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THE CHURCHMAN

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*CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

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THE CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO THE WANTS OF MODERN TIMES.

THE great problem which is stirring the heart of the Christian Church of this age is, How to bring the healing and refining influences of the Gospel upon the great mass of spiritual destitution and ignorance which prevails throughout the length and breadth of the land. The deadly and injurious effects of scepticism and other kindred forms of opposition to the Christian faith are felt in every quarter and class of society; but great as these evils are, it seems still more hopeless to battle against the wide-spread indifference to any phase of religious life.

The Church of England has not failed to recognise the existence and enormity of these hindrances to the spread of the Gospel and the advancement of religious education among the people; she has not under-valued the great difficulties of the case, nor has she flinched from efforts of self-sacrifice in endeavouring to meet them. It has often been thought and said, no doubt, that the machinery of the Church was too antiquated and ill-adjusted to deal with the peculiar wants of modern times; but such a conclusion is obviously and fully disproved by the methods which have been resorted to in order to render the institutions and work of the Church suitable to our present needs.

It will be interesting, and it is the principal object of this paper, to illustrate some of the efforts which are now being made to simplify and popularize the services of the Church, and in other ways to advance the highest welfare of the people.

I. It is not unnatural, in the first instance, to turn to our
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cathedrals, the great historic monuments of the spiritual life and devotion of the Christian Church in past ages.

In days gone by, it has been said that they failed adequately to respond to the great opportunities which they possessed of promoting religious life throughout the nation; but such a charge in these days would utterly fall to the ground. There is not a single cathedral which does not systematically provide its round of daily services with other multiplied spiritual privileges. In addition to the opportunities which the cathedral affords to those in the immediate neighbourhood, these buildings have been freely thrown open for the encouragement and edification of every agency created to assist Church life and work in the diocese. By way of showing the peculiar readiness to make these grand buildings available to every class and want of the community, one or two illustrations may be given.

At Bangor, a Saturday morning children's service is held at ten o'clock during eight months of the year, some 500 or 600 children attending. At Bristol, special Sunday afternoon services are frequently held for the volunteers, cadets, and naval reserve, post-office and telegraph clerks, police and fire brigade. Week-day evening lectures on the Psalms have been given to men and women separately and to mixed congregations. At Ely, on the Feast of the Epiphany, a special service is held for children, the congregation frequently reaching 1,100. Special services for men and women, separately, were held during the last Lenten season, the congregation numbering 200 or 300. At Lichfield the communicants of the diocese, forming themselves into guilds, were last year welcomed in the cathedral, and a service specially arranged for them. A service of a somewhat similar character was held in Newcastle Cathedral, the congregation numbering more than 3,000. At Worcester special services have been held for men only, with congregations of 300 and more. It remains to point to the very remarkable efforts which have been made by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, to render the services helpful to the varying needs of the great metropolitan population. Most of our readers will remember the days when the usual hour of evening prayer under the dome saw but comparatively few present, but how marvellous is the change now! One can scarcely ever go there without casting one's eye upon what we may venture to call a crowd of worshippers; and in marking the evident signs of devotion, it is clear that these once neglected services have now become a source of comfort to many hearts feeling the burden and strain of City business life. Has anyone witnessed those grand gatherings under the dome during the Lenten season, so largely composed of men,

without heartily thanking God for the quickened life of the Church? Nor should it be forgotten how zealously and generously the Dean and Chapter have sought to render the cathedral available to those who are giving their services to the Church as lay helpers, whether men or women. Throughout the winter months at least 100 men are systematically brought under Bible-teaching by some of the Minor Canons, who also give instruction in the Greek Testament. Lectures to women have been regularly given, and more than 120 have continuously attended these classes.

These illustrations surely afford evidence enough of an anxiety and readiness to throw the cathedrals open as widely as possible, and to make them, as we venture to assert they are, the centres of godly zeal and spiritual activity, their influence radiating through every corner of the diocese.

II. Passing to the subject of Parochial Missions, we note one of the most remarkable and encouraging witnesses to the spirit of enterprise which would leave no stone unturned in reclaiming the ungodly, and leading back into the fold of the Church, those who have wandered into sin.

