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traditions and superstitions) is to be met with, it must be sought for elsewhere than in the Church of Rome.

MONTAGUE FOWLER.



### ART. III.—SOME LATENT FORCES OF THE CHURCH.

IT may truly be said that what is called "Church Reform" is attracting a great deal of notice, and at many diocesan and other conferences of Churchmen and laymen lately held the subject has been approached by men of divers schools of thought and of different positions in the world. In offering these reflections, then, I may plead that I am following a widespread example. And, if any should be inclined to consider that it is both impious and unnecessary to try to throw some *new* light upon an institution as *old* as the Church of England, may not a justification for our position be found in some words of Mr. Arthur Balfour, spoken at Manchester as recently as January of this year? The words, indeed, were not uttered with any reference to Church Reform, but it is probable that most people will on that account deem them none the less, and, indeed, perhaps all the more, pertinent to the present purpose. Thus he says: "Do you suppose that, either in politics or in ordinary life, it is enough to have a thing in order to keep it?"

"To preserve anything, be it health . . . be it an institution of your country . . . be it anything you please, something more is required than sitting still and enjoying what you have got.

"Effort is the very secret of our existence here on earth, and it is mere folly to suppose that sitting still and saying you do not want your institutions changed will be enough to preserve them. . . . No policy requires longer effort . . . than to preserve that which you have got, to prevent it deteriorating, and if possible to improve it. . . . We are no opponents of reform. We are no believers in any such strange superstition as that a machine will go on indefinitely doing its work without care, without cleaning, without repair, sometimes without alteration."

Encouraged by these words, we will mention one or two ways in which, as it seems, the strength and usefulness of the Church of England might be increased.

In making our suggestions, we will pass by such scandals as are caused by the simoniacal holding of benefices, and by the difficulty of expelling criminous clerks.

These are, indeed, hideous hindrances to the welfare of the

Church, but they are hindrances which every Churchman, and, indeed, every Christian, fully admits as obviously hurtful to the cause of religion, and would willingly see abolished. With these offences, then, we need not now concern ourselves, as they are on all sides execrated and condemned.

#### I.—THE LAITY TO CONSULT AND CO-OPERATE WITH THE CLERGY.

Our first suggestion would be *the creation of Ruri-decanal Councils*, composed of laity as well as clergy, which should, perhaps, meet half-yearly in different places in the deanery. Let us shortly explain how such a Council might come into existence, and what work it should do when formed.

Let the parish clergyman and the churchwardens summon a meeting of the parishioners, explain to them the needs and the object of Ruri-decanal Associations, and finally invite them to choose three of their number to represent the parish upon the Council. It may be objected that such parochial meetings might be attended by avowed enemies of the Church, who might claim to be represented upon the Ruri-decanal Council. Under circumstances that might possibly be imagined, some one or two persons might be chosen who were hostile to the Church; but even if, owing to exceptional ill-feeling in some specially ignorant parish, such persons were sent as parochial deputies to sit at the larger Council, their power of obstruction would, indeed, be small, for it is plain that they would be in a ludicrous minority. What would happen, then, upon notice being given of the proposed parochial meeting would be that the usual worshippers in the church would welcome such a sign that they were to take some part, if only a *consultative* part, in the affairs of the Church, and when the evening of the meeting arrived, a goodly number of communicants, choirmen, and bellringers, together with not a few of the ordinary congregation, would attend the meeting and duly elect those whom they desired to represent them on the Ruri-decanal Council. Such meetings should be open to any parishioner, whether male or female, above the age of eighteen; but it would probably be well if the right of *voting* was limited to those who had contributed at least sixpence towards a Ruri-decanal fund for meeting expenses, and we are the more hopeful about this method of franchise, because it has been very successfully adopted in all the parochial branches of a society so well represented all over England as the Church of England Temperance Society. It is plain that the vigour and efficiency of these Ruri-decanal Councils depend entirely upon their being genuinely representative of all classes.

