdom of experience has long since decided that the most effective as well as the most economical course to pursue, in benefiting the greatest number to the greatest extent, is by the *association* of persons so disposed into a compact body, for united and powerful action, on the principle that the body itself can always carry out the office of each member more extensively and completely than such member of itself could do. The system does not interfere with private charity. It is supplementary to it. I do not think that our parishioners in general have any idea of the number of these Institutions, nor consequently of their philanthropic and comprehensive objects. I have been often surprised to find how little they are understood, even after years of connection with the parish. Nor is it fully known, I am sure, to what great extent they are pressed upon the attention of the clergy. I would wish, then, to use this opportunity of awakening the attention of my own parishioners at least, and of others if they will give me leave to do so, (and I hope they will not be alarmed,) to the very great importance of the subject, viz., the maintenance and support of these instrumental means employed by the Church in the exercise of her great mission, the temporal and everlasting welfare of the people. Combining the local with the parent Institution, and remarking only on the latter, I would mention :-

(1.) *The Fincham Deanery District Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.* -- This society was formed in the year 1698, and is the oldest Bible society in England. From it we obtain our Bibles, Prayer

Books, School Books, and Tracts ; at a price which admits of no profit, and in many instances less than actual cost. From the large and handsome folio on the reading desk at church, down to the numerous instructive little tracts in the village library at the Rectory, we have evidences of the great value of this society. And so throughout the whole country, and in the colonies abroad. Its issues in 1861 were the enormous aggregate of six millions six hundred and thirty four thousand and seventy three !

Is it possible to over-rate the usefulness of such an institution, and the blessings which it is calculated to convey to every corner of her Majesty's dominions ?

The Committee hold their meetings at the house of Mr. Daniell bookseller, Downham ; where also is the depôt for books. And the Secretary is the Rev. E. J. Howman, Rector of Bexwell.

(2) *The Fincham Deanery Association in connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.* -- This society also is a venerable institution of the Church, dating from the year 1701, and its first object is the care of our emigrated countrymen in the colonies. When we think of the trying lot of a village family, compelled to leave their native home, with all its happy privileges, but which perhaps they had not before felt the value of, and to settle amongst strangers in a strange land, where they do not exist, we must see at once the blessing that exists in such a society as this, which labours to keep before them the "friend "that sticketh closer than a brother." Let not the words "foreign "parts" tend to cool our kindling love ; it is our late nearest neighbour whom the chill blasts of poverty have separated from us for ever. It contributes to the support of about 422 missionaries, and about 700 other teachers.

The Secretary and Treasurer is the Rev. W. H. Stokes, Rector of Denver.

(3.) *The Fincham Deanery and Parochial Association of the Church Missionary Society.*-- This is an institution strictly in harmony with the principles and first duty of a Christian. The gospel must be preached to the heathen of *all nations*, and "how "shall they hear without a preacher ? and how shall they preach "except they be sent ?" And who are to send

them, if wealthy and Christian England ought not ? The society was established in the year 1801, and has been blessed to a very great extent. It has 147 stations, and supports 266 ordained missionaries, and several hundreds of other teachers.

The local Assistant Secretary is Mr. Wm. Nurse, Fincham.

(4.) *The Fincham Branch Association of the British and Foreign Bible Society.* -- This society was founded in 1804. Half its members are of the Church of England, the rest of other denominations. Its great and Christian object is the circulation of the Holy Scriptures in all lands. It has already done so to a great extent, through the medium of 163 languages or dialects ; and its issues last year were 1,595,248 Bibles, or portions of the Bible.

Lady Secretary, Mrs. George Aylmer, Fincham.

(5.) *The Fincham District Committee of the National Society for the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church.* -- This is an institution which, out of pure gratitude for benefits received, if for no other reason, ought to have our liberal support. The National School Society was established in 1812, and has just celebrated its first jubilee anniversary. There are 11,539 schools in union with it, containing upwards of 1,187,000 children. In 1848 we received grants both from the Parent Society and from the Diocesan Branch of the same at Norwich. And several other schools in the Deanery have experienced like assistance. As the subject of education is still a somewhat controverted one, I will reserve myself for a few remarks upon it presently.

The office of Secretary and Treasurer is in myself.