It is not within the scope of this paper to trace the history of this movement. It is enough to show that "Mission Work" is not only a recognised part of the Church machinery, but that it has proved of untold worth in its effect upon the spiritual life of the people.

The whole subject of how best and most quickly to stem the overwhelming tides of ungodliness around us, has for some time occupied the careful attention of the Councils of the Church. It is clear from their conclusions that they fully recognise the urgent necessity of active steps to utilize every possible agency, whether clerical or lay, for widening the borders of Christ's Kingdom throughout the world. One cannot doubt but that in a few years each diocese will have formed some systematic plan for reaching the masses of non-churchgoing people by means of simpler services than we are accustomed to, and of a distinctly missionary and evangelistic character. Already such organizations exist in the Dioceses of Lichfield, Peterborough, Lincoln, Salisbury, and Truro. These societies have gathered together a staff of clergy fitted by experience and popular gifts for conducting Parochial Missions; they have also supplemented their work by arranging for special services in various parishes during the Advent and Lenten seasons. In the Dioceses of London, Exeter, Norwich, and Manchester, steps have also been taken to follow a similar course.

It is natural here to mention the Church Parochial Mission Society, which has for some years devoted itself with so much

wisdom and labour to this branch of Church work. This society has been instrumental in organizing over 700 Parochial Missions in different parishes and districts.

Patiently and prayerfully prepared for, it is perhaps impossible to exaggerate the importance of a Mission in its bearing upon the spiritual and moral life of a particular parish or neighbourhood.

It affords a striking evidence of the power and attractiveness of the Gospel, when the hearts of thousands in some of our large towns are stirred by Mission agencies to long for the peace and joy of true life in Christ Jesus. We may imagine, for instance, how the case stood in Leeds, when some eighty churches, for a week or more, threw wide open their doors to welcome men and women wearied with all the sad disappointments and bitter heart-aching sorrows of their God-forgetful life; and we may picture many of these as bent in sorrow for the past before the Cross of Christ, and quickened there by the word of His forgiving love and the regenerating breath of the Holy Spirit. Those who have taken their part in unfolding the story of the Cross, can tell of the lifelong joy which the Parochial Mission has brought to many who thought their souls uncared for; how many, will be known only at "that day." What was done with such power and hopefulness in Leeds, has been repeated, as is well known, in other great centres of population, as, for instance, in Preston, Wolverhampton, Northampton, Huddersfield, and Norwich.

One of the most useful and hopeful outcomes of this movement has been the Special Services held for Working Men. It is very commonly said that the Church has entirely lost her hold upon the artisan classes; but is this altogether true? The vast crowd assembled for Mission Services at Norwich and Lichfield, would surely incline us to hope that there is no real breach between the English working man and his Church. There are many signs, indeed, that by patient and self-sacrificing work, and painstaking labour to understand them, the clergy may win the respect and affection of our artisans, and even enlist them in the highest sphere of service in the Church.

An illustration is furnished in the working men's meeting at Church Congresses. In no single instance has this great effort failed; but in every town where the Congress has been held, and the working men have been invited, the invitation has been accepted with an enthusiasm evidenced by numbers and kindly feeling, showing plainly no real want of goodwill between the Church and the working classes.

III. In connection with the special function and working of Parochial Missions, it may be well to make some mention of the efforts made to follow up and deepen the spiritual impres-

sions left upon the minds of those who have come under these exceptional influences, and who, in response to the awakenings of God's Holy Spirit, have actively united themselves with the work of the Church. It is impossible, of course, to give anything like an exhaustive statement of the guilds and unions which now exist for the advancement of devotional life among communicants and Church-workers; we can only, therefore, quote one or two instances as illustrations of similar efforts. Last year a special service was held in Canterbury Cathedral, to which the clergy and Church-workers of the city and neighbourhood had been previously invited. The Bishop of Sydney gave the address at the service; a meeting followed in the assembly-rooms, and subjects of natural interest to Churchmen were brought under discussion. This movement was originated by the late Archbishop Tait, who was anxious to foster a desire for Christian work among the younger communicants of the Church after their confirmation, and to give some formal sanction to the offering of their service. In the Diocese of Lichfield for two years past the members of the Diocesan Guild Union have assembled in the cathedral for a service of prayer and praise united with instruction. The Bishop has encouraged this movement by his presence, and some fifty clergy or more have joined in the service with a thousand communicants. The intention of this Guild Union is to bind communicants together for holiness, work, and prayer. An organization exactly similar in character exists in the Diocese of Truro; it is known by the name of "The Church Society for the Advancement of Holy Living." More than forty parishes in the diocese have joined the society, which has now a roll of members exceeding 1,500.