Indeed, it should be forcibly urged upon the electors by the chairman of the parochial meeting (who should always be, if at all possible, a layman) that the Council should be made up, not only of men and women of leisure and wealth, but of representatives of the labourers and artisans, and of the commercial and professional classes. It may be contended that it is only well-to-do persons who would have time to attend meetings of the Council, but those who are not wealthy attend, under present conditions, a variety of meetings in the year, not only in their own parishes, but in neighbouring villages and in the country towns, nor can we imagine that some easy means of locomotion would not be found by the parochial electors to convey their representatives to wherever the Ruri-decanal Councils might chance to be held. We will now comprehensively define the *work of these Councils* by saying that it would be their office to consider *all* matters affecting the welfare of the Church in the deanery, and to originate schemes by which the different parishes might combine to inaugurate or to maintain various branches of religious and philanthropic work. At present a parish clergyman, especially the country clergyman, lives and labours too much alone, and the Church's work is weakened by being so strictly "parochialized." If a Ruri-decanal Council were formed, a spirit of what we may call ecclesiastical trades-unionism would be generated in the whole deanery.

This "trades-unionism" would be found very effective for defence when any special attack was made upon any particular clergyman, or Church school, or institution in any given parish. Amongst the other advantages that would flow from the working of such Councils we may specially mention two, the importance of which will be recognised by all who realize the loss that is entailed to the Church and the country by tens of thousands of Church laymen of all classes living and dying without being effectively brought within the area of parochial activity and parochial organizations.

At such Councils, then, the clergy would enjoy the privilege of hearing *local* Church questions discussed by local laymen from a lay point of view. At present, how seldom do clergymen hear what even the best-informed of laymen are thinking about Church affairs. But such Councils would not only most usefully elicit lay criticism on matters touching the Church's work and welfare, and would not only cement together laymen and ecclesiastics, for we may claim for them a still nobler office. Thus, we believe that one of the principal effects of such Councils would be to arouse the interest of the laity in the various branches of Church work that existed, or should exist, and by their aid might exist, in their different

parishes. For instance, at such Councils the clergy could recompense the laity for the value of their criticism on clerical methods, by explaining to them in a spirit of affectionate reciprocity how warmly would be welcomed their interest and co-operation in carrying on all those religious and social agencies which the necessity of the case always demanded, and which now the circumstances of the age imperiously require. For instance, the Council meetings would afford to clergymen a happy occasion of assuring laymen how heartily would be appreciated their personal help at all kinds of *evening* meetings and *evening* services. For our own part, we believe that it is impossible to exaggerate the spiritual, social, and political effect which would be caused by well-to-do laymen and laywomen taking their share along with farmers, shopkeepers, and labourers in *all* gatherings in the *evening*, whether in church, or in parish-rooms and institutes. It may be said, This is a fair ideal; but how can it be accomplished? We believe that these Councils would indeed go a long way towards the consummation of this ideal. And we would say that this ideal *must* be accomplished, not only if we are to justify the Church's existence in the eyes of her political foes, but if we desire to see the Church doing that work which not only her natural position, but her Divine origin, require shall be done. We believe, then, that we shall never see that fruitful union of all classes and conditions of men (for which the very rudiments of our religion impel us to long) until the clergy convince the laity, by words not to be mistaken or misread, of the magnitude of their as yet undeveloped power of religious and social usefulness in their several parishes. At such Councils, then, the representative laymen might be invited to assure their fellows that they possess opportunities of doing good to an extent hitherto unsuspected, and practically inexhaustible. Thus, for the sake of brevity or precision, they might put to them some such questions as these:

(a) Do you wish one class to worship God in the morning and another class to worship Him in the evening?

(b) Do you intend the working-classes to understand that you will never pay them the compliment of meeting them in the *evening*?

(c) Do you intend them to feel that you will go out six, or perhaps seven, evenings a week to meet your *rich* friends, but that you cannot face the night air in order to help to educate or to entertain the labourer or the artisan?

But are we declaiming without a cause? are we crying out when no one is being hurt? We could call many witnesses to support our plea; but let some plain words of the Bishop of Liverpool, spoken at his recent Diocesan Conference, suffice

to show that we have some reason for that which we affirm. Thus Dr. Ryle says: "Seldom considered, seldom consulted, seldom trusted with power, seldom invested with authority, the English Lay Churchman as a rule is ignorant, indifferent, or apathetic about Church affairs." Surely all who even slightly understand what an inexhaustible power for good lies latent in the laity will admit that these things ought not so to be. Nor (we are persuaded) need they long exist, if there flourished in every Rural Deanery Councils really representative of priest and peasant, of capitalist and clerk, of lord and labourer.

