

have no common ground to start with. We must agree to differ.

(2) Some of my readers think that Church Reform may be a desirable thing in the abstract, but they regard it as totally impracticable and impossible. They look on me as a sort of visionary enthusiast, who has a "bee in his bonnet," and have hardly patience to read what I say. Well, that cry "impossible" has often been raised against novelties, and I am not surprised to hear it again. Winsor was called an enthusiast when he proposed to light London with gas; Stephenson, when he advised the use of the locomotive on railways; Lesseps, when he originated the Suez Canal. I am content to wait. A few years will show who is right and who is wrong. "Solvit ambulando." Scores of things are thought impracticable, simply because men will not attempt to do them.

(3) Some of my readers think that to attempt external Church Reform is downright wrong. They are ready to denounce me as a carnal-minded backslider for propounding it. They say that what we want is not more Bishops, or new Convocations, but a revival of true religion, more preaching of the Gospel, more faith, and more prayer. All very good! For twenty-five years, I may humbly remark, I have written, and worked, and preached, and laboured, in this direction, to the best of my ability. I hope to do so to the end of my days. But why is all this to prevent my seeking Church Reform? You might as well tell me that I am not to urge on a man sobriety, cleanliness and economy, because these things are not converting grace, and cannot save his soul.

(4) Some of my readers think that Church Reform is positively dangerous. They shrink with horror from the idea of multiplying Bishops and vivifying Convocation. They regard me as a kind of Ishmael, whose hand is against everybody, and whose suggestions would ruin the Church,—or as a kind of Jehu, who "drives furiously," and would upset the whole concern. They tell me that ten more Bishops, like some on the bench, would blow the whole Church into the air, and that the remedy is worse than the disease. "Talk no more of reforms," they cry; "let us hobble on as we are."—Well, we must agree to differ! I do not believe that one of the reforms I have suggested would imperil the Church, if it was only accompanied by the safeguards I have named. The greatest peril, to my mind, consists in the policy of total inaction, and in doing nothing at all.

Is the Established Church of England in danger or not? This is the broad reply I make to all who object to Church Reform, and refuse to consider it. Danger or no danger? Yes or no? That is the question.—What! no inward danger, when the Real Presence, the Popish Confessional, and candle-blessing are found rampant on one side, and the Atonement, the Divinity of Christ, the Inspiration of Scripture, and the reality of miracles, are coolly thrown overboard on the other!—What! no outward danger, when infidels, Papists, and Dissenters are hungering and thirsting after the destruction of the Establishment, compassing sea and land to accomplish their ends!—What! no danger, when myriads of our working classes never enter the walls of our church, and would not raise a finger to keep her alive, while by household suffrage they have got all power into their hands!—What! no danger, when the Irish Church has been disestablished, the Act of Union has been trampled under foot, Protestant endowments have been handed over to Papists, and the wedge for severing Church and State has been let in, and the Statesman who did all this is still Prime Minister with an immense majority!—No danger, indeed! I can find no words to express my astonishment that men say so. But, alas, there are never wanting men who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, and who will not understand.

The Established Church of England is in danger. There is no mistake about it. This is the one broad, sweeping reason why I advocate Church Reform. There is a "hand-writing on the wall," flashing luridly from the other side of St. George's Channel, which needs no Daniel to interpret it. The bell has begun to toll for the funeral of the Irish Establishment. Her grave is dug, and the mourners are going about the streets. Who shall say that a coffin is not already being made for her English sister?—The old Italian enemy of Protestantism has tasted blood in the last twelve months, and she will never be content till she has tasted more. There is a current setting in towards the disestablishment of all national Churches, and we are already in it. We are gradually drifting downwards, though many perceive it not; but those who look at the old landmarks cannot fail to see that we move. We shall soon be in the rapids. A few,—a very few years,—and we shall be over the falls. The English public seems drunk with the grand idea of "free trade" in everything, in religion as well as in commerce, in Churches as well as in corn. Even the Master of the Temple tells Harrow school, "I expect and half foresee disestablishment." (See Dr. Vaughan's sermon on "Progress the Condition of Permanence.") Quite moderate men, like the Bishops of Ely and Rochester, calmly discuss its consequences. The daily press is constantly harping on the subject. There is not a respectable Insurance Office in London that would insure the life of the Establishment for twenty years! And shall we sit still and refuse to set our house in order? I, for one, say God forbid!—Shall we wait till we are turned out into the street, and obliged to reform ourselves in the midst of a hurricane of confusion? I, for one, say God forbid!—The experienced general tells us that it is madness to change front in the face of an enemy. The skilful American driver objects to shifting luggage in the middle of a deep ford. If we believe that danger is impending over the Church Establishment, let us not wait till the storm bursts. Let us grip our oars while we can, and attempt Church Reform.