In the grand old parish church of Newcastle, now the cathedral of the diocese, two thousand Church-workers assembled last year at an evening service specially designed for them: the choir on the occasion consisted of 500 trained voices. A very large number of working men, it was observed, were present, showing not only their practical sympathy with the objects of such a gathering, but their willingness to make sacrifices of time and ease for the active service of the Church.

Undue importance can hardly be attached to such movements as these. They have already done much to encourage workers who have too often had but little help given them in the way of realizing a common bond of union among all who pray to make their lives a service to Christ in ministry to others.

In several large towns the district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, and others, have been invited to what we may call a retreat, or quiet day: a service has been held in the church;

and instructions upon the spiritual life have been given, with intervals for meditation and prayer.

In the Diocese of St. Albans, during the last Lenten season, special devotional services for clergy and Sunday-school teachers were held in four appointed centres.¹

It is needless to point out the peculiar value of such opportunities as we have now described, for giving spiritual direction and encouragement to the labours of those who are offering their gifts to God in the service of His Church. The obvious tendency of an awakened earnestness is to lead many who are under the impulse of religious feelings to devote themselves to Christian enterprises of one kind or another; but the danger is that the enthusiasm may be chilled, and the work laid down. It is needful, therefore, that opportunities should present themselves for fixing upon the mind the highest conception of what Christian service really is, and for the setting forth the ever-opening sources of that Divine grace, which enables the soul to continue unmoved in its desire to labour for God and man.

IV. We have touched upon Parochial Missions designed chiefly to arouse those who are careless and indifferent. It may be well to allude to some of the most prominent and avowed hindrances to the spread of the Gospel of Christ which the Church has to face, and to try, if possible, to remove. The existence of a wide-spread infidelity among the masses is one of the most painful obstacles the Church has to overcome. On the right and left hand of us, attempts are being openly and persistently made by infidels and secularists to undermine the Christian faith: the Church has not been wanting in her efforts to resist this hurtful tendency. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has for some considerable time recognised the urgent necessity of facing the prevalent scepticism of the present day. Under the direction of the Evidence Committee, a number of most valuable manuals have been published, compiled by those who have taken an active part in the strife of Christianity with infidelity. By the publication and distribution of these manuals, which seem to cover the whole ground, immense good has been already accomplished. In other ways the Christian Evidence Society is seeking to do a similar work. Its method of procedure is that its appointed agents should as frequently as possible visit our large towns for the purpose of holding conferences, open-air lectures in

¹ The service consisted of a shortened form of prayer followed by three addresses: after each address a short interval was reserved for meditation and secret prayer, a subject for intercession being suggested. The response to an invitation to attend these services was most encouraging, both on the part of the clergy and Sunday-school teachers.

parks and crowded thoroughfares, with opportunities given for discussion; the formation of classes for the instruction of young people in Christian evidences. There is scarcely a diocese in which this kind of work has not been carried on with more or less success, but it is chiefly perhaps in London and our large northern towns that these efforts have been made. Open-air lectures have been given under St. Pancras Railway arches, in Clerkenwell, Whitechapel, Victoria Park, and other centres in the metropolis. At Halifax, Leeds, Manchester, Bury, Burnley, and other towns in the north, active steps have been taken to cope with the terrible evils of existing forms of unbelief; large bodies of working men have been drawn together in friendly conference, and great good has unquestionably followed.

Another great adversary to the cause of Christ throughout the land presents itself in the prevalence of intemperance and impurity.

The crusade of the Church against drunkenness, and the habits and temptations which encourage it, has been of a very decided character, and has met with considerable success. Whilst some will be inclined to draw comparisons between the agencies which the Church has employed for checking the intemperate habits of the nation, and the means which others have adopted in the like cause, it is impossible to gainsay the fact that the most solid reformation is being wrought out by the quiet systematic labours of our Parochial Temperance Societies rather than by impulsive efforts of a less personal and permanent character.