(6.) *The Fincham Parochial Association in support of the Church Pastoral Aid Society.* -- The absolute necessity of such an institution, if Christianity is to continue to be the religion of this land, in reality and not in name only, is apparent from one single consideration, namely, the enormous increase of the population. In the year 1801, the population of England and Wales amounted to 9,156,171 ; last year (1861) it had reached to 20,223,746 ; and it is going on at the rate of 200,000 annually. Hence in hundreds of large villages and towns, the vast increase of the people, -- ten, twenty, or an hundred fold, -- has long since utterly outgrown the means of

grace, and the spiritual blessings *of* pastoral superintendence. In 1837 the first associated effort was made by this society to supply something of this great need, and it has already done so to the extent of providing a systematic annual pastoral visitation for a population amounting to *three millions and a half*, which would otherwise be neglected.

The Secretary for the District is the Rev. W. W. Clarke, Rector of North Wootton.

These six noble institutions I have selected and placed first, as being general and parental in their character. They have all of them their local and affiliated branches, and are broad enough in their principles to comprehend in one or the other all Christians as members. But even these are not all that might be so placed. There is the valuable *Church Building Society*, with its 4365 churches, new or greatly enlarged ; and the *Additional Curates Society*, with objects similar to those of the Pastoral Aid ; and many others, with which I am myself unacquainted ; -- all testifying to the character and constitution of the Church of England, in connection with the State, as seeking earnestly and faithfully to provide for the highest interests of the people. We have, moreover, in our midst, the District Branch of the *Book-Hawking Association* ; the Fincham Deanery *Lay and Clerical Association*, for tracts on social evils and their remedies ; and the Fincham Branch of the *Diocesan Church Association*, for defensive purposes ; of all which I can only record the names and titles.

In reference to the parish in particular, having said thus much of charitable institutions in general, I will here only mention the *educational*, -- our Day, Infant, and Night Schools, now numbering respectively 90, 36, and 40 learners, -- a hundred of whom are also in the Sunday School. Of the great importance of a general religious education it is not easy to speak adequately. The Night School especially -- for boys, lads, and married men -- originated and conducted entirely by ladies -- demands the most kindly and candid consideration. An occasional visit to it would gladden and expand the hearts of their superiors. Such schools

can only be maintained by a union of Christian benevolence with zeal and labour. That in their combination of religious with secular instruction -- heart and head together -- they are highly beneficial, -- not only to the individual taught, but to the whole community of the village, -- I think is capable of clear demonstration. And I believe the same to a certain extent of the National Day School likewise.

We are all, however, aware that opinions are still very far from an agreement on this point. I will take the liberty first of stating my own views, and will then as briefly as possible notice what I have heard of those of dissentients therefrom.

In the first place, we have testimony of the most unquestionable value, that crime has much diminished in the lower classes of society. I mean here *crime* as directly punishable by law. From the increase of the population the contrary might have been expected. But judges and juries, magistrates and police, assert a decided diminution of crime, and their voice is confirmed by the actual shutting up of prisons ; for example, our old well-known Walsingham Bridewell.<sup>1</sup> Then, again, it is an absolute fact, as stated in the Reports of the County Prisons on several occasions of late, that the great majority of criminals can neither read nor write, and numbers of them are unable to say the Lord's Prayer. Education, therefore, has nothing to do with *their* transgressions ; more likely the want of it.

But I appeal with confidence to the observation of honest minds, when I assert, in the case of my own parish, and of others which I could name, and of others

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics of the Rev. Henry Kitton, late chaplain to Walsingham Bridewell, seem to exhibit an increase of crime in the county ; but his tables extend over half a century, the first thirty-five years of which were in the times of the old poor laws, when the state of the rural districts was such as I need not stay to describe. The improved character of the labouring classes, which has led to *the abolition of prisons*, dates from ten to twenty years ago.

of which I have no doubt, that within the last twenty years the conduct of the people has been more orderly -- that there is less intemperance -- that there are fewer instances of malicious depredation -- much less profane swearing and bad language -- but little habitual interruption to respectable inhabitants in the streets -- the idle corner less frequented -- and the church-gate group not now that rude and jeering mob, which formerly I recollect to have been the terror of modest females on their way to church. Nay further, in spite of this dreaded education, and teaching poor boys and girls to *write*, there is even an abatement of obscene drawing and writing in public places, and of cutting names and lines and holes on the leads of church roofs, as used to be done when churches were esteemed as little better than parish lumber-houses or convenient watch-towers.

No :- the increase of crime comes from other quarters. *O tempora ! O mores !* Who can deny it ? It is in the middle and upper classes of society, where the lust of avarice and love of money have led to the perpetration of enormities before unknown in their satanic refinements and colossal magnitude ; -- perjured persons and trust-breakers, forgers of deeds and forgers of wills, robbers of whole incomes of the widow, and the orphan, and the aged ; libertines, adulterers, and suchlike criminals,<sup>1</sup> compared with whom the offenders amongst our peasantry are most of them innocent.