## II.—CONCERNING BENEFICES AND THEIR TENURE.

Our suggestions will be arranged under three heads:

(a) We understand that there are some hundreds of clergy, for one reason or another, wishing to leave cures, still facetiously called "livings," who are obliged to remain where they are because they can neither afford the cost of dilapidations, nor pay the legal and household expenses to which they would be liable if, owing to exceptional good fortune, they obtained some other piece of preferment. We propose, then, the creation of a Diocesan Board, composed of clergymen and laymen, with the bishop of the diocese as its chairman. Such Board would undertake the inspection and repair of glebe house and buildings, provide for their sanitation, and pay all charges connected with the discharge of these duties. Exceptional damage, of course, would be paid for by the incumbent, but all ordinary wear and tear should be set right under the superintendence of the Diocesan Surveyor, and paid for out of the common Diocesan Fund. All fees, also, which are now paid by an incumbent to the Diocesan Registrar should be paid by the treasurer of the Board, whose business, in addition, it should be to collect tithes.

(b) We cannot doubt that there are numbers of incumbents who would resign their cures if there existed a general and what may be termed an "automatic" system of *pensions*.

There should be brought into operation, then, a regular and reliable scale of pensions, which should not altogether depend for their amount upon the value of the benefice, but should be dealt out on one equal plan to all clergymen of so many years of age or so long service, though perhaps it might be possible, without wounding rural feelings, to arrange that work in specially populous places should count for a pension as time and a quarter.

(c) Long indeed would be the list of those who would willingly alter their sphere of labour, but who are imprisoned in their parishes, not because of the cost of dilapidations, nor

of the expenses attendant on taking up a new charge and entering a fresh house, nor on account of advanced age, but because of the absence in our Church of any scheme or system of obtaining promotion or preferment.

Though, then, we do not wish to raise a demon of unrest in every vicarage, nor to urge the advisability of establishing in every parish what children would call a "general post," we think that it should be reasonably easy for an incumbent to move from one living to another.

For example, as things now stand, how difficult it is for a London clergyman to obtain a country living, or for a rural vicar to take a turn of work in a large town! Occasionally (to the great disquietude of ecclesiastics who are unwillingly compelled to witness the bringing into their midst of some stranger from afar) prominent clergy are moved from one end of England to another, but, as a rule, only such clergy as are specially well provided with patrons can hope to gain that refreshment which comes from a new scene and new circumstances. Thus, too often, and from no fault of his own, a clergyman is placed upon a kind of spiritual treadmill. He labours, but he does not progress.

We would propose, therefore, the formation in London (and perhaps also in York, for the purposes of the Northern Province) of an official registry of benefices, whereat should be kept a list of every living, with the name of its patron, description, and, if possible, a map of the parish and glebe lands, together with a statement of its exact value. The existence of such a registry would enable a clergyman to obtain early notice of a vacancy, and would confer upon him the boon (under present conditions almost unattainable) of correct information regarding both his spiritual and temporal prospects of any piece of potential preferment. The usefulness of this registry would be vastly increased if a country and Church as rich as ours could be induced to see the advantage of buying up as many livings as could be put on the market, and placing them at the disposal of the Diocesan Boards. Nor will the sum necessary for such wholesale purchases of advowsons seem so startling when we remember that not only has agricultural depression and the threat of impending disestablishment lessened the selling value of advowsons, but has also operated very powerfully in the direction of making patrons desirous of selling them. We know that even a very partial and limited reform of the system of patronage is beset with many serious difficulties, both legal and financial. It is not our business to attempt to minimize these difficulties, nor, on the other hand, would we belittle the reforming and administrative abilities of our bishops and statesmen. Con-

vinced, then, that something in the way of amendment of the present system of patronage *must* be done, we also believe that it *may* be done, if the flaws and defects in the present system can only be adequately brought home to the public opinion of Church-people, who, when once fully informed of the waste of force and loss of usefulness now entailed on the Church, will never rest until the matter has been mended, and mended effectually. The wisdom of our rulers can surely produce some plan which would, in time, win the confidence of patrons, who would at first be shy of any change, but might gradually be induced to consent even to some sacrifices in the matter of patronage in order to secure the increased efficiency of their Church. They might also view reforming proposals with less alarm if such of them as sold their rights of patronage were given a seat on the Diocesan Board. If these proposals could find their fulfilment, we claim that the following benefits would accrue to the Church and the nation :

1. Promotion would be quickened, for incumbents who by reason of age or ill-health were past work would avail themselves of the Pension Fund.