Any great change in the habits of the people can only be looked for as the result of prayerful and persistent toil pursued, especially among the young, with a view to remove the causes which have tended to foster intemperance. The witness of the Church of England Temperance Society has been powerful and emphatic, and has left its mark for good upon the Church and our national life in the formation of so many parochial organizations for coping with this great sin which has so long been England's shame.

It may perhaps be safely said, of the two evils, impurity is even greater than intemperance, though it cannot make its existence so openly felt. The revelations of the Report made to Convocation upon this subject some few years since were awful in the extreme; and it must be a matter of thankfulness that the conscience of the Church has been aroused, and that she is now exerting herself to abate the overwhelming misery and disgrace of this great national reproach; and all must earnestly wish that the Church of England Purity Society may be wisely guided in the methods which it may adopt for

dealing with a subject calling for so much courage and judgment.

Whilst giving prominent mention to this newly created agency, which the special circumstances of so great and widespread an evil have urgently called into existence, it would be a great omission were we to fail to point out what great efforts the Church of England has made to rescue the thousands who are exposed to the snares of seductive vice. There is scarcely a Diocese which has not organized its Industrial School, its Refuge, and Penitentiary; and though it is always difficult to tabulate the actual results for good achieved by these institutions, those who are acquainted with their history and working well know how powerfully they have made their influence felt in the renewal and purifying of lives which would otherwise have been lost in the yawning gulfs of sin.¹

A work which would seem to be of especial value is found in the associations which now exist throughout the country for attempting to cut off this great evil in the bud. These preventive Societies seek to accomplish their work by establishing free registry offices, clothing clubs, careful visitation, the foundation of clubs for factory-girls, addresses to working mothers upon the early training of their children, the rescuing of those placed in circumstances of exceptional temptation, and by other kindred means. There are now seventy-two such Societies existing, and they are continually increasing in number.

A kindred effort has been made by the Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays. Under the direction of this Society, Homes for boys and girls have been established at Clapton and Dulwich, and others are in course of formation. There is perhaps no work that calls more urgently for the self-sacrificing labours of the Church than that which is suggested by these various agencies for training the rising generation in the love and habits of purity; nor has any work a greater promise of reward than that of helping thousands of our fellow-creatures to come out from the darkness of their sin into the light of a renewed and purer life.

V. This may seem a fitting opportunity for touching upon the position and value of women's work in the Church. It is generally admitted that the sphere is very wide indeed for the employment of women's gifts in this service. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the constitution of Sisterhoods, and of the principles upon which their work has been carried out, no one will refuse to admit that they have been,

¹ The actual extent of the work accomplished may be gathered from the statistical returns furnished in the "Official Year Book," pp. 128-139.

and still continue to be, channels of especial and abounding mercy. The deaconesses' work and institutions for nurses indicate another form in which the ministry of women has developed itself. In the Dioceses of Canterbury, London, Winchester, Ely, Salisbury, and Chester, efforts have for some time been made to find systematic employment for women, duly trained and solemnly set apart for the most part by Episcopal authority, as authorized Church Deaconesses, thus practically reviving the primitive order. Their work is to visit and nurse the sick and poor, to conduct Mothers' Meetings, and to assist in other ways in parish work as the incumbent may direct. Anyone having practical acquaintance with the domestic sorrows and difficulties of the poorer classes will understand how to value the inestimable boon of efficient nursing; it is, perhaps, one of the most useful services which can be rendered in times of need, and it is, certainly to the comprehension of the poor, one of the most practical expressions of the life and spirit of Christianity. The difficulties in many cases of nursing the poor in their own homes, and of placing them in conditions conducive to a complete recovery, have doubtless in a very great degree led to the formation of cottage hospitals and convalescent homes; a reference to the tabular records of these charities presented in the "Official Year-Book" will show how actively the Church of England has taken her part in the development of this specially valuable work. Those who have visited these homes, and have heard from the patients their testimony to the benefits which they have received, will be able to appreciate the great advantage and the real necessity of considerably multiplying their number.