I must drop this part of my subject here. I turn from those who object to Church Reform, to those who are its friends. They ask continually, What can be done? How shall we set to work? What may we expect? What are our prospects?—To these questions I shall at once proceed to supply an answer. I shall give that answer with unfeigned diffidence, as I do not pretend to have more eyes than other men. But I shall give it with the utmost frankness. This is no time for mincing matters, and beating about the bush. A pilot must speak shortly, sharply, and plainly, when the ship is in the breakers. Nothing, I

know well, can be done without an Act of Parliament. But how shall we obtain Parliamentary action? From whom must the first impetus come?

(1) In the first place, we must look for nothing from the Bishops. It is impossible, with all the cares of their present large Dioceses, that the Bishops can take up so complicated a question as Church Reform. Many of them it is commonly reported, see no necessity for any change. Some of them, judging by recent "Charges," appear to think the unhappy divisions of our Church a most useful, salutary, elysian, and delightful state of things, and to regard the various schools of opinion as excellent checks on one another, or as Kilkenny cats, which will finally eat one another up, except their tails. In short, they are not, as a body, united, and it is useless, under such circumstances, to expect from them any large measure of Church Reform.

After all, Bishops are only flesh and blood. They can hardly be expected to propose any large diminution of their own dignity and importance. We cannot expect Bishop Wilberforce or Bishop Magee to play the part of Quintus Curtius, in order to fill-up the yawning gulf in our ecclesiastical forum. We cannot expect these able prelates to bring in a Bill enacting that their own Dioceses shall be cut in two, their own incomes halved, and themselves exiled from the House of Lords, in order that they may retire, like Cincinnati, into provincial obscurity! The idea is preposterous and absurd.

Above all, we must never forget, that, with rare exceptions, our English Bishops have never initiated great popular movements. It is not the genius of their order. They have generally been followers, and not leaders, of public opinion. Boldness, aggressiveness, inventiveness, constructiveness, have seldom been their characteristics. They rarely move unless they are pressed into action. They avoid, as far as possible, all risk of collisions.—It may be they are right. Perhaps in the long run they adopt the safest line. The history of Laud, who ruined himself and the Church of England, is a standing warning against much episcopal independence of thought! But, judging from the experience of the last two centuries, English Bishops are never likely to be leading Church Reformers.

(2) In the second place, we must expect little or nothing from Convocation. It is utterly improbable that this anomalous assembly, which can do nothing without Royal license, will ever be allowed to originate Church Reform. Its proceedings are already regarded with a little chronic jealousy. It is more than doubtful whether any Government would ever trust it with legislative power of the pettiest description. It is quite certain that the House of Commons would never tolerate the slightest shadow of statute-framing by anybody but itself. Above all, the very constitution of Convocation makes it most unlikely that it would ever propound any really valuable reform.

Can we imagine, for instance, this little clerical Parliament putting the extinguisher on its own head, amputating its own superfluous limbs, and deluging itself with an infusion of laity? Can we imagine Deans and Canons performing the Japanese operation of "happy despatch," and proclaiming the uselessness of the Cathedral system? Can we imagine Archdeacons snuffing themselves out in cold blood, passing a "self-denying ordinance," and voting that there shall be no *ex-officio* members in the Church's synod? He that expects such things has more imagination than I possess. I expect no thorough measure of Church Reform from Convocation.

(3) In the third place, we must not dream of anything from the Parochial Clergy, as a body. A few of the Evangelical section, and a few of the High Church section, I believe, are honestly in favour of Church Reform. The vast majority, I suspect, are entirely opposed to it, and want no change.

