

OUR CHURCHES.

ST. MATTHEWS.

O Tempora, O Mores. Well may this be said in respect to this church, "Na Na mon," says my Scotch friend, "not church, it's aye a kirk." Shade of John Knox, where art thou? Didst thou when in the flesh, whilst preaching on the lone hill side, with the Bible in one hand and the good old Claverhouse in the other, ever dream that thy doctrines would be preached in such an edifice as St. Matthews? I trow not! I was not myself on the spot when this hill side episode came about, but memory carries me back to childish days, when I was once taken to a Presbyterian meeting, and I distinctly remember a gentleman all in black,—except his face, which was of the sallow hue,—being ushered on to a platform by sundry other black coated individuals, who I afterwards found out to be "elders;" I could not understand why, because the Pastor looked a great deal older than any of them. How youthful fancy does run riot at times; I remember so well when I saw this procession filing on to the platform comparing the pastor to a poor wretch just going to be hanged, and those who followed him to a sort of coroners jury, to see the thing was properly carried out, so lugubrious did they look. The platform was ornamented solely by chairs, for the benefit of the above mentioned, and a table on which was the inevitable decanter of water and a glass. By the bye, why are these not required now? Perhaps the prayers are not so long. All this passed through my mind on my entrance into St. Matthews, and whilst collecting my scattered ideas, preparatory to "taking in" the "feast of reason" as regards the sermon, and the "flow of soul" as regards the singing, which I had been told awaited me on visiting St. Matthews. On taking my seat and having—as some impertinent youngster has handed down to posterity—"smelt into my hat," otherwise, said a prayer, I took a look round and was astounded at what met my gaze. This is no lone hill side, this is no platform decorated with half a dozen chairs, on which are perched the same number of men, who, if their plumage were any criterion, might be taken for crows; this, why this is a palatial residence, this is no *kirk*, it's a church, and of the church, churchey. This place of worship has a spire, John Knox if I remember rightly said he was the most lowly minded of men, still that's no reason that St. Matthews should not aspire. An organ also is to the front, dear, oh dear, how things do change! Those good old Reformers used to give out the hymns verse by verse, leading the tune themselves, and by doing this, and praising "Him from whom all blessings flow" and leading otherwise a good life, the considered themselves entitled as much as others to a seat in Heaven.

Now, it seems to me we want a \$3000 organ, a brass band, &c., &c., to gain the same position. But to return to St. Matthews. I venture to say that no congregation of any denomination ever had duty so indelibly written on each individual face as it is in this kirk. It is shown in the solid matter of fact way each one takes his seat, and the self-congratulatory look round he gives, to stamp it on the elders' minds that he is there, in his place, and afterwards the way in which he does *not* kneel, when his Pastor during a thirty minute prayer, happens to say "Oh Lord we thy servants now kneel before thee." As a matter of fact, on my visit, I never saw one individual kneeling at all, so I conclude that the above quotation must be a figure of speech. Whilst I did not see anyone kneeling, still I saw its antitheses in a worshipper standing up during the prayer. I commend that man:—he did show what ought to be in attitude, he proved that he made some difference, in his house of worship, and in his domestic hearth. One word in regard to the length of the prayers, I wonder if the congregations were canvassed, whether they would not prefer two prayers of twenty minutes each with a hymn sandwiched to one of forty minutes straight? Long prayers and sermons seem to me very like another "Fair Rosamond's Maze," where the more one wandered, the more like one was to come back to the same spot. The singing at St. Matthews exceeded my anticipations, it often happens that one

has been impressed beforehand, that he is going to have a treat, he expecting too much is disappointed, but not so in this case; but considering who formed the choir I ought not to have had the least anxiety. Choir, I said! Well, the fact is that had it not been for that department there would have been no singing, for the members of the congregation sit placidly back in their seats smiling benignly on any waif or stray that may come in for a little spiritual refreshment, as much as to say "not such a bad choir, eh?" I myself like a paid choir, because I know then, that however monotonous the prayer, however uninteresting the sermon, I shall find rest in the arms of the choir, so to speak. Still, even with a choir such as this, the fact remains we cannot be sung to Heaven without some volition on our part. In bidding adieu to St. Matthews, I trust that their "call" may turn out a satisfactory one, and that whoever is chosen, may be as well liked as the late pastor. Mr. Laing.

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