So far it has been our endeavour to survey the agencies which the Church has constituted, and is still employing, for carrying on what we may describe as the home mission work. Though the distinct mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel to the poor, has she not yet to show that beautiful side of the Redeemer's life which was spent in ceaseless works of mercy to the sick and suffering? Is it not possibly true that the work of the Church has presented itself to the minds of great masses of the people as a counterpart of that painful misrepresentation of the Christian life which St. James describes in such striking words: "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Surely the attractive and convincing power of the Gospel will be as forcibly unfolded by deeds as words; and it is a matter for great thankfulness that so many hands and hearts are now pressed into the service,

and are so cheerfully responding to the call to carry "food to the hungry and clothing to the naked."

VI. We pass to the subject of education. In spite of all the difficulties which have surrounded this great question, and in which it is still involved, the Church has striven boldly to hold her own and to preserve our national life from the hurtful and corrupting influence of a mere secular and godless education. The disadvantages under which we labour in competition with School Boards are very great indeed, and are certain to increase rather than to diminish; bearing this in mind, the results of the Church's labour in the great cause of education during the previous year were most encouraging.

The accommodation in Church schools rose from 2,385,374 in 1882 to 2,413,676 in 1883, whilst the average attendance increased from 1,538,408 to 1,562,507. The Church educated last year half as many again as the Board schools; and contributed voluntarily during the year nearly £580,000 towards the support of Church schools, besides the large sum required for new buildings and improvements. During the year 1882, the Church spent the sum of £928,608 upon elementary education.

Looking at these figures, and at the devotion to the cause which they represent, we cannot be without hope for the future, whilst at the same time the aggressive character of the Board-School system lays a most solemn claim upon the conscience of the Church to leave no stone unturned in endeavouring to secure for the children an education founded upon the laws of God, which we must ever regard as the only safeguard for our national liberty, prosperity, and honour.

In duly estimating the contributions of the Church to the great cause of national education, we should not overlook the liberality with which the training colleges have been founded and maintained out of her revenues through many years past, nor should we forget how largely they have assisted elementary education throughout the land by the staff of experienced and well-trained teachers they have supplied from time to time. It will be known to many, that of such institutions there are thirteen existing for male and sixteen for female teachers; these colleges, though receiving assistance from Government grants, yet continue to be maintained very largely out of Church funds. The action of the State, in withdrawing its official inspection in religious subjects, has thrown upon the Church a further responsibility which has been readily accepted. The Church schools in every Diocese are now voluntarily placed under the supervision of experienced inspectors, who, acting with the authority of the Bishop, systematically overlook the religious instruction. This provision has been universally ac-

cepted, and in several instances the managers of Board Schools have applied for the services of the Diocesan Inspector.¹

The Diocesan Boards contribute the sum of at least £15,000 annually towards the maintenance of the Inspectors, and in many cases receive large supplementary contributions from the National Society. The work of this Society is far too widely known and valued to need any commendation. Its wise and energetic administration has laid the Church under a deep and lasting obligation.

The adoption of the principle involved in the mere secular training of the young has naturally thrown an increased burden and responsibility upon the Sunday-school system, and it is clear that we shall have very largely to rely upon this agency in the future for the maintenance of religious education of the children. Great as the debt is which we owe to the work of Sunday-schools, it is generally allowed that they are very far from reaching the standard of efficiency which is needful to enable them to exercise the influence that they should and must do throughout the Church. To render them equal to our present necessities, much more to the demands which will surely be made upon them in the future, it is obvious that every effort must be made to ensure a largely increased staff of Sunday-school teachers, and above all to raise the intellectual standard of their teaching.

The Church of England Sunday-School Institute has rendered invaluable service in both directions; the work of this Society in continually organizing meetings of a devotional character, and conferences for the mutual interchange of thought, has unquestionably done much not only to give encouragement to those already occupied in teaching, but to awaken a desire in the hearts of many more to devote themselves to this work. Very material assistance has been given in raising the intellectual standard of Sunday-school teaching generally, by the model lessons and examinations held under the direction of the Institute Committee. These examinations are held annually under the sanction of the Archbishops, and they have received more or less encouragement from nearly every Diocese. From intimate acquaintance with the results achieved, we are assured they have exerted a very direct and permanent influence.