The ruling maxims of a good monk in the middle ages were said to be three,—*"Semper subesse superioribus—legere brevarium taliter qualiter,—et sinere omnes res eo vadere quo vadent."* I often think, when these mediæval worthies left the world, their mantle must have descended on the rectors, vicars, and perpetual curates of Old England. At any rate, if we have not put on their clothes, we have drunk deeply into their spirit. For resolute unwillingness to admit the necessity of change,—for steady dislike to anything new,—for persevering adherence to old paths, whether good or bad,—for inability to see the need of adapting ourselves to the times,—for all these characteristics, I believe there is no class in England to be compared with the Parochial Clergy. Reforms of any kind are not much in our line.

Like Bishops and Deans and Archdeacons, the Parochial Clergyman is only flesh and blood. Can any man in his senses suppose that one incumbent out of ten will like the idea of an active lynx-eyed Bishop in every county making an annual visitation of every parish, and taking stock of every nook in his diocese,—an annual Ruri-Decanal Synod, comprising laymen as well as clergymen,—an energetic Churchwarden or parochial Lay Council poking him up about his doctrine or ceremonial,—a Diocesan Evangelist invading his parish and arousing the spiritual appetite of his people? If many rectors and vicars did not instinctively shrink with horror from the very idea of such revolutionary work as this, I am much mistaken in my estimate of human nature. Oh, no! Your average English clergyman is a worthy quite man, who views with suspicion anything like stir, movement, sensation, progress, steam, violent exertion, perpetual motion, or express speed. He thinks these things savour of excitement and agitation. He deprecates the very idea of changes in this direction. They are just as obnoxious to him as the steam thrashing-engine was to the old labourer who used to flourish a flail all the year round in his master's barn. From the bulk of the parochial clergy we must expect no help in seeking Church Reform.

(4) In the fourth place, we must build no hopes at present upon the House of Commons. That remarkable assembly, no doubt, is the most powerful institution in England, and does pretty much what it likes with every question. Nothing, we may depend, will ever be done in the matter of Church Reform, unless the Lower House of Parliament is the doer of it. But the House of Commons is eminently the representative of public opinion, and unless public opinion brings Church Reform to the front as a great question of the day, there is little chance of its

getting even a hearing in St. Stephen's. The House of Commons is now composed of such heterogeneous elements that it naturally dislikes religious questions, especially questions affecting the Established Church of the realm. And wonder. Such questions evidently cannot be discussed without causing heavy collisions. A day may come when constituencies may insist on their representatives taking Church Reform in hand. At present it seems far distant.

Something, I admit, might be done, if the cause had a champion in Parliament who could command the ear of the House. A Lay Churchman who possessed the high principle and eloquence of Wilberforce, or the strong sense and unwearied perseverance of Cobden, might yet do for Church Reform what the one did for free trade. He might bring forward the question every year with courteous importunity, and win a place for it by his able advocacy. He might gradually plant the subject in the minds of thinking men, secure a patient hearing for his arguments, and rally round him a respectable party of adherents. But it is vain to pretend that we have any such champion at present. Secular questions absorb the intellect of rising politicians. Church Reform requires an advocate in St. Stephen's who shall be a man *per se*, a man of one subject, and a man of one thing—not a bore, not a fool, not a fanatic of the "Praise-God Barabonns" style, but a man of sense, a man of tact, a man of imperturbable good temper, a man of undeniable power, a man whose character commands the respect of his opponents, and whose motives are above suspicion. Such a champion of Church Reform might do wonders if he could be found, and make a glorious position for himself in ecclesiastical annals. But where is such a man to be found? I cannot tell. Our Egypt yields no Joseph at present, and our Synod no Pym or Hampden. From the House of Commons we expect nothing at all.

