

'sphere' most coveted. In fact, few positions are, in a worldly point of view, more enviable than that of a popular member of a town chapel. No vestry patriots vex his meditative moments; no squabbles with ritho-abhorring farmers disturb his sleep. When he looks round him from his pulpit, his glance is not met, like that of the parochial clergyman, by the stars of stolidity or indifference; but he beholds a throng of fervent worshippers who hang upon his lips, and whose very presence as voluntary members of his congregation is a pledge of their personal attachment to himself. There is something not merely soothing to vanity, but animating to the better parts of his nature, in such a spectacle. The zealous man must feel his zeal quickened, the pious his piety warmed, by such evidence of sympathy; and among the Recordite clergy, men of zeal and piety are not lacking. But, beside these so advantages, he is exempted from all the more burdensome responsibilities of the pastoral charge. His flock consists exclusively of the wealthy or easy classes, so that the painful task of attempting to enlighten brutal ignorance, and to raise degraded pauperism, is not among his duties. Even if a local district has nominally been attached to his chapel, its poor inhabitants form no part of his congregation, or, at most, only a straggling representative of their class lurks here and there, behind the pulpit, or beneath the organ. The duties of such a district, if there be any, are performed by the Curate, who reads the prayers and is kept to 'servo tables,' while the incumbent devotes himself to 'the ministry of the Word.'

His ministry consists essentially in preaching two extempore sermons on the Sunday. But there are other duties incidentally pertaining to his office. One of the most important is that of attending at the evening parties of his wealthier adherents. These social meetings are, indeed, among the most characteristic phenomena of the sect. In them we can best study its peculiar phraseology, and some of its most curious etiquettes and observances. The principal topics discussed in such assemblies are the merits and demerits of different preachers, the approaching restoration of the Jews, the date of the Millennium, the progress of the 'Tractarian heresy,' and the anticipated 'perversion' of High Church neighbours. These subjects are canvassed in a dialect differing considerably from common English. The words 'faithful,' 'tainted,' 'acceptable,' 'decided,' 'legal,' and many others, are used in a technical sense. We hear that Mr. A. has been more 'owned' than Mr. B., and that Mr. C. has more 'seals'† than Mr. D. Again, the word 'gracious' is invested with a meaning as extensive as that attached by young ladies to 'nice.' Thus we hear of a 'gracious sermon,' 'a gracious meeting,' 'a gracious child,' and even 'a gracious whipping.‡' The word 'dark' has also a new and peculiar usage. It is applied to every

† A preacher is said in this phraseology to be 'owned' when he makes many converts, and his converts are called his 'seals.'

‡ We are told of the hero of a recent biography that 'He gratefully recorded the history of his own conversion, and blessed the origin which had sometimes used the rod. In his father's chastening of him when a little child, he considered there had been a skill, and a secret of gracious influence, which all his fond affection could never repay.' (*Memoir of Forsyth*, p. 4.) We have mentioned this book above with deserved respect: we may therefore venture to express regret that its excellent writer should occasionally fall into this sort of phraseology.

person, book, or place, not impregnated with Recordite principles. We once were witnesses of a ludicrous mis-understanding resulting from this phraseology. 'What did you mean' (said A. to B.) by telling me that — was such a very de- village? I rode over there to-day, and found the street particularly broad and cheerful, and there is not a tree in the place.' 'The Gospel is not there,' was B.'s laconic reply.

