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ART. II.—THE GREAT PHILANTHROPIC AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES: THE CHURCH PASTORAL AID SOCIETY.

THE history of the Society covers the whole period which we are accustomed to describe as the "Victorian era"—in fact, it even goes back some little way into the time beyond.

How much of real history is contained within that brief period, which is full of all that goes to make up "history," except in one particular—war!

For, although the years of Victoria's reign have not been exempt from the ravages of war, yet the reign has been on the whole a peaceable one, and the triumphs by which it is distinguished are those of peace and not of war. With all of these triumphs our Society has been more or less personally concerned. Unnoticed by the statesman, unhonoured by popular applause, steadily and silently the influence of the Society has been exerted on the side of peace and righteousness, of religion and piety.

Events move so fast in these days of steam and electricity that we are apt to disregard the immense gulf which separates the England of to-day from the England of 1836. Historians are accustomed to wax eloquent over the wonderful transformation which followed upon the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, telling us that all the arts and sciences, and eventually all the conditions of life, were remodelled in consequence of the new facility for acquiring knowledge.

Yet a change not less beneficial and far-reaching has resulted from the discovery of steam and electricity, and the progress and development which have followed are almost beyond calculation. For example, the revenue of the United Kingdom now exceeds one hundred millions sterling, while when the Queen came to the throne it was forty-seven millions.

In those good old days, every one of which the Society remembers, there was no railway between London and Birmingham, and people went to Blackwall Docks in carriages drawn by a rope. No electric wire spanned the air, or burrowed through the earth, or crawled beneath the sea.

The earliest steamers had yet to cross the Atlantic, and India could only be approached by sailing vessels round the Cape. . . . Where everything has been transformed, and all the conveniences of life have been multiplied and increased a thousand-fold, we can only stay to point out one advance in which, as a Society of Christian men, banded together for the highest purposes, we feel the greatest personal interest. This

advance is the improved conditions of industrial life. The working man of to-day would not know himself or his family if he could put back the clock only sixty years. It is difficult to believe that when our Society was started boys and girls were taken into coal-mines as early as at the age of four, and that a large proportion of the persons employed were under thirteen. These young children worked the same hours as adults, many of them never seeing daylight for weeks together, except on Sundays. They were harnessed like dogs to the trucks containing the coal, and these they drew from the workings to the shaft, thence to be hoisted to the surface. Persons of both sexes worked together, and the details given in the Report of the Royal Commission in 1843 must be read to be believed.

In trades and manufactures the condition of things was equally bad. Children mostly began work at eight or nine years old, sometimes as early as three or four. The regular hours were ten, eleven, or twelve, with very many cases of sixteen to eighteen hours every day, except Sunday. No one cared for the education, whether secular or religious, of these children—in fact, their whole condition, social and moral, was entirely neglected.

In the agricultural districts the hours were equally long, and the gang system in the fields was atrociously cruel and degrading.

In the brickfields young children of both sexes kneaded the clay with their bare feet from four in the morning until nine at night all through the summer months, to say nothing of carrying great masses of clay upon their heads to the place where bricks were made, and afterwards carrying and storing vast numbers of finished bricks.

At last legislation stepped in, largely promoted by our first president, the great and good Lord Shaftesbury. The same spirit which had prompted him and others to provide for men's souls the means of grace in the establishment of the Society, taught them also to care for men's bodies, and especially for the physical protection of women and children.

There were Mines Regulation Acts, Factory and Workshops Acts, Agricultural Gangs Acts, and many more of kindred object.

To-day no child can be lawfully put to work under eleven years of age; health and education, hours of work and hours of rest, are all regulated by Acts of Parliament.

As regards adults in 1836, the general run of hours of

labour for skilled trades was sixty a week, not allowing any time for meals, while the wage was sixpence an hour. Other employments called for twelve or fourteen hours every day, except Sunday, at a wage of threepence or fourpence an hour. At the same period the agricultural labourer earned a shilling a day while unmarried, with a maximum of eighteenthpence when married. Coupled with these long hours and meagre payments, the first harvest that the Society saw—that of 1836—was bad, the next year's was very bad, and that of 1838 was the worst harvest since 1816. Under such conditions we cannot wonder that there was widespread discontent, violence, and wrong, and Chartism was everywhere prevalent, while all the higher attributes of our common humanity were entirely undeveloped. Such was the condition of the working classes when the Church Pastoral Aid Society was originated.

