

ART. V.—THOUGHTS ON SOME SOCIAL QUESTIONS,
PAST AND PRESENT—III.

TO promote the growth of thrift and providence has been one of my most earnest endeavours during all my long intercourse with the poor, and as one of the best efforts in this direction is the promotion of provident dispensaries for times of sickness, I have joined the movement from its beginning, many years ago, when Sir Charles Trevelyan first started it. This, like other good plans, is also slow of growth; but its promoters are not discouraged, being convinced of the soundness of its principles, and that the old free methods inevitably lead to pauperism, and are no longer needed, now that good Poor Law dispensaries are provided everywhere for the very poor or destitute.

Last year I had the satisfaction of attending one more conference of the South-Eastern Poor Law District, held at Whitehall, when matters of great interest to me were discussed, some pertaining to Kensington, and brought forward by its lady Guardians, relating to the "abuse of Poor Law infirmaries." I was glad to take the opportunity thus afforded me of stating what I believed to be the chief cause of this abuse and their being frequented by those who can, and do, pay for their admission—viz., the absence in our social system, though consisting of innumerable charities, of any home for infirm or incurable men in this part of England, in which they can pay according to their means, two only of such institutions existing in the Midlands and the North. I am glad of every opportunity of making this want known, and I earnestly hope that many years of the new century will not pass without some effort being made to supply this manifest deficiency in connection with some homes for women already existing at Highbury, first started fifty years ago. In connection with my Home for Incurable Women, begun forty years ago, I may add that its first and chief object was to receive those who could pay something; and two of our earliest admissions were from workhouses, which were not intended for such cases.

I cannot leave the subject of the social work in which I have been interested without naming the old Working Men's College, in Great Ormond Street, founded nearly fifty years ago by my friends Frederick Denison Maurice and "Tom" Hughes, whom I cannot call by any other name.

The object of a recent meeting was to bring the old institution up to date, both as regards the building and endowment, without which help it cannot continue to hold its position in these days of progress and increasing requirements. As

probably one of the oldest friends of both the founders, I felt a gratification in being able to say a few words for the object, and my thoughts naturally went back to the days when, living in the neighbourhood for nearly fifty years, my sister and I used to assist in the classes which were there started for women in the afternoons, this being the first step to women's Colleges, the rooms being only occupied in the evenings by the men. Her subject was botany, mine the more humble but useful one of needlework. This fact was probably not known to any of the audience, and I think they were interested in it. Professor Dicey, of All Souls, Oxford, the Chairman of the College, presided.

Before leaving the subject of "reforms" I can hardly avoid naming one other matter which has occupied so large a portion of my time and life, but as I have so fully described the progress of the Poor Law work in which I have shared in other pages, I will only say here that much that I desired to see has been accomplished in the last fifty years, but that, also, much remains to be done. Perhaps, however, the most remarkable reflection may be that, as in almost all matters of the kind, reaction is to be expected, and is found; an extreme of harshness, or severity, or neglect, being generally followed by the opposite extreme of undue leniency; and this is, I fear, in some measure the case in the changes which are being brought about in recent measures set forth in Poor Law recommendations. All must rejoice in the adoption of plans for the improved care and nursing of the sick; but many persons, remembering the wise reforms of the law in 1834, and its strict injunctions against "pauperizing," or rendering relief by the State attractive, or placing the condition of its recipients in any respect above that of the independent poor, are beginning to watch with alarm the recent plans for the increased comforts of the so-called "deserving poor," and inducements for them and their families to look through life to the privileges of the workhouse for their old age. We have already far too many of such inducements to dependence in the shape of free medical relief—other than by the Poor Law—free education, partially free feeding and clothing, and, looming in the perhaps not far distance, we see the still greater boon held out of pensions for old age, whereby all will be saved from the trouble of taking thought for the future, and will thus be able to spend more in the present on their own comforts, or, may I not say, in a more liberal support of the public-house? When it is remembered that those who have abstained from drink are not found as inmates of our workhouses, not having contributed to the annual expenditure of £162,000,000 of our drink bill, is it possible to repress the desire that every

inducement to thrift and forethought should be held out, rather than the contrary, encouraging a reckless expenditure by promises of present and future help?¹

