

ART. VII.—AN OCTOGENARIAN'S RETROSPECT.

IT may perhaps be considered presumptuous for a woman to write on the subjects which I am going to discuss; but as we are equally with men fellow-members of our Church, and sometimes form by far the larger part of its congregations, I hope I may be allowed to give expression to a few thoughts which I know are in the minds of many at the present time.

From my standpoint at the beginning of this new century I can look back for a far longer period than the half-century of which I am going chiefly to write, and for this reason, at least, my remarks may have some value. And first let me say that my object is not primarily to cry up the present state of things in order to decry the past. This is the tone that has been chiefly taken by writers at the present time, and the past has been not infrequently unduly depreciated. In proof of this conviction, let me give some testimony drawn from members of my own family, who were clergymen—one in the eighteenth century, the other in the early half of the nineteenth. Of the first it is recorded in a brief notice written of him that not only was he a distinguished scholar and writer, a graduate of Cambridge, and a musician, but, as Rector of a town living in Essex, "he devoted himself to the faithful discharge of his parochial duties till his death in 1804. In these he was most conscientious, and during the last forty years of his life he scarcely ever allowed himself to be absent from his parishioners for more than a fortnight in the year, although his society was very much courted." The second instance I give was the Vicar of a small village in Leicestershire; and here my own recollections can be added, as I was often present at his church in my early days, and can speak of his reverent performance of the services, his excellent reading, and of his sermons to his humble congregation, amongst whom the men appeared in their smock-frocks. The following extract from Dean Church seems to me so exactly to describe a state of things now wholly of the past, but applying so literally to what I remember of this old Leicestershire village and its Vicar, that I cannot resist inserting it here:

"The typical clergyman . . . was often much, very much, to the society around him. When communication was so difficult and infrequent, he filled a place in the country life of England which no one else could fill. He was often the patriarch of his parish, its ruler, its doctor, its lawyer, its magistrate, as well as its teacher, before whom vice trembled and rebellion dared not show itself. The idea of the priest was not quite forgotten, but there was much, much even of what was good and useful, to obscure it. . . . We may truthfully and thankfully recall that among the clergy of those days there were not a few, but many,

instances, not only of gentle manners and warm benevolence and cultivated intelligence, but of simple piety and holy life . . . preaching, without passion or excitement, scholarlike, careful, wise, often vigorously reasoned discourses on the capital points of faith and morals. Its better members were highly cultivated, benevolent men, intolerant of irregularities, both of doctrine and life, whose lives were governed by an unostentatious but solid and unfaltering piety, ready to burst forth, on occasion, into fervid devotion."

This may be said to be an exact portrait of two of the members of our family who were clergymen. The one I have alluded to as being fifty years Vicar of a Leicestershire village might have sat for this picture. Of fine presence and countenance, he was said to resemble the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., in his youth. He was, indeed, the ruler of his parish, to whom all looked up; he preached always in his black gown, and on coming down from the pulpit he would stand and bow to his congregation with dignified and courteous manner, robing and unrobing in the chancel—for there was no vestry in those days. A recent visit to this church, familiar to me during sixty-five years of my life, reveals a remarkable change which deserves to be noted amongst my recollections. Smock-frocks and scarlet cloaks have disappeared, and the congregation consists of well-dressed men and women with no appearance of poverty. A surpliced choir of men and boys, who look like those to be seen elsewhere, has replaced the high west-end gallery, where singers, men and women, remarkable for their vocal powers, sang to the accompaniment of a small organ played by a lady. The contrast was strikingly complete on the occasion of a harvest festival, with all its decorations, an event undreamt of in those far-off days.

But now, after these glimpses into the distant past, let me turn to the present and the future. I confess it gives me pain and sorrow when I hear such indiscriminate detraction of past times and workers as is sometimes bestowed by ardent admirers of the present. The chief feature which must, I think, strike us in the reorganization (I will not say reform) of our Church services is the enormous advance and increase of the musical element. Is this an unmitigated good, and is it appreciated by the majority of Churchgoers? The custom of having choirs of both men and boys has become almost, if not quite, universal, instead of being limited as formerly to cathedrals and some other special churches and chapels. From my childhood I have attended with delight St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and in later and recent years one of our country cathedrals, where the services were well-nigh as admirable in all respects as those of the greater buildings. My love for these more elaborate performances will not therefore be questioned, and to these already named experiences I

may add those of the Temple Church and Lincoln's Inn Chapel. Is it, however, desirable or desired that these services should become universal, or adopted in every parish and smaller church? Before answering this question, let us remember that these are dependent not on a picked number of specially selected voices and of the more highly educated and trained boys, but on the average scholars of the National Schools of the village, or town, or of London; and I think we all know by experience what this means. I can only say when I am compelled to listen to the singing of some such choirs, that I look back with longing and regret to the days of reverent reading in the past, and especially to those at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, when the unsurpassed and most reverent performance of the service by Frederick Denison Maurice was a privilege and a blessing never to be forgotten by those who heard it.