(5) In the last place, we must place our main dependence, under God, upon the individual efforts of Church Reformers throughout the length and breadth of the country. This may seem a "lame and impotent conclusion" to arrive at, but I can arrive at no other. It is vain to wait for Bishops, Convocation, Clergy, or Parliament. They will work no deliverance for us. The friends of Church Reform must take up the matter with their own hands, or else nothing will be done. The classical waggoner, when his waggon had stuck fast in the ruts, was told by Hercules not to sit still crying and roaring for help, but to put his own shoulder to the wheel. The friends of Church Reform must not be content with constantly screaming out, "Something ought to be done." They must cast off all dependence on Hercules on the bench, or Hercules in Convocation. They must take off their own coats, and set to work in a business-like way to do something themselves. Every Church Reformer must put his own shoulder to the wheel, and do his duty. What is the first thing to be done? My answer is short and simple. We must begin by informing the public mind. We must try to create, educate, and direct public opinion. We cannot possibly force Church Reform down people's throats, however much we may be convinced of its desirableness ourselves. We must go to work as the "Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers" did, and patiently sow light and information, before we shall reap any harvest. The ignorance of most people on the whole subject of Church Reform is vast and profound. Myriads of them have a vague idea that our country is a "land of priests and monks," and that the "Popish" faith is preached and Popery

any subject at all. Like nature, "Anglia nihil facit per saltum." It took many months of miserable disorder at Balaclava and Sabastopol, to convince us that our army administration needed any reform at all, and was not a perfect system? How many years will it take to convince Churchmen that there is anything wrong with the Church?—It took years of patient agitation to carry the objects of the Anti-Slavery Societies. How much longer will it take to remedy ecclesiastical defects?—In truth, I know not whether God means to allow us time to reform our Church at all, and whether all our efforts may not, like Josiah's reformations, prove "too late." One thing only I know. Our business is to work on patiently, and if we cannot get all that we want, to get all that we can.—Let us not despise bit-by-bit reforms. Let us accept them with thankfulness, as instalments, so long as we find principles are admitted, and the train is set in motion. Better a thousand times creep slowly forward, than not move at all. Let us, for instance, make a practical beginning, by pressing everywhere and in every way the rights and duties of the laity. Let us summon churchwardens all over the land to take up their rightful position, and to become genuine champions of the Church of England. Let us urge the admission of the laity into ruri-decanal synods, and leave no stone unturned to obtain it. These things may seem trifling and insignificant to some. They are not so in reality. They are a beginning; and that is half the battle. Come what will, and come what may, one mighty principle must never be forgotten by the friends of Church Reform: "Duties are ours, and events are God's."

My task is done, and I hasten on to a conclusion. I leave the whole subject with a somewhat heavy heart. My hopes for the future of the Church of England are less than my fears. The clouds in the ecclesiastical horizon are dark and lowering. There are evil symptoms abroad in our Zion which fill me with alarm.

(1) One evil symptom is the general low standard of ministerial holiness and decision. I speak of the whole clerical body, without reference to schools or parties, and of my own section of it as much as of any other. We are not up to the mark of our forefathers in many respects. Our fine gold has become very dim. Our lock seem shorn like Samson's. We are not the thorough-going "men of God" that we ought to be, and our influence on the public mind is proportionately small. I tremble to think what would come out, if the Church of England were suddenly disestablished and disendowed. We are, many of us, quite unfit and unprepared to meet such a catastrophe. I say it to our shame. Oh, that God would revive us! Oh, that revival might begin at the sanctuary!

(2) Another evil symptom is the seemingly endless estrangement of good men from one another. Of course there can never be real harmony between Evangelical Churchmen and ultra-Ritualists or ultra-Rationalists. There is an utter want of common ground between them. There is a gulf which cannot be passed. If they are Churchmen we are not. Whatever some newspapers and some Episcopal Charges may please to say, mere "earnestness" is not a sufficient bond of union. There is no cement in mere vague "zeal."—But how long is the miserable misunderstanding between Evangelical Churchmen and moderate High and Broad Churchmen to go on? Is this a stream that can never be bridged, forded, or crossed? I cannot and I will not believe it!—On the one hand, it is high time for Evangelical Churchmen to understand that

—On the other hand, it is high time for moderate High and Broad Churchmen to understand that Evangelical clergymen are not all Antinomians and fanatics, and that they do use the Prayer-book honestly, and do value the ministry and the Sacraments, and do believe the Nicene Creed.—At present the ignorance on both sides of one another is simply scandalous, disgraceful, and astounding. Oh, that God would pour upon us the spirit of unity! I tremble to think what would happen if Disestablishment suddenly came down upon us! Without a better understanding than there is at present, the Church of England would infallibly go to pieces. I want no one to give up a jot or tittle of that which he believes to be God's truth. We need not change or sacrifice one of our cherished opinions. But surely we ought to try to understand one another.