I can hardly omit from this retrospect of past history a mention of the beginning of the movement in aid of the idiot and feeble-minded members of the population, which took place nearly sixty years ago. One of my brothers, a medical man, was induced, in the year 1842, when on a tour in Switzerland, to visit an institution for cretins, begun by a young Swiss doctor, on a mountain near Interlachen. The interest he felt in the matter, and the progress which he found had been made, caused him to write a pamphlet about it on his return, and it is believed that this resulted in the first efforts being begun here for their benefit.

Believing that nothing is perfect in social or any other department of life, and, therefore, that reform is required in most things, it has been my object to endeavour to effect this in some matters. The latest, and perhaps most surprising, instance of reform now called for is as regards the Church, where it was hardly to be looked for or expected. But amongst the many social reforms in which all must surely rejoice (except, perhaps, the undertakers), I may name that of funeral and burial arrangements; but there is a counter-balance to this satisfaction, as in so many other matters—viz., in the enormous and extravagant development of the habit of sending costly flowers and wreaths, not only by relatives, but mere friends or even acquaintances. "Memorials" of all kinds have assumed an excessive and unreasonable importance, everyone's death being taken advantage of to promote some pet scheme or plan. Two eminent opinions have recently been expressed against this system, which I will quote. The late Lord Selborne protested against one for himself, classing them as a sort of added "death-duties"; and Mr. Chamberlain has said that "it is not desirable to connect such with particular charitable objects, so clearly for their furtherance rather than for the memory of the dead."

Though I have said I do not wish to enter on either politics or religious questions in these thoughts, I cannot refrain from one or two observations on matters which deeply interest me and occupy my thoughts, loving sincerely, as I do, our National Church of England. I am encouraged to do so, when I was just pondering the matter, by reading a notice of

¹ There is still one missing link in our ever-growing charitable institutions, which I have long wished to see added, viz., homes for men in chronic illness and old age, in which they could pay according to their means. Many such persons are now in Poor Law infirmaries, and paying for admission, because there is no other refuge open for them.

a new book, or essay, on "A Neglected Ingredient of Church Reform," which expresses what I have long thought and will now explain. It deals chiefly with the subject of "Bishops," their position, and titles, which I believe is a real stumbling-block in the way of all our Nonconformist brethren, and a needless one. I allude to their titles as "My Lord," and their habitations as "palaces," both, as it seems to me, wholly inapplicable to their position as servants of our one Lord and Master. The author states that both Bishops Jacobson and Fraser refused to live in the palaces assigned to them, and took other houses; and he proceeds to lament the want of touch between Bishops and the masses as owing to this cause, but my conviction is that the chief mischief results in the envy and isolation of other Christian bodies, rather than the reason he assigns against the system.

It is noticeable that the most recently appointed Bishop states that he had asked if he could let his two sumptuous houses, or palaces, but was told it was impossible! With regard to the titles, why should they not be always addressed or described as "Right Reverend Father in God," as in the official announcement at present, which could give offence to no one?¹

Another matter which may perhaps be considered partly religious is that some serious thoughts have been aroused during the last year, when the subject of "missions" have continually been brought before us in consequence of the bicentenary of the S.P.G. Sermons have been preached and meetings held in countless numbers all over the country, in order to impress upon us this duty of extending our work to all heathen and other lands not yet Christianized; but in reading or glancing at many of these exhortations, it has struck me that little or nothing has been said as to the difficulties and hindrances that beset us, and only our blame as a nation is dwelt upon in failing to fulfil our Lord's command. Now, what strikes me as to this question is what I venture to state, that, as my reading largely consists of "Travels," which are deeply interesting to me, the enormous difficulties of the task entrusted to us are wholly overlooked or underrated by most preachers and speakers. When I read "Travels in and through Africa from South to North," "Through Unknown Arabia and Persia," the "Overland Route to China," and half a dozen others in that gigantic country and its neighbour

