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THE CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

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

VOL. XII.

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1885

us never forget the debt of gratitude which we owe to him; that he spent a long and laborious life in opposing barbarous ignorance, blind superstition, and many of the errors of the Church of Rome; and let us admit that he deserves to be called the most illustrious of the Reformers before the Reformation.

ARTHUR R. PENNINGTON.

(*To be continued.*)

Correspondence.

ECCLESIASTICAL DILAPIDATIONS.

To the Editor of "THE CHURCHMAN."

SIR,—The article on Dilapidations in your last issue calls for some comment, as it misrepresents, or misapprehends, the reasons why a large majority of the beneficed clergy regard the Act of 1871 with strong and increasing dislike, not to use even a stronger word.

Whether it is of any use for them to complain of anything, however oppressive, which from time to time is added to the burthen of their cares and responsibilities, is a question which perhaps most of them would now answer in the negative. They have no real voice in making or modifying those laws which bind them; and the stream of public feeling has, of late years, been decidedly against giving them a voice, or even listening to their expressions of opinion at all. But lest the "Hon. Sec. of the Association of Diocesan Surveyors" should plead hereafter that the voice of protest is silent, I may be permitted to point out why the sufferers under that Act continue to regard it as unjust and oppressive; and why they are determined to leave no stone unturned to procure its repeal.

From the earliest times it has been customary for the holders of glebe to be responsible for its repair; and it is simply calumnious to say they now shrink from that responsibility. The Archdeacon used to be empowered to see that the glebes were repaired; but abuses no doubt crept in, bribes were offered and accepted, and instead of the dilapidations being repaired, Archdeacons grew rich. Some years before the Act of 1871, the Archbishop of York tried to pass a new Dilapidation Act; and, when modified, it finally became the Act of 1871. Had justice been done, a short and stringent Act should have compelled Archdeacons, under penalty, to do their duty, which does not consist in delivering Charges echoing the Bishop's opinions, but in maintaining in efficiency the fabrics and glebes of the Church. That Act gave Bishops the power of appointing Diocesan Inspectors; and they appointed architects, of some standing perhaps as architects, but whose qualification for dilapidation surveys was not by any means apparent. Residing, for the most part, far from their work, living probably in London, they cannot be aware of the local value of labour, the cost of materials, etc.; and their assessments, as no one can wonder, are often far wide of the mark, made perhaps on a scale of prices which obtain elsewhere. Numerous cases may be cited when the assessments have been as much as 30 or 35 per cent. above local prices. But no redress is possible, and no available appeal. The appoint-

ment of surveyor, which ought to be made by the clergy alone, and annually, is virtually a life appointment, by the Bishop alone, and adds one more member to the Episcopal staff, with constant access to the secretaries and others who have the ear of the Bishop. Feeling that they are thus placed in an impregnable position, the new surveyors have in multitudes of cases conducted themselves as virtually irresponsible, and inflicted truly terrible hardships upon isolated and defenceless clergymen. The ears of all honest and generous-minded men would tingle could they hear the letters which I have received, containing details of cases from every part of England and Wales, in illustration of this statement.

On the avoidance of a living and subsequent appointment of a Vicar, the surveyor sends him a statement of dilapidations which he is forthwith to make good, and the amount of which he could not guess at before his institution. Cases have come under my notice when livings would have been refused had not the sum so required been concealed. But when he has entered upon the living, and cannot draw back, the surveyor will tell him that the sum, *whatever it may be*, is a debt due to him from the old Incumbent, or his widow, probably penniless; but that he, the new Incumbent, is actually made responsible for recovering it, and anyhow must pay it to the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty (so called) within six months, whether he recover it or not! And this paternal imposition is laid upon him under a threat of immediate sequestration, which to many a poor clergyman means practical ruin! He must pay it into that powerful body without the faintest guarantee that it will ever be repaid to him. And, more shameful still, that wealthy Corporation, composed chiefly of Bishops, have, in numerous instances, withheld all or part of this money, till it has amounted, including interest, by competent calculation, to the sum of upwards of £300,000! So this Act, which was passed on the pretence of benefiting the clergy, has managed to extort out of their pockets, and place practically in mortmain, a sum which is stated to reach this considerable amount, in addition to what they have expended in the preservation of their glebes, chancels, and houses; and this in fifteen years! It only wanted one more touch to make this beautiful contrivance perfect. That last touch is given when we learn that the new Incumbent—and, poor man, he alone—is to pay all the fees which can be accumulated round the survey by the joint ingenuity of his skilful phlebotomists! the amount of which, by the way, in the Diocese of Chichester is carefully shrouded from the public eye, and finds no place, as in most other dioceses, in the "Diocesan Calendar;" and it has been very difficult to arrive at this abstruse piece of ecclesiastical history. It was found at last, hidden away in the Blue Book, ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, giving the proceedings of a Committee of Investigation into the working of the Act after five years' trial. From that Blue Book it appears that the survey in the Diocese of Chichester is divided into three cases. In the first, the fees are at the rate of £31 7s. 6d. per cent. of cost of repair—i.e., to get £20 worth of repairs done, the clergyman must first pay to the surveyor the sum of £6 5s. 6d. In the second case, the fees are £32 17s. 6d. per cent.; and in case 3, we find that it will cost the unhappy clergyman the sum of £3 13s. paid down to that gentleman to get *no repairs done at all!*