(3) Another evil symptom is the wide-spread apathy and indifference which prevail among lay Churchmen about the future of our ecclesiastical questions. There is a want of rallying power which bodes ill for our constitution. The feeling of the vast majority, even of thinking men, seems to be that "it is all a muddle and confusion, but we suppose it will last our time." I advise them not to be too sure. The deluge may come rather sooner than they think. "To-morrow shall be as this day," was the saying of man in Noah's time. Yet the flood came suddenly, and destroyed them all.—"To-morrow shall be as this day," was the saying of Belshazzar's companions at his feast. Yet that very night the Persian army broke in, and the feast ended in bloodshed, destruction, and confusion.—"To-morrow shall be as this day," was the saying of Louis XV.'s profligate courtiers. Yet many of them lived to see Church and State upset, and the guillotine at work in the streets at Paris.—"To-morrow shall be as this day," was the feeling of Irish Churchmen three years ago. Yet a sword was hanging over their heads at that very moment by a single hair, and the year 1870 sees them stripped, plundered, and turned out of doors!—Oh, that we may not see something of the same sort on our side of the Channel! Oh, that English Churchmen would try to be in earnest about other matters beside hunting, and shooting, and dancing, and dressing, and farming, and railways, and cotton, and iron, and coal! Oh, that they would take up Church matters in a business-like way, and "set their house in order" while they can!

I see these three evil symptoms, and I honestly confess I am afraid. Were it not that I believe that nothing is impossible with God,—that the greatest works are often begun by small minorities,—that the darkest hour of the night is often that which precedes the morning,—that in Church work light is often evolved out of a chaos of mist, fog, tangle, and obscurity, so that God may have all the glory,—were it not that I believe all this,

the public what repairs are needed, and how its usefulness may be increased. One wants a steady, wholesome current of public opinion about Church Reform, and the thing will be done.

What means shall we use for spreading information? Again my answer is short and simple. We must use those old and tried weapons which in every free country are the prime agents of all reformation. We must use the press and the platform, the pen and the tongue. We must set men thinking, talking, and considering the whole question of Church Reform. We must invite them to read short statements of the defects we want remedied, and the best probable remedies. We must court the fullest inquiry into the facts of our Church Establishment, point out its admirable qualities, and ask men to assist in getting such a noble institution rearranged, readjusted, and improved. Once set the great stone rolling, and it will clear a road for itself. Once set the middle classes and intelligent artisans reading and thinking about Church Reform, and I have strong hope that something will be done.

What special machinery shall we employ for carrying out our designs? This is a question which I had rather leave to others to answer. What is good in one locality is not good in another. I have little faith myself in brand-new Societies. Such agencies are too often noisy, expensive, useless affairs, and do more harm than good, by making men shuffle off their own responsibility, and leave to others what they should do themselves. Such agencies are apt to assume a defiant, combative tone, as if they would knock any one down who disagreed with them, and thus create prejudices instead of winning friends. I have far more faith in the unbought, unsalaried, voluntary exertions of all Churchmen who are friends of Church Reform. Every Church Reformer must set to work in his own neighbourhood, and like the builders in Nehemiah's days, labour opposite his own house. If there was only one man in each town or rural deanery who would begin regularly agitating the question of Church Reform, and constantly bombarding his neighbours with wisely-chosen tracts about it, I think much might be done. John Wesley's maxim, "All at it, and always at it," is a maxim which would be found most valuable by Church Reformers. Once more I say,—Only enlighten the public mind and fill it with information, and the question would ultimately settle itself. The one thing needful is to spread light and knowledge. Give me in every county the "one man" system! I doubt whether Noah's ark would ever have been built, if it had been left to some modern "Committees."

How long will it be before Church Reform is obtained? What chances are there of the movement succeeding? These are questions which I cannot possibly answer. The English people are notoriously slow to move in new directions on