¹ At the meeting of the Church Conference of the Deanery of St. Pancras, the following resolution was passed: "That reform is required in the style of residence, stipend, and title of our Diocesan Bishops."

the almost unknown Thibet, I cannot help asking, How is it possible that one small island, a mere dot upon the map of the world, *can* supply missionaries in numbers and qualifications sufficient for the work we are called upon to perform? ¹ At the present time our attention is rightly directed to the great and increasing difficulties attending the diminution in the supply of clergy at home; and parishes which I know have been endeavouring for months or perhaps years to obtain curates.² The other reason and difficulty to which I allude, which has never been named recently in this connection, but which is surely one of the greatest hindrances in the way of our efforts and success, is the sad fact of "our numerous and unhappy divisions." In one sermon (not missionary) I have seen this alluded to, when forty different sects were named as competing for converts; in another statement no fewer than sixty-four were mentioned! Some women missionaries, whose work I know of in India, say, "What can we hope to do in this place where ten bodies of differing Christians are striving for converts?" We can hardly be surprised at the answer given by some conscientious, if ignorant, heathen, when they say, "We will wait till you Christians have settled your differences before accepting Christianity." And one of the most learned of Hindoo converts has said: "You send out to us missionaries who teach apparently different religions"; and it is the greatest stumbling-block in the way of converting thoughtful heathen.

There is still one more point concerning mission work which strikes me as strange and incomprehensible—viz., the failure to influence or convert those unbelievers of other, especially Eastern, nations who live amongst us, either as students or consuls, or in other public capacities. Why should we hope or expect to convert the lowest ignorant classes in their own country, when we are unable to touch the few living in a Christian nation and surroundings? Even the attendants on royalty retain their false religions, and exercise them, unchanged and unmolested.

One matter which has struck me lately for the first time is as regards the system still adopted in so many churches of

¹ I have just read the following words in "A Lecture on India": "Throughout that wild border-land, into the inner recesses of which few Europeans had ever penetrated, there must exist thousands of peoples—Aryans, Dravidians, and Pathans—who had never seen a white face or heard an English word spoken." And again: "The Mother Country is only in extent a seventieth part of the empire of which it is the nucleus, and which occupies a fifth part of the habitable globe." Of course these remarks do not apply to the responsibilities of our empire.

² It is reported from five districts alone that no fewer than 453 additional clergy are at once required.

appropriated seats and pew-rents, by which, with few exceptions, the comparatively new parishes and districts are supported. Never before was the evil—for such I must call it—so forcibly brought before me as now, and I can only express my astonishment that any body calling itself a National Church should have adopted such plans. That it should aspire to be the Church of the people under such circumstances seems to me an impossible dream when those who cannot pay sums in gold are relegated to side or back bare seats, generally the worst for seeing or hearing. The self-respecting and increasingly instructed democracy of the present day can hardly be asked or expected to come to churches with such arrangements, and I cannot help wondering if their clergy dare to read certain chapters in the Epistle of St. James when they recur! I often wonder what the simple, but devout, worshippers in some foreign, and especially Russian, churches would say if such arrangements were introduced at home! The results, as I see them, are, and must be, late coming to church (persons usually not being admitted to empty seats till the Psalms), or else there is the irreverence of walking about or standing during one of the most solemn and important parts of the service—the Confession and Absolution! Surely, in most well-to-do neighbourhoods the offertory might be asked to provide the means, where endowment does not exist, and experience has shown that this method is successful. This is, indeed, one of the “insular” arrangements for which we are distinguished in the eyes of many!¹ When we venture to speak against these plans as objectionable from many points of view we are met with the remark that they are a necessity in order to provide the means for all church work and support. Exactly the same is said with regard to bazaars and similar plans; but, we reply, it is our methods that have made the necessity by educating people to this way of giving, rather than any other, and so the evil cause and effect goes on from year to year, and will do so till public opinion is turned against it.