But you admit -- it will be asserted -- that personal vice and follies, affecting the welfare and good order of families, abound to a greater extent than in past years. Admitted fully. "Young persons," it has been said too truly, "of both sexes, "are not now such good servants, they are not so obedient, "are more impatient of restraint, and less amenable to "discipline

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<sup>1</sup> The business of the new Divorce Court is absolutely overwhelming, and the details of it disgusting beyond expression.

“and order, less frequent in their attendance at church, less careful, and less inclined to continue in one situation ; more fond of dress and show, and much more lax in their general moral conduct, than they were 25 or 30 years ago.” Again, “the enormous increase of loose morals in all our towns and large villages is notorious ; and almost as bad a feature as any is the indifference, and frequently entire disregard, manifested by boys and girls at a very early age, for the authority of their parents, who tacitly allow what they seem unable to prevent.”<sup>1</sup> This is extensively true, and the cause of it is fairly attributed in a great measure to the “entire *absence of home education*, of that teaching and that training which none but a mother can give.” But there are many persons who nevertheless cannot help inclining to the suspicion, that the spread of public education among the people is answerable for all their sins. “Many farmers and masters find that the children of laborers do not come to them so well trained for common handy work, nor with such willing obedience as they used to do, and hence they observe *in reference to schools, -- Cui bono ?*”

This question I will endeavour to answer, chiefly with the view at least of exculpating the promoters of education from certain implications, and to lay open as far as I can the real truth. And, first, are the vices and follies of the age peculiar to the classes from which our servants come ? Assuredly not. Very much that is said of their dislike of restraint, disobedience, love of dress, unfitness for the duties of their station, &c., is equally true of many in the classes above them.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of H. E. Blyth, Esq., to the Archdeacon of Norfolk, 1857. It would be good service if more of our influential lay brethren would interest themselves in the moral welfare of the people, in the way that is done by my brother in this valuable letter. We may not agree in all our ideas and conclusions, but it is the discussion of them which brings out the truth and fixes attention upon it.

Consider the effect of this example ! Then, many young masters, but especially young mistresses, do not know how to treat servants, much less how to train them and to keep them. The girls of the Docking Union school are taken “for “half their time, *out of the school into the kitchen.*” This is a very sensible and practical thing to do. Their future mistresses, the daughters of farmers, or clergymen, or other gentlemen, ought to be taken there likewise more often than they are, that they may be better acquainted with the nature of servants' work and wants and duties, and learn wisdom for the management of their households. Again, in some domestic establishments there is positively *no day of rest*, but much of common labour, and even more preparation for visitors, &c., on Sabbath days, than on any other day of the week. I have known respectable servants from this village get into such places, and have not been allowed to go to church more than about once a month. Is it reasonable to expect that servants will stay long in such places ? Still worse, as to *loose morals*, there are masters and mistresses who “care for none of these things,” but will actually continue in their service girls of loose character. With regard, moreover, to boys being less apt for handy work than their fathers were on entering upon field labour, (which by the way girls also are now required to do in mixed gangs, than which no system was ever invented more corruptive of good morals), I confess I cannot see how this can be fairly connected with the duties of a village school, unless it professes to give industrial training, which I suppose not one in fifty does. But more than all, there is the monster plague of insufficient cottage accommodation, where, in so many hundreds of instances, a whole family of all ages and both sexes is compelled to sleep and dress in one little room, where two would not be decently sufficient. So long as this prolific source of

vice exists, it will be useless to expect much improvement in the personal morality of the rising generation.

These, I think, are some of the causes of those defects in the youthful character complained of, and they are further rapidly developed and greatly increased by the peculiar temptations of our times, affecting all classes alike, namely, the immensely increased facilities of communication, -- which are used for evil as well as for good, -- cheap postage, cheap travelling, cheap articles of dress and tawdry ornament, and a thousand emissaries of the Evil One running swiftly to and fro through the land.

*Against all these we have to contend*, in our efforts to train and teach our children ; and we are not unblessed in our work, for where it can be shewn that education is abused by some to bad purposes, (and the abuse is no argument against the introduction of a good thing), it could also be shewn, in more striking proportions, that it has been the greatest blessing to far greater numbers. This I have not time or space to trace out. It is the same in kind, if not in degree, as that which a good education has brought to any of ourselves. One question only I would ask here : -- Whence comes that universally admired patience of the men of Lancashire at the present time ? Twenty-five or thirty years ago there would have been alarming bread riots, to be quelled only by the brute force of Cavalry and batteries of Artillery, at the sacrifice of life, and vast cost to the country. Let us thank God and go forward, rejoicing that the deserted mill-room is for the time turned into a school-room. The work is really a national work, and will be a vast national benefit if properly directed. Hitherto the clergy, in many places where schools have been established, have had to bear too large a proportion of the burden of the expense.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Her Majesty's Commissioners on Education, in their recent Report, remark that the clergyman "is frequently responsible for the finances of