The letter which convened this first meeting dwells upon the regard paid by the founders to "the true interests of our National Church, as well as to the spiritual welfare of multitudes who are wholly or greatly deprived of her pastoral care." It was felt at that time that the bounden duty of the Government of a Christian country was to provide means out of the national resources for the religious instruction and welfare of the people, and it was thought by the committee that the indifference existing on the subject was due to the great deficiency of church accommodation and of pastoral care of the people. Until men had been brought by the means of grace to value the ordinances of religion, it was not likely that the nation would take steps to deal with the question of religious destitution. Accordingly a scheme was framed by the committee, and was forwarded to the Archbishops, and to some of the Bishops, asking for suggestions and inviting criticism. It was at this point that the Society's first trouble began, because of the prejudice then existing in episcopal minds against the principle of lay agency. The committee insisted upon the value and necessity of such agency in the following terms: "It is by such an agency in great measure that the mass of the people are to be brought, by God's blessing, to become willing and desirous to place themselves under the ministry of the Word." Every layman engaged in the service of the Society received this commission at starting: "Remember that your business is to be simply this: the visiting from day to day the people of the district in which you are placed for the purpose of inquiring into their spiritual state, conversing with them on the things of God, entreating their attention to the care of their souls, and, in one word, seeking by all Scriptural means to bring them to Christ." It was

thought at that time that some at least of the lay agents might become candidates for holy orders, and there were some who wished the Society to employ none other but these ; but the committee adhered to their original proposal, and claimed that they were not introducing any innovation, because godly laymen had been employed ever since Apostolic times, and the same practice had prevailed in our own Church, being sanctioned by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, as well as by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, both of these employing Lay Catechists in the colonies and in heathen lands. In fact, the position of our committee was even stronger, because they did not employ, and never have employed, any agents whatsoever, whether clerical or lay, on their own responsibility, but have always accepted them on the nomination of incumbents, to whom alone these agents became responsible.

Yet there were many who refused to be satisfied, maintaining that the discipline of the Church would be largely infringed by a voluntary society, which ventured to require assurances that the men employed were men of faith and prayer, having an adequate sense of their high responsibilities.

Here, again, we may apply the *tu quoque* argument, for just as the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. set us the example of employing lay agents, so it is instructive to note that they made their own inquiries as to the character of the agents employed, whether clerical or lay. Rule XVII. of the S.P.G. ran as follows : " That no missionary be employed until the fullest inquiry has been made into his fitness and efficiency, and that all persons applying for missions shall produce testimonials signed by three beneficed clergymen, and countersigned by the Bishop of the diocese in which those clergymen are beneficed." This is the principle of the veto, which, when applied by our Society to missionaries in England, called forth the most vigorous opposition.

Let us now briefly consider some of the special classes of people who have benefited by the Society's help. The first class consists of men employed on rivers and canals. Long before Mr. Smith of Coalville was heard of, the Rev. John Davies was at work among the boatmen, and his services were so valued that he became known as the "Apostle of the Watermen." Speaking of the year 1838, there were then 120 canals in the United Kingdom, extending over 3,000 miles, with a floating population of nearly 10,000. The spiritual condition of these boatmen may be inferred from the fact that over 300 of them were committed to Worcester Gaol alone during the first ten years of the Society's history,

and of these only one could read and write well. Mr. Davies devised the plan for a watermen's floating church; the Society found the money to pay for a chaplain. Encouraged by the support thus afforded, which was afterwards increased to meet increasing needs, Mr. Davies had the privilege of laying the foundation stones of three separate churches, and by his influence and that of others, the complete cessation of Sunday traffic on several canals was at length secured. In 1849, Mr. Davies and others interested themselves in obtaining similar provision for the spiritual needs of mariners and boatmen at Gloucester, and from that date to the present the Society has made a grant at Gloucester for the purpose. Services have been held, as occasion offered, on board vessels and in the open air, as well as in the Mariners' Church. On one occasion the captain of a ship estimated the congregation present to weigh forty-eight tons, because the vessel had sunk eight inches in the water since they came on board for service; this would represent about 1,000 people. It is pleasant to read the hearty words of gratitude from the local committee to the Society which has so long assisted them.

Another class who have benefited by the Society's help in the past, and, thanks to the forward movement, are likely to benefit again, are the scattered dwellers in country districts. So long ago as 1840, clergymen were stationed by the Society in hitherto neglected hamlets, congregations were gathered, and most happy consequences, temporal and spiritual, resulted.