2. Changes of work would be reasonably encouraged, and the consequent increased vigour of the clergy would result in an increase of parochial activity.

3. The disappointment and restlessness attendant on taking a living in ignorance of its circumstances would be avoided.

4. And last, and perhaps greatest gain of all, the burden of financial uncertainty, so fatal to a steady devotion to duty, would be entirely removed.

### III.—THE PLUTOCRATIC SYSTEM OF THE CHURCH; OR, THE PURSE AS THE FOUNTAIN OF PREFERMENT.

We come now to mention one of the blackest blots on our Church system. Happily it is a blot that can be removed without any creation of elaborate machinery, or any recourse to Parliament. It is a blot widely recognised by the clergy, but about which, perhaps, the average layman is not nearly so well informed as he might be. But whether he is primed with figures to prove its reality, or whether he is blandly unconscious of its existence, he and his Church suffer much from it, and by its means the Church in many places is weak where she otherwise might be strong. We refer to the totally insufficient value of livings (we retain the name for old acquaintance' sake, though it is a striking example of bad nomenclature), and the consequent inability of patrons to



exercise a free choice in filling them. At present when a vacancy occurs, perhaps even in some important town where a resourceful and capable man may specially be required, patrons, whether episcopal or lay, have to consider, not a clergyman's professional powers, but his worldly means. Fancy if this system of appointing to important posts obtained generally! Imagine the consequences that would follow on arranging a teaching, or an engineering, or a hospital staff on such a plan!

We would propose, then, that the Diocesan Boards should most urgently press upon their different constituencies the supreme importance of raising all benefices (in this connection we dare not call them by their familiar misnomer) to the value per annum of two hundred pounds at least, and to, perhaps, a higher figure in the case of important parishes. We fully recognise that it is a large sum indeed that would be required if the emoluments of incumbents were to be thus increased, and if the Diocesan Board, in addition to providing augmented stipends, were burdened with the duty of repairing and maintaining vicarage houses and glebe buildings. But, in the first place, we would say, Do those, who would decry the possibility of raising a capital sum sufficient to carry out these proposed changes, realize the immense wealth of the Church laity—wealth, even under present circumstances, freely given, but which would flow forth in a still more generous stream if the financial necessities of the Church, and all that depends upon them, were brought home to the minds of those who have it in their power to prevent, we will not say the downfall, but the deterioration of the Church? And, in the second place, we would ask those who might consider that the relief of the financial anxieties of the clergy would place too severe a strain upon the liberality of laymen, How much money do you think would be required to resuscitate and maintain the Church, supposing that, owing either to opposition from without, or to what we may generally term *internal* causes, she should be left without the support of her endowments? We think, then, that it is not prudent to insist too strongly upon the difficulty of enabling the Diocesan Boards to remove the present depression. The raising of benefices to the proposed sum would enable patrons to make appointments that would vastly encourage those clergymen who, unless vicarial stipends are raised, can never hope to secure any permanent sphere of work. That the present system works well in many cases, is only an indication that men of means have taken Orders; but with the gradual extinction of the amenities that used to attach to the position of clergyman (especially to the country clergyman), we must be prepared to throw appointments more

widely open. If, then, the Church is to grow and develop and be able to take her share in facing and in directing the thoughts and the problems of the day, she will need the services of the best men that can be obtained, and of the best organization that can be imagined. We are unable to believe that the Church is officered by the most able, or reflective, or philanthropic men, so long as incumbencies can only be occupied by clergy who possess good means. We think, then, that is both a shameful and wasteful system which enacts:

- (1) That a priest's promotion should depend upon his purse.
- (2) That a poor priest should habitually be passed over by patrons.

In one word, it should not be possible for any scoffer to jocosely intimate that benefices are filled by men representing, not the priesthood, but the "pursehood."

And as we write this we are reminded of a conversation we once had with a clerical friend touching an appointment to a certain office of dignity in the Church. We mentioned an able man whom we considered worthy of the post, but forgot for the moment the sublime conditions which govern selections for promotion. My friend replied, as if reminding me of a maxim of ideal beauty: "Oh, he is too poor to entertain the clergy at lunch or dinner!"

Realizing at length the ineffable perfection of our system of bestowing spiritual functions, I said to him (and I noticed that he could not answer me): "Do you really mean to place the welfare of our branch of the Catholic Apostolic Church upon the ludicrous, though luscious, foundation of ices and mayonnaise sauce?"