Numbers of the wealthier laity as yet withhold their support, and many others, it is sometimes said, “only give it out of respect to their minister or other friends, rather than from any conviction of the positive good effected by the school.” Well, at any rate they are cheerful givers, and “God loveth a cheerful giver.” They “plow in hope,” and in their “threshing” they shall be “partakers of their hope.” The fruits indeed at first may be in great measure invisible, because the real value of a good institution lies as much in the unknown amount of ills and evils prevented, as in evident benefits obtained.

But if it be allowable thus to hint at the motives of some who lend a hesitating aid to the cause of the education of the poor, it is allowable to do the same with those who withhold it altogether. They allege indeed the faults and follies of the age as great discouragements to charity ; but when they charge them upon the general extension of education, do they take pains to ascertain whether their impressions are well founded ? do they desire information ? do they read reports ? do they consider facts ? and search and “see whether these things are so” ? I fear very many do not. One single visit to a school would go far to modify a hostile or indifferent feeling towards it. Let us all beware of this great tempting fallacy and self-deception -- the plea of *disapproving* an object whose merits we have not inquired into, or of *inability* (cannot afford) to “spend or be spent” in a good Christian cause, when at the same time we are either indulging largely in personal luxuries, or, on the other hand, straining every nerve to save money. “There is that *scattereth* and yet *increaseth* ; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but “it tendeth to poverty,”

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“the school ; he takes the largest interest in its affairs ; he has to beg subscriptions from all sources ; and at last submits, most meritoriously, to bear not only his own proportion of the expense, but also that which ought to be borne by others.”

-- if not a poverty in worldly goods, yet the poverty of a barren faith, and a leanness of soul, which will have no reward in the day of account.

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3. As regards the greatest of all the Institutions of our parochial system, the Church of England established all through the land, I would beg to make one or two remarks, suggested by our local circumstances. Theoretically it is assumed that provision is made for a Christian minister in every parish. But what is really the case ? There are eleven parishes in the Deanery of Fincham whose clergy derive from various sources an official aggregate income of under £900 per annum, *i.e.*, an average of £80 for each parish, which, (not one of them having a parsonage house), after rent, rates and taxes have been paid, is really only £50 *as the provision*. I hope there is no parallel to this in any other Deanery in England. In other professions the stipends granted by the State to men of no higher attainments, for services not more important, and responsibilities of far less weight, are not often below £500 per annum. To refer only to the lower civil and moral considerations connected with the clerical office, how does the State requite her ministers for services rendered ? We take an example. For every registration of a marriage, being now so far a civil service, there is a double entry required of numerous minute particulars, in which the highest interests of the whole parish are cared for. This has to be written out a third time for the Superintendent Registrar, and the accumulating fee for the whole amounts to *six-pence*, which in a population of 1000 persons will add *five-shillings* per annum to the income of the clergyman. Were it not for private resources which he brings to his aid in his

official duties, the beautiful theory of the parochial system would in hundreds of places entirely fall to pieces. Let the jeering sentiment of the puritanical or political religionist, that the curate of souls ought not to trouble himself with thoughts about maintenance, feel itself crushed by the just precept of both Testaments, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox "that treadeth out the corn."

There is also the old argument about tithes, which some, not many, still put forth in hostile discussion upon the Church's temporal rights. They say that tithes were always meant to bear a large proportion of the burdens which the claims of charity involve. But they forget that since the time when Henry VIII, "in a storm of indignation against the "clergy of that day, mingled with insatiable avarice," despoiled whole thousands of churches of their tithes, they have become a recognised legal and saleable hereditament, as much so as land itself. They forget moreover that tithe no longer means a *tenth*, nor represents indeed a twentieth part, of the land's produce. It was so perhaps when Nigellus de Fyncham gave his tithe (*decimam suam partem*) to the monks of Castle-Acre ; but I suspect that their successors, the vicars of Castle-Acre, have had a very different tale to tell. Then how as to impropriations and appropriations ? The subject is intricate and cannot be discussed here. Whatever may be the equitable and proportionate liability of any property or possessions whatsoever to voluntary assessments, (if I may so speak), in the cause of charity, it appears to be the proper part of the Church to work on in faith and hope, that men, "seeing her good works," may be stimulated thereby to step forward in the day of her necessity and appeal. The recent and progressive restoration of churches and chancels, with other generous and more private acts of Christian benevolence, are evidences of an awakened readiness to

help, on the part of *impropriators* of tithes. This is not, however, so clearly seen in the application of *appropriations*, which are in the hands of civil and ecclesiastical corporations ; and the reason is, I suppose, because, as it is said, *they* have no conscience.