It should be added that the Committee appointed to investigate the working of the Act in 1876 reported as follows:—"Your Committee are of opinion that the operation of the present Act has in many respects failed to accomplish the objects for which it was enacted; that it has provided no remedy for the most important complaint made under the old law, namely, the inability of the representatives of deceased Incum-

bents to meet the amount assessed for dilapidations, but has cast upon new Incumbents an obligation to pay over the amount, and attached also to them a liability for fees previously unknown to the law, and has deprived the clergy of all power of acting in their own matters, of choosing their own advisers, and of all practical appeal against the official surveyor appointed under the Act. Your Committee are of opinion that some legislative alteration is needed to remove the well-grounded complaints of a large body of the clergy."

Allowing for the fine point which, in such documents, is always put upon condemnatory language, it is clear that in the real opinion of the Committee the Act of 1871 is little short of iniquitous. And now that the surveyors have bound themselves together in an Association to rivet their chains upon the clergy, it is high time for the clergy to form an organization to obtain the repeal of the Act, by sending to Convocation practical men from the lower ranks of the Church; by urging on all friends of the Church the prompt removal of the scandal of Queen Anne's Bounty amassing money wrung from the clergy on dilapidation accounts; and by opening the eyes of the hitherto untouched holders of livings to the injustice which hangs over their heads, and which makes a mere surveyor their absolute master instead of their hired servant; and, above all, by warning all our rulers of the danger of imperilling the paternal authority of the Bishop by associating him with frequent acts of oppressive exaction perpetrated in his name. The surveyors, as a body, complained that they had not been asked by the Committee for their suggestions how to make the Act more tolerable by the clergy. This at least proves that they know how it could be amended. But no suggestion with that object has ever emanated from them that I know of; and now they are found, through the agency of their secretary, bolstering up the Act with all its provisions! Is this because it would be quite impossible to make it any better in the interests of the surveyors, though it could easily be amended in those of the clergy? The only remedy is for the clergy to stir to amend it for themselves. A Bill could easily be framed which would be a boon to the Church. The clergy do not wish to get rid of responsibilities, which are indeed bulwarks against disestablishment and disendowment. They do not even wish to get rid of surveyors; for the Archdeacon has no authority over their glebes; but they wish to hire their surveyors at their own wages—they wish to get rid of exorbitant fees; and, by making the office elective and terminable, they wish to put a check upon abuses. Above all, they wish for a real and effective court of appeal; and that a schedule of what is and what is not assessable be drawn up for the whole Church. And they are prepared to present to Parliament a Bill embodying these suggestions.

H. GLANVILLE BARNACLE, M.A., F.R.A.S.

Kirk Chapel Vicarage, July 24th.

REMARKS ON THE USE AND NON-USE OF ITALICS IN THE REVISED VERSION.

SIR.—These remarks were written before the learned article on the same subject by the Rev. Canon Girdlestone was in print, and are offered with considerable diffidence; the more so, that they are an expression of regret that the italics of the A.V. are not more generally retained; whereas his opinion is "that our Bibles have hitherto been overloaded" with them. On this general statement I offer no opinion, but as an ordinary reader think it may be well to draw attention to one of the uses of italics, to which Canon Girdlestone does not make special allusion, and