A quarter of a century has elapsed since the purchase system was abolished in the army: let us not retain it in the Church. Let not the Church be the only calling which can say to its members, almost without fear of protest or expectation of ridicule, "If you pay your money, you can take your choice!"

We may be as thankful as we like that, under existing methods, incumbencies are so well filled; but it is of no use disguising the fact that the Church experiences a great loss owing to her not being able to fully employ the services of many gifted ministers, who are at present beyond the reach of preferment. We must cleanse, then, the Church from the evils which may shortly be described as the "purchase system," if she is to be as strong and spiritual and pure as she ought to be.

## CONCLUSION.

But it may be said, If the picture is as black as you paint it, how is it that both laity and clergy seem so indifferent about its blackness? With regard to the laity, we would answer that they have so long been left to live apart from active communion with, and participation in, the Church's work, that they are in profound ignorance, not only of many of the defects in the Church system, but of their own infinite powers of usefulness.

They, as has been shown, as a rule concern themselves but little with Church questions, and consequently are but little able to discern the signs of the Church's times; consequently they remain in ignorance of many of the Church's flaws, and in silence suffer results, concerning the causes of which they are too often completely in the dark. With regard to the clergy, we think that the reasons for their reticence are the following. Thus, most of those who are in any positions of importance or dignity consider professional optimism to be, if not "gentlemanly," at any rate the mark of a mind that is mellowed by wisdom and softened by comfort. And it may also be said that the clergy are optimists, because their love for the Church makes them sensitive to a word breathed against her, and unwilling to take stock of her flaws or deficiencies.

If we were to give another reason for clerical optimism, we would say that sometimes a clergyman is averse from making complaints of the failure of Church methods, lest unkind critics should suggest that he is himself a failure. This assuredly is an erroneous reason for silence, for we believe that it is in the best-worked parishes that the truth about the Church becomes most apparent. To put this truth tersely, "The plough discovers more than the rake."

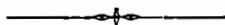
In conclusion, then, we would say:

Let not the Church be a kind of sacred museum, in which are exhibited the relics, however interesting, of disused systems. The Church has before her a complicated work and a critical warfare. Let her not try to employ tools or weapons that have outlived their usefulness or lost their edge; but let her give her clergy every facility for the most efficient and rigorous discharge of their duties; let her invite the laity to co-operate in every branch of religious and benevolent and social activity. In one word, let her utilize and vitalize *the limitless resources of her latent forces.*

We know well how serious are the difficulties that beset any scheme of developing these latent stores of strength and fertility, but we also remember how exacting and how critical

are the times in which we live. True, the Church is now enjoying a period of calm—a period that perhaps may be suggestively described as a sort of “quinquennium Neronis”; but the present state of restfulness may be rudely disturbed in the course of a few years. During this time of security, then, let us learn that the most reasonable kind of Church defence consists in a vigorous system of Church reform, based on a belief in the absolute necessity of Church *development*. And if there are any who need the countenance of a high authority ere they criticise, however reverently, our Church system as it prevails to-day, let them in conclusion be consoled and encouraged by some words of Francis Bacon, who says: “Surely every medicine is an innovation, and he that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils, for time is the greatest innovator; and if time of course alter all things for the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them for the better, what shall be the end?”

E. C. CARTER.



#### ART. IV.—THOMAS SCOTT: CLERGYMAN, COMMENTATOR, SECRETARY.

IT has been remarked that the life of a minister of the Gospel is not likely to abound in incidents which would render it interesting to ordinary readers. But to those who seek for moral improvement and Christian edification such a history cannot but be attractive. In the biography of the Rev. Thomas Scott, well known as a godly clergyman, an evangelical father, a great commentator, and the first secretary of the Church Missionary Society, the most striking characteristics of a man who was so evidently owned of God are presented to the thoughtful attention of the devout mind. And in studying these the Christian reader will be edified by the discovery of many items of more than ordinary interest.

Cecil has said that the history of a man's own life is to himself the most interesting history in the world, next to that of the Scriptures. And without doubt the Christian man will look back throughout eternity with interest and delight on the steps and means of his conversion. “My father said this”; “My mother told me that”; “Such an event was sanctified to me”; “In such a place God visited my soul”—these recollections will never grow dull or wearisome. It is curious, however, to think that in the case of Thomas Scott his own serious conviction of sin against God should have come in the first instance through an *irreligious* master. And this man was