King James I. addressed the following letter to the University of Oxford. on this nationally important subject :-

JAMES REX

Right trusty, and well-beloved, we greet you well :-  
 - the zeal that Religion might be well planted in this realm, and all other our dominions, hath caused us to enter into consideration of the means that might best serve to the furtherance thereof. Wherein finding that no one thing is a greater impediment, than want of competent living to maintain learned men in such places, we have found that there could not be a readier way to supply that defect, than if the appropriate tithes might be converted again to the right use for which they were instituted, and wherein we have a purpose to do by God's grace, in such of them as are or shall be in our hands. By which example of ours we presume to induce all others, possessed of the like, to imitate us as far as with their ability they may.

In the mean time, to give beginning to so good a work, none are more fit than the Colleges in the Universities, whose example should have great efficacy unto all good men, in this sort, to advance the glory of Christ's Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Given, &c.:- at Windsor.

10th July, 1603.

Then, in looking to the efficiency of the Church, there are a great many persons who consider her constitution to be capable of considerable further development, and adaptation to the circumstances and wants of the times. And surely it is true loyalty and nothing otherwise in churchmen to inquire "what can be done to supply the needs, to remove the "defects, to increase the usefulness, to promote the welfare, "of the body

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Sacrilege*, p. 240.

“with which they are themselves incorporated, -- in whose trusts and privileges they participate, -- whose interests they are bound to foster and to further. The English Church has had her warnings both from without and from within, and had it not been a true branch of Christ's Church, planted on the Rock of Ages, it must have come to an end long ago.” In what I am about to say, I know that the majority of my brethren in the ministry do not agree with me. I therefore speak with deference to their opinions. The laity, however, in larger numbers may approve of this definite principle, that it is wise and right that Ecclesiastical Laws, and Church Institutions, and the Order of Divine Service, should be not only such as are agreeable with Scripture, but also adapted to the exigencies of the times. In confirmation of which principle I will make just one quotation from the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer : “It is but reasonable that, upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in places of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient.” Nobody can justly allege against the wisdom of this sentiment that experience does not confirm it, for experience has been denied its opportunity. There has been only one revision of the Prayer Book since 1559, and that, unhappily, of a retrograde character, in 1662, now exactly two centuries ago.

Then, also, “there is an increasing conviction,” says Archdeacon Sandford, “that the Church needs the aid of its lay members, in some more definite position, and practical share in the administration of its affairs, than they have been hitherto called to. Other religious bodies have known how to avail themselves of lay co-operation ; and amongst them the laity exercise

“an important voice and agency.” Nor is there involved any necessary change in the constitution of our Established Church in such an idea. The office of Churchwarden, than which there is no more honorable office in either Church or State, has its distinctive duties of a certain formal routine character. And these need not be interfered with. “But there “are numerous points on which the judgment and feelings of “the lay members of the Church ought to be consulted, on “which they are at present debarred from any legitimate “means of expressing these. From how much that has not “only disturbed the peace of parishes, but agitated the public “mind, and prejudiced the cause of the Church, would it have “been preserved, had our pious and leading laymen “possessed some legitimate method of remonstrance ! The “fusion of the laity with the clergy, in Diocesan and “Archidiaconal and Ruri-decanal Conferences, has been tried “with the happiest effects in our Colonial Church, and in “some of our Dioceses at home ; and no one can deny the “great and manifold blessings which might result to the “English Church, were the sympathies, counsels, and “personal efforts of the laity more enlisted and exercised in “its behalf.” The subject, it is known, has received much attention from those in authority, and has been discussed in Convocation, with a very favorable prospect of a further consideration.

In the meanwhile, we may all, but the clergy especially, ponder the wisdom which is contained in one more quotation from the very able and practical work to which attention has been called. The author, speaking of the qualities which the English people prize in their spiritual guides, continues : “It “behoves all who love their Church, and seek its peace and

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<sup>1</sup> See the Bampton Lectures at Oxford, for 1861, p. 207, by John Sandford, B.D., Archdeacon of Coventry, from which I have taken this, and one or two other sentences, in this section.