In the third place, chaplains paid by the Society attended the construction of some of our principal railways in England. In 1846 a chaplain was placed in charge of 1,600 railway labourers engaged in the construction of one of the northern lines, and similar help was afforded throughout the country. At the present time, in connection with this branch of our work, it is interesting to notice the labours of the Society's grantees at the terminus in Plymouth of the South-Western, and at Stratford E. of the Great Eastern, also at Darlington and Crewe, where the North-Eastern and North-Western respectively have thousands of men employed.

A fourth department of work, not less necessary and encouraging than any other, is the assistance rendered to the Church in Wales. The mining districts of South Wales especially have called for much help from England, because of the marvellous increase of population, and also because of the special difficulty arising from the use of two languages in

public worship and in everyday life. Practically, this has involved in many places the necessity for doubling the clerical staff. So early as 1848 the Society had twenty-five agents employed in Wales, at a cost of £1,950 a year. This compares with eighty-one agents at the present time, at an expenditure of £4,175 a year.

Closely akin to the work done in Wales has been the help afforded to colliery and manufacturing districts in England. The Society has lived to see the population of the country doubled, and yet the whole increase has been in certain well-defined localities and has been owing very largely to the changes wrought by steam. In earlier times the balance between town and country was fairly preserved, and there was no quarter of the land in which the pressure of ministerial responsibility was so excessive as to render the task impossible. But when the bulk of the population began to gather around certain centres, all the old conditions were changed, and the parochial system in such places proved unequal to the strain put upon it. Comparing the census of 1861 with that of 1891, it appears that the town population of England increased during that period by more than 8,000,000, and the country population by 800,000. That is to say, for one additional dweller in the country, there were ten additional dwellers in the town. And out of 2,000 country districts, at least one half showed an actual decrease at the end of these thirty years.

While this migration and multiplication were taking place, the value of the Society became more and more apparent. Being a voluntary agency, with no preference in favour of one parish or of one diocese rather than another, it could throw all its strength wherever the need was seen to be greatest. A single glance at the map, showing the distribution of the Society's grants, will serve to prove this statement. For out of 10,000,000 people, living in twenty-nine great towns, more than one-third are benefited by the Society's grants, at a cost of £36,000 a year.

Our policy in this respect has been uniform, for at the time of the Hartley Colliery Explosion in 1862, it was stated that more than one-third of the agents of the Society were working in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. Although subdivision of parishes, to meet these growing numbers, has been in progress for all these years, yet the average population of the parishes receiving grants remains almost at the same point as in 1836. The average was then 8,699 for each parish, it is now (1897) 8,416. Clearly the Society has done its best

to cope with the spiritual needs of the multitudes, wherever they were most densely congregated.

Time would fail me to tell of the numberless cases in which the Society has been able to lend a helping hand to the cause of Temperance, the sanctity of the Lord's Day, and the holding of special missions in parishes.

Suffice it to say that there is no present indication that the Society is no longer needed because its work is done.

On the contrary, an ever-widening field of usefulness is opening out before us, and we have only to step in and to occupy the ground now lying fallow.

May God give us grace to recognise and seize the opportunities which He Himself provides.

As we see around us so many tokens that the time is short, and as we realize that our redemption draweth nigh, let us once more, as fellow-workers with God, renew our resolution that by His grace we will be found waiting and watching, and hastening our Lord's return.

RICHARD G. FOWELL.



ART. III.—THE BENEFICES BILL OF 1897.

IT is a wholesome sign of the revived and increasing activity of the Church of England, that schemes for reform are both abundantly propounded and receive on all hands careful attention. Time was when it was otherwise. Any thought of change or suggestion of improvement was either regarded as revolutionary, and therefore dangerous, or as an unwelcome disturber of somnolent indifference.

In that, as in many other things, we may say, *Tempora mutantur*. Most ecclesiastical periodicals of the day have occasionally had able articles on the subject, written by men whose very name is a guarantee for sober as well as able treatment of the subject they tackle. This magazine has been no exception.

The projected schemes of reform wisely refrain from the formularies of the Church; they address themselves more to its discipline, its machinery and temporal interests. Hence have arisen the insistence of the increase of the Episcopate, the desire for a reformed convocation, the amalgamation, occasionally at least, of the two Provinces, and now a society has been floated with extensive schemes for Church Reform, calling itself the Church Reform League. This league, instead of being scouted and denounced, as would have been the case in