Then as to the custom of introducing anthems into parish churches, to be sung by an average choir, can we think this desirable while efforts are being made for shortening the services by the omission of many prayers to which we have always been accustomed? To stand during a long anthem must surely be more trying than to kneel during other parts of the service.

Once more, is it necessary, when money is so sorely needed for many objects (and, not least, for the support of the clergy) to have organs costing hundreds or thousands of pounds in every church, large or small? Those who have been privileged to hear the exquisite singing of Russian choirs, with *no* accompaniment, will hardly think so. Surely, too, the addition of music cannot be required, or be suitable, for the Confession and the Lord's Prayer, or indeed for any prayers.

In defence of what I have ventured to assert as to the universality of entirely musical services, I go back once more to my own experiences. Can such services be acceptable to all old and elderly people of the present day, or to the poor and uneducated classes? I may instance the case of my own mother, who during all her long life never failed to attend the morning and afternoon services, and who followed them with reverent devotion. But she had no musical ear, and no knowledge of, or capacity for, music or singing. What part, therefore, would she have been able to take in the services we are considering? And are there not many like her in every congregation, unmusical by nature, or by age debarred from singing and chanting? In the elaborate responses in the Litany and Communion Services, now so common, I hear but few voices joining, and, indeed, it is only the few who could do so with any propriety. The hymns alone are in any sense

congregational, and those who cannot join in these are content to listen.

Lastly, I must name one more arrangement of these latter days unknown formerly—the almost total absence of afternoon services in favour of the evening. Here, again, I speak mainly in the interest of the elderly persons who, for at least a large portion of the year, cannot go out to lighted and heated churches after dark. This change is, of course, owing to the consideration now given to children, for whom special services are provided in nearly every church, to the exclusion of those who used to attend them. But can it be necessary or desirable for children of any class to be four times under instruction on Sunday—at morning Sunday-school and church, and again afternoon school and service? Those only to whom this arrangement must be welcome are the parents who thus get their children off their hands for nearly the whole day, while they never enter a church or think of taking their children there. Can we be surprised if the children themselves do not attend church in later years, after the doses of church attendance administered to them in their early days? Surely, if such a system of training were all it is supposed to be, some other and further results than we see at present would be found. As it is, a large proportion of those who have been diligently instructed Sunday after Sunday fail to appear in church when emancipated from school-life.

There is still one subject to which I must refer before concluding these criticisms—the falling off in the reading of the present day. Whether this may or may not be due to the widespread practice of intoning the services, which, of course, renders expression difficult, if not impossible, it is a fact which can hardly be doubted that good reading is now rarely heard from the younger clergy. We must all be aware of the much complained of “gabbling,” often inaudible, and rendering it impossible to follow the prayers, even in reading the Lessons, and especially in parts of the service not supposed to be heard by the congregation; and I venture to say there is no modern practice which gives greater pain to old-fashioned worshippers than this. What, too, must be its effect on uneducated hearers? It is surprising that more attention is not given to this important qualification by those who have the selection or approval of candidates for the ministry.

If it may be said that I have only been pointing out defects, I reply that it was my object so to do, leaving to others the more pleasant and genial task of noting the progress which undoubtedly has been made in many directions. While

acknowledging this, the prevalence of the drawbacks I have named seems to become more prominent and trying because they appear to us unnecessary, and to mar, instead of assisting, the onward march and growth of our National Church, beloved by us from childhood.

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ART. VIII.—TO WHAT EXTENT HAS CHRISTIANITY
INFLUENCED LIBERAL JEWS?—II.

WHAT about Reformed Judaism in England? How far have its exponents advanced along the road to Christianity? We get our information principally from the writings of Mr. Claude Montefiore, editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, the Rev. Rabbi Morris Joseph, and Mr. Oswald Simon.

The first-named describes Jesus and His teaching as "an intricate and fascinating subject," and declares the old Jewish view of patronizing indifference or depreciation as being most certainly modified, and that "some elements in the teaching of Jesus, or perhaps its very core and principle, may be recognised as vital portions of Judaism itself, and their origin or fullest enunciation in the mouth of Jesus may be freely allowed; but, nevertheless, Jesus will find His place in the development of Judaism."¹

Again, "Jesus seems to expand and spiritualize Judaism."²

And in his "First Impressions of Paul," the same writer has evidently grasped the Apostle's teaching, and thus sums it up: "That at the appointed season God redeems man from his bondage to the law and to sin, and gives him righteousness and salvation through Christ's work for man, and through man's faith in Christ."³

And in his article on "The Religious Value of the Fourth Gospel," he has likewise laid hold upon the object of its writer, and his central proposition, "that the eternal and Divine Word became flesh, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."⁴

Claude Montefiore, indeed, in his numerous articles which enrich the pages of his review, appears to be holding open an umbrella labelled "Church of Israel," and inviting Jews, Unitarians, and Theists to come under its shade. Thus he says: "Jews might join hands with Unitarians in a

¹ *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. vi., p. 109.

² *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 429.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 448.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 27.