One more change, not for the better, strikes me on returning to West End churches after ten years—the novel practice of some members (not a few) of the congregation leaving the church before the sermon, and thus avoiding the offertory as well, one hour or less of Divine service being thus considered sufficient in these restless and impatient days. The growing custom of shortening services by the

¹ The following words were spoken by a clergyman at the Newcastle Church Congress, describing the pew-rent system as “one of the most wonderfully contrived systems for utter stupidity that ever the unwisdom of man conceived and carried out.”

omission of important prayers, as well as the entire Litany, is a real trial to many, amongst these being the "Prayer for Parliament," "For all conditions of men," and the "Thanksgiving," besides, also, those for the Royal Family, at the will of the clergyman. I must also note the frequent omission of the first part of the Communion Service, the general congregation thus never hearing the Commandments, or the Gospel and Epistle, though the sermon may be upon them, only the few who remain hearing either. How is it that the present generation are thus wanting in the patience of former times?

In connection with this subject of changes in Church matters, it cannot be denied that there are many improvements, if some retrograde steps; amongst the former I will name the banishment of the clerk, and another officer who has disappeared with him, the beadle, gorgeous in apparel and armed with a formidable wand, with which he tapped the heads of noisy or slumbering school-children, the sound echoing through the church, as I distinctly remember in St. Clement Danes and elsewhere; modern children would, indeed, be surprised at such an exercise of despotic authority and interference. Saying prayers in their hats placed before their faces, on entering a pew, was the habit of all gentlemen—one more that has now, happily, disappeared.

The subject of "education" has been before us for many months, and we begin to weary of the controversy, but the practical results of our system have not been touched upon, all-important as they are. Lessons affecting morals and character are not conspicuous, and the "laws of life" are not amongst the subjects included as necessary. A recent consideration of the weekly statistics of mortality, and of the reports of police-courts and coroners' inquests, have strengthened these opinions as to results.

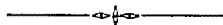
The Reports of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children should also be studied with regard to this subject, and the absolute and incredible ignorance of the mothers must be accounted to be the cause of, at least, the majority of these sad tragedies. The coroner at one such case of starvation did not scruple to tell the mother and sister of the victim that they were "savages"; and on another occasion said that "hundreds of lives were sacrificed through sheer ignorance." But I need not multiply facts which all can read for themselves weekly and even daily. Cruelty, intentional and deliberate, may be accountable for some of these terrible tragedies, but there is no doubt that ignorance of the simplest laws of life and health is more often the responsible cause, and one obvious remedy for this is, surely, that some more

useful instruction should be given in our schools;¹ that teaching and advice should be imparted by the district visitors in every parish and at mothers' meetings, by means of the distribution of the literature of the National Health Society, which for the last thirty years has been working in this cause, and giving lectures about it to gatherings of working men and women.

At the present time we are lamenting the decline of the birth-rate in England; would it not therefore be well to consider more seriously how we may preserve those lives which we have, and which are now being wasted in thousands by the ignorance or vice of those to whose care they are committed?

In concluding these thoughts, it only remains for me to say that they are recorded by one whose memory extends back to the age of two years, and thus over seven decades, comprising a longer period than falls to the lot of many. I would ask my readers also to believe that my object in this review of past years has been to assist in forming a right judgment on some important questions of which I have seen the commencement, and not in order to relate the part I have been permitted to take in them.

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ART. VI.—A VISIT TO JERICHO.

TRAVELLERS in Palestine can now drive from Jerusalem to Jericho in about six hours. Formerly the route was both difficult and dangerous, and could only be accomplished on horseback, but about three years ago the Government made a good carriage road from the Holy City to Jericho.

We started about 8 o'clock one lovely morning in February and drove through the dirty but prettily situated village of Bethany. Here an old tower was pointed out to us called the Tower of Lazarus, and near it is the so-called tomb of Lazarus in a vault reached by a flight of steps. The house of Martha and Mary was also pointed out to us.

On leaving Bethany and descending the steep and circuitous road to the bottom of the hill, we came to what is called the Apostles' Spring, from a legend that here the Apostles rested

¹ At the recent meeting of the Sanitary Institute, held at Manchester, the President said in his address that "teachers should be able to impart to their scholars the simple laws of health and domestic hygiene."