“its extension -- and would have it rooted and established in  
 “the hearts of our people -- in their teaching, in their mode of  
 “celebrating worship, in the arrangement of their churches,  
 “in their personal conduct and demeanour, -- even in their  
 “dress, -- to ‘give no offence in anything, that the ministry be  
 “not blamed.’ And all who understand the temper of our  
 “countrymen must pray that the Church's doctrine, and its  
 “discipline, and its ritual, may be such as to secure respect  
 “and inspire confidence, -- and that the desire and aim of all  
 “its members may ever be to heal sores and compose  
 “differences, and promote peace, and unity, and goodwill,  
 “and practical godliness, in every parish, and in every  
 dwelling.”

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4. There is another most important object to which our thoughts may with advantage be directed, namely, the material Fabric of the Parish Church, and its proper reparation. In the first place, that every parish in England should have a Church, dedicated to the honor and glory of Almighty God, is perhaps the most beautiful external feature in the constitution of our Christian country. It stands there a witness for God and the Christian religion, abiding from generation to generation. And even in the supposition and admission of a spiritually collapsed state of things, in how many instances it has been the means of retaining some fear of God in that place -- in how many, even though dilapidated, it has given the signal note of a revival of religious life, -- “the stone crying out of the wall, and the “beam out of the timber answering it,” -- as some reflecting man has seen its desolation, and been moved to prayer and exertion, -- is not within the power of any to say. The outward and sensible object has attracted

attention, when but for it every soul might have slept on still in his lethargic state. It was such a sight as this which moved Nehemiah to very earnest supplication to God, and exhortation to the people, for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem ; and he had not far to seek for the true answer to the scornful reproaches of the obstructive Sanballats and Tobiahs who surrounded him, -- "The God of heaven, he will "prosper us ; therefore we his servants will arise and build." -- Neh. ii. 20.

In the restoration of the Church the fire of true zeal and devotion is kindled afresh, and hundreds have been reached and touched by its invigorating warmth. It is perhaps the greatest external aid that can be rendered to the cause of religion and truth and righteousness. The minister finds herein a hearty stimulus to higher labours, and the more than half-dead piety of the people is proportionately aroused. When Bishop Stanley first saw the plans for a National School and the restoration of St. Martin's Church in this place, he exclaimed : "I am amply repaid by these for all my "anxieties about your parish."

This awakened respect for the sanctuary of God has recalled to many how "God is greatly to be feared in the "assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all "them that are round about Him." And it has taught no other lesson more forcibly than this, -- that "God is no respecter of "persons." that the soul of Lazarus is as precious in his sight as the soul of Dives. There is even a diffused benefit from this source perceptible amongst the clergy themselves. It has promoted a tendency to a closer uniformity, and greater harmony amongst them ; it has shamed many out of slovenly services ; and has led others to see more clearly that the saving truths of the Bible are incorporated in our admirable Prayer Book. And hence the people have been "edified," "*built up*, an holy temple unto the Lord."

We have been more than once rejoiced to hear from our highly-esteemed Archdeacon of the steady progress of church restoration in his Archdeaconry. I think he will not hesitate to award to us our due share of the credit to be taken for a fair contribution to the general result.<sup>1</sup>

I used just now the word “edified.” I would take it as a text for one or two further remarks. Edification, as we know, means “a building up,” in a moral or religious or spiritual sense, stone upon stone, on a good foundation, “even Christ, “from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and “compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to “the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh “increase of the body unto the *edifying* of itself in love.” Now the etymology of the word, combined with the beautiful expansion and exposition of its meaning in this verse, shews clearly that substantial unity is a very essential requirement in Christ's Church, for its strength and perfection ; and that the most perfect unity is that which embraces the body as well as the spirit. The idea is expressed twice in this verse, “the whole body fitly framed together,” and again “maketh “increase of the body.” Now what is the body of the Church,

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<sup>1</sup> Restorations of churches in this Deanery, more or less satisfactory and complete, effected within the last twenty years or thereabouts, and all of them supplying to a great extent an acknowledged defect in their former state, namely, a more just and impartial seating of the congregation, may be seen in the following churches : -- Upwell, West Dereham, South Runcton (new), Holme, Fincham, Stoke Ferry (new chancel), Barton St. Andrew, Welney (new), Hilgay St. Mark's (new), Downham, Stow, Wimbotsham, Shouldham Thorpe, Bexwell, Southery (new), Outwell, Ryston, Wretton, and Hilgay All Saints, which last is now in progress, and will be almost an entirely new building, in excellent taste. -- Of the rest of our churches about nine require immediate attention as being dilapidated, or bad in their internal arrangements ; and the remaining five may be said to afford sufficient and fair accommodation, but are capable of and demand considerable improvements. There are still some things the toleration of which is almost now doomed, -- that they will soon be of the past can be questioned, -- and with another generation will be a matter of amazement.

if it be not “the body of Christian believers” ? And how can that be truly a body whose parts are not compacted together ? and have no joints ? nor any effectual working together in the measure of every part ? That can only be properly called a body where the several members are united, and meet together, and “sit together,” and communicate one with another.