Great as is the help which has been rendered by the Sunday-School Institute, it is yet evident that the Sunday-school system must receive its strength primarily from diocesan organization.

¹ The practical working of this department of our educational machinery is represented in tabular form in the "Official Year Book" of 1884, p. 163.

The Church in each diocese must, in other words, see that the Sunday-school is effectively fulfilling its proper functions. This necessity has been recognised in the Dioceses of Ely, Chichester, Carlisle, Lincoln, St. Albans, Peterborough, and Truro. In each case a committee has been appointed at the instance of the Diocesan Conference, and is more or less giving encouragement to the Sunday-school work.¹

In the case of other Dioceses, Sunday-school teachers have been invited to attend examinations arranged by the Diocesan Boards of Education. Thus it is evident that this subject is occupying the watchful consideration of the Church, and that practical methods are being employed to enable the Sunday-schools of the country to fulfil with power and intelligence their own peculiar functions.

The necessity of a much wider development of the provisions made by the Church for the education of the middle classes, is now prominently under consideration. The subject has been discussed in many Diocesan Conferences during the past few years, and in every case there has been a unanimous approval of the claims upon the Church, to extend the existing institutions for advancing education upon distinctive Church principles among the children of the middle classes. It is well known that several efforts have been made in this direction with more or less success. The schools which owe their origin primarily to the efforts of Canon Woodard have already done extensive service. An organization under the direction of Canon Holland is labouring to provide an education for girls, based upon the teaching of the Church of England. It is proposed, with a like object in view, to erect one or more schools in memory of the honoured and useful life of the late Dean Close; and the Dean of Canterbury has lately founded the South-Eastern College at Ramsgate. In the hope of giving a very large increase and responding still more effectually to the want so widely felt, the Church Schools Company has recently been formed, and in the two years of its existence has given proof not only of the growing necessity for its work, but of its practical power to fulfil it. Already through the efforts of the Council, several schools have been opened, and have received very encouraging support.

In drawing this paper to its close,² it is natural to admit

¹ In Ely such an organization has certainly shown its vitality, and has rendered very valuable service in giving greater prominence to the importance of this branch of Church-work. Under the direction of this Committee a Triennial Festival for the Clergy and Teachers of the Diocese is held in the cathedral, and the very large number attending have undoubtedly given an impulse that has made itself very widely felt.

² The first portion of the paper appeared in the June *CHURCHMAN*.

that, traversing over so wide a range, the sketch which has been given must be regarded as more or less imperfect. Many indications of the growth of the Church could not within the allowed limits be touched upon, as, for instance, the development of the Home and Foreign Episcopate—the wider opportunity afforded for mutual counsel between clergy and laity upon matters affecting the position of the National Church and her increased usefulness. There is now but one Diocese which has not its Diocesan Conference; and the Central Council has already shown its power to awaken enthusiasm and to remove some existing difficulties in the way of Church progress by its thoughtful discussions and practical suggestions. Again; the Church Congress, which has lived twenty-four years, by the large and influential character of its meetings, is a living witness not only to the renewed and awakened life of the Church, but to a greater willingness to sink “party” differences in an earnest desire to encompass the common good. The recent proposal of the Archbishop of Canterbury to form a House of Laymen, in connection with Convocation, is another indication of the readiness to invite the laity to take part in the councils and administrations of the Church.

The records of the Church’s progress in the Foreign Mission field have not come within the scope of this paper, but by reference to the “Official Year-Book,” pp. 197-273, those who desire such information may be able to form a very accurate idea of the work of the Church abroad from the short reports furnished by the Colonial Bishops and the official summaries of the Foreign Missionary Societies.

In endeavouring to form an estimate of Church life and progress, it should be remembered that by no human standard is it possible to gauge the secret and deeper work which God is ever carrying on in the souls of men through the appointed ministry: this will best be seen and known in the light of the future. Meanwhile we may rejoice to see all around us in the multiplied energy of the Church and practical methods for bringing the great masses of our people under the blessing of God’s saving mercy and love, so much to strengthen the conviction that the life-giving Spirit is in the midst of us, and that God in a very powerful and visible way is making the Church of England the instrument of communicating His life and light to the world.