I am not now speaking of dissenters, or of other churches, but rather of the inconsistency of members of our own church. For they who have been baptized into her communion, and taught in her schools, and confirmed in her fellowship, and hope to be buried with her services, are rightly called members ; and that they should not all worship together, and communicate together, but join themselves to other congregations for these ends, is surely in forgetfulness of the Apostle's precept and God's word, which says that divisions are a sign of a carnal mind, and that “God hath “tempered the body together,” in order “that there should be “no schism in the body, but that the members should have “the same care one for another.” – 1 Cor. xii. 25.

The restoration of the visible Fabric has contributed not a little towards preventing this schism, and towards effecting the “compactness” of a spiritual edification, the unity and growth in grace of the body of the Church of Christ. It has done much for the consolidation of the earlier labours of devoted men. “When Wesley sounded the note which woke “the English Church from its death sleep ; when Whitfield “reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to “come ; when the fathers of the great modern religious “movement stirred everywhere the national mind in the “beginning of the present century, -- these men took “comparatively little thought of the Church's material “structures and outward forms. For they were the pioneers “of a religious revival, -- and had to

“resuscitate dry bones, and to breathe life into an effete and  
 “almost extinct theology, and to impart elementary lessons in  
 “religion.

“But the effect of their preaching was as might have been  
 “anticipated. Both Church and Nation awoke to a sense of  
 “their responsibilities, and more sacred buildings have been  
 “erected in this country in the course of a few years than  
 “during any previous whole century.”<sup>1</sup>

And thus, where this and the other accessaries of divine  
 worship have been provided, and the means of grace under a  
 faithful ministry completed, it seems that all is being done  
 that can be done, and the responsibility of divisions and  
 separations must remain with the separatist himself, which  
 before could scarcely in all cases be justly said. John Wesley  
 would now be, more than ever he was, a Churchman, and all  
 who are called by his name would do well to consider his  
 real sentiments on this point. To help them in this I will very  
 briefly quote from his writings :-- “The “Methodists of  
 Oxford [the beginning of Methodism] were “all one body,  
 and as it were one soul, members of the “Established  
 Church” ; -- “and it was determined without one “dissentient  
 voice that they ought not to separate from it.” – “I believe  
 one reason why God is pleased to continue my life “so long  
 [1786] is to confirm them in their purpose, not to “separate  
 from the Church.” – “As for myself I dare not “renounce  
 communion with the Church of England. As a “minister I  
 teach her doctrines, I use her offices, I conform to “her  
 rubrics. As a private member I join in her prayers, in  
 “hearing, in communicating.” – “I declare once more that I  
 “live and die a member of the Church of England, and that  
 “none who regard my judgment and advice will ever separate  
 “from it.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bampton Lectures, 1861, p, 174.

<sup>2</sup> Wesley's Works, vols. vii, viii, xii, xiii, &c. He died in 1791.

And now where the Fabric of the Church has been restored to its proper character and use, as the House of God, and place of Common Prayer, will any man grudge a small annual outlay for its sustentation ? Will any man labour to deprive her of any right which has been hers for centuries ? And why, as guardians of her temporal interests, should her officers and faithful sons give up those rights without sufficient compensation ? Will the private owner do it ? Does the Legislature ever take away an inch of land, or other private privilege and right, without a full and fair and legal compensation ? No. Then let the English Church have justice likewise. Give up the offensive *rate*, (it has become a hateful word), but make a rent charge on the land, -- a charge to which that land has been legally liable for so many ages, and has hitherto honorably borne, -- and the whole question, as it seems to me, is settled for ever.

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5. Lastly, there is the village Church-yard. What awakening thoughts does it suggest ! Every right feeling dictates reverence, for such a spot. It is consecrated by whatever is dear to affection or sacred in religion, -- by our griefs and our consolations as mourners, -- by the memory of those we have lost, and the hope of reunion ; -- above all by thoughts of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Mere natural feeling would sanctify the spot where friends and relations sleep in the dust ; but doubly so the religion which has brought life and immortality to light, -- and which fortifies us to resign the form, dear even in decay, by the hope that it will rise again. How ought, then, "God's acre" to exhibit every where the appearance of pious care, and its general air and aspect to imply that it is sacred to the departed, and may in a

proper sense be termed “holy ground.” The reverse of this is too frequently the case, where its real condition revolts the feeling mind, and painfully contrasts with what piety would claim for such an inclosure. There cannot be any surer means of weakening the sanctions of religion itself, than by any habitual desecration, (for instance, by the trampling of cattle upon the graves), of what every reverential feeling would lead us to respect. The clergy are chiefly responsible for this, the freehold being generally in them, and coming so immediately under their observation.<sup>1</sup>

It unfortunately happens at the present moment that the parish Church-yard is an object of anxiety and solicitude with those in whose care and under whose control it has ever been placed by law. Access to it is demanded by certain non-conformist bodies for their own free and unrestricted use. The opposition to this on the part of the Church must not be set down to petty feelings of jealousy. There is a most important principle involved in it, and upon that principle and the sacred dictates of conscience our objections are based.

It must be borne in mind that the burial of the dead in the parish Church-yard is an integral part of our national parochial system. The Church and its surrounding cemetery are bound together by the most intimate and indissoluble ties. The burial service itself most aptly shews this connection, for it is used partly in both of them. In giving up the one you must be expected to give up the other. But, further, a little reflection will convince us how that to throw

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<sup>1</sup> See Sandford's Parochialia, p. 58. Since the chapter was written in which the church-yard of this parish is noticed, a piece of land has been liberally given for its enlargement by Mr. Hebgin, the impropiator. It will be well for certain other parishes in this Deanery to lose no time in making efforts for the like object, as their church-yards are now liable to be closed at any time by an order from the Home Office, under the new Burial Acts ; and they will then probably be required to provide a new cemetery with *two chapels* at the parish expense.

open the Church-yard to all sects and denominations would be to introduce and sanction in turn every kind of doctrine and sentiment and superstition, indeed even the most contemptuous infidelity, under the very walls, and ultimately within that very building, where the clergy are solemnly bound to preach and uphold the pure truth of Christ's holy gospel. If you admit one you must admit all, and no more fruitful source of religious strife and "bitter envyings" could possibly be opened up.

If any decline our funeral service for the dead, -- against which the only fault I have ever heard imputed is that it is too charitable, or rather too comprehensive, -- their proper course is obviously to provide their own place of sepulture, and use their own services, as they do in regard to congregational worship.

But if this should be felt to be too inconvenient, or undesirable, as promoting and further ratifying discord even in death, (and few things are more hideous in the landscape of the country than the twin-chapel cemeteries which are rearing their rival fronts around us), then there remains this one other medium alternative, that the representatives of the deceased should first celebrate their funeral service at their own chapel, or private house, and then, if they desire it, quietly deposit the corpse, without any further religious ceremony, in the burial ground of the Church. A legal enactment for this might possibly be obtained, as indeed is in contemplation. It certainly will not be so unanimously opposed as that which has been recently demanded. Such a concession would have the conciliatory effect at least of continuing unbroken that strong chain of attachment to ancient landmarks, and so far to the Church of England, which is supplied by deceased relatives continuing to be laid side by side in their last earthly resting place, as one after another they shall be thus literally "gathered to their fathers."

Let these reflections have their due effect upon the living. They are intended to point to scenes which survivors may visit with a melancholy pleasure, and there muse hopefully upon their own mortality.

“Tis well true hearts should for a time retire  
 “To holy ground, in quiet to aspire  
 “Towards promised regions of serener grace :-  
 “*Then* to the world return, nor fear to cast  
 “Thy bread upon the waters.” -- *The Christian Year*.

Let us not dream away life ! Let us never again talk of killing time, forgetting how we are being killed by it ! It is an unavailing regret, when men say they would give the world to live over again. “Oh ! for ten years only back again, “with the added experience of age !” Work now, young men, and face the drudgery and overcome the temptations of daily life. Recoil not from duty, nor waste your golden opportunities. Enquire, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to “do ?” And see “how England might be Christianised, and “the world evangelised, and humanity redeemed, and God “glorified, and earth and heaven break forth into jubilate, -- if “each one amongst us would put forth his own strength, and “do his own work.” Then all is bright beyond. *Faith* realized -- *hope* fulfilled -- and *charity*, which never faileth, perfected in its eternal enjoyment. For this, unerring TRUTH is pledged :-

“From low to high doth dissolution climb,  
 “And sink from high to low, along a scale  
 “Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail ;  
 “A musical but melancholy chime,  
 “Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,  
 “Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.  
 “TRUTH FAILS NOT ; -- but her outward forms, that bear  
 “The longest date, do melt like frosty rime,  
 “That in the morning whitened hill and plain,  
 “AND IS NO MORE.” -- *Wordsworth*.

**FINIS.**