In such conversation the evening wears away, not without instruction to the stranger who is initiated into these mysteries for the first time. At length, when he is preparing to depart, a rustling of gowns announces a general change of position; and suddenly the scattered chairs range themselves in a great semicircle, radiating from a central table, at which the clerical hero of the feast is seated. The fatal truth flashes upon the stranger's mind. An 'exposition' is about to begin, and he is doomed to sit it out. The minute-hand of the time-piece opposite must traverse three-fourths of its circle, before that lengthened torture ceases. And then there follows a scene, yet more painful to every rit feeling; a by-play of complimentary etiquette between the clergy present, accompanied by polite pressing and courteous refusals of the request urged by one upon another to offer the concluding prayer.\*

But these evening assemblies are not the only amusements permitted by the party. They are often pitted as the doomed victims of *ennui*; for it is supposed that the absence of balls and races, cards and theatres, games of chance, and tales of fiction, must render existence insupportable. Yet, even when they are destitute of higher objects, their life is by no means so colourless as is imagined. Novels and fairy-tales, it is true, are forbidden luxuries; but their places are abundantly supplied by the romantic fictions daily issuing from the Prophetic Press.† The imagination, cut down to the roots on one side, only pushes forth more vigorous shoots in another direction. Nor is variety wanting to this literature; for no two writers agree in their predictions, and some new history of futurity is published monthly.

Again, it is a popular delusion that the Recordites are excluded from public amusement. Nothing can be more contrary to the fact. Races indeed, and theatres, they abjure; and good reasons may be urged for the abjuration; but public meetings and platform orator fill up the vacant space.— Nor are these accessible only to the Londoner, or confined to the area of Exeter Hall. The religious world of every manufacturing town and watering-place has its fashionable season, when the secondary stars of London shoot down from their metropolitan sphere, to glitter on the provincial boards. Then follow morning meetings in the rotunda, and evening gatherings in the amphitheatre; Protestant breakfasts and Jewish luncheons; lectures here, addresses there, and specification elsewhere. Day after day, while fathers and husbands are busy in the counting-house, maids and ma-

\* We trust that nothing we have here said will be considered as implying an objection to the practice of ending the social meetings of Christians with common prayer. We only deprecate the faults which tend to bring that practice into disesteem.

† The fertility of the Prophetic Press may be estimated from the fact, that, besides innumerable treatises and pamphlets, it sends forth several regular periodicals, of which the 'Christian Ladies' Magazine,' the 'Prophetic Herald,' and the 'Quarterly Journal of Prophecy' have we believe, the largest circulation.

trons struggle for proximity to the platform. Their patient zeal is rewarded by the grateful orators with allusions complimentary and facetious, contrasting strangely with the solemn thorns on which they are grafted.\* On these occasions the Jewish Society generally attracts the largest audience; nor is this surprising when we remember the sex which furnishes the majority of the hearers. For where can curiosity find richer gratification than that supplied by this prophetic propaganda? Their bill of fare includes the immediate approach of the Red Dragon; the achievements of Gog and Magog; a fresh 'discovery' of the Lost Tribes (sometimes in the valleys of Kurdistan, sometimes in the plains of Timbuctoo †); a new and accurate account of the battle of Armageddon; and a picture of the subversion of Omar's Mosque by an army of Israelites marching from the Seven Diols. Such is the food provided for that love of Jews which distinguishes the sect. Nor is less ample provision made for their other ruling passion, the hatred of Papists. For its gratification, the Reformation Society meets in the subscription rooms. There subtle calculators announce a new solution of the number of the beast; there Protestant rhetoricians rekindle the flames of Smithfield in many a gentle bosom; there the dungeons of the Inquisition are once more flung open to the light of day; and there the chaste eloquence of Father Achilli expatiates on the abuses of the confessional, and detests with biographical fidelity every abomination of the Scarlet Woman.

The extravagancies and buffooneries which too often disgrace these public meetings, are perhaps unavoidable excrescences of a system which is itself a necessary evil. For it is said, and we fear truly, that without these periodical displays, it would be impossible to raise the requisite funds for religious or charitable objects. It is a farther cause of regret that it should be needful to spend so large a part of the income thus contributed in the mere work of collection; and that so little of this service should be the free-will offering of Christian love. In fact, the whole machinery and getting up of these societies has become far too much a mere matter of trade.\*

No doubt it is inevitable that when a party grows powerful in number and in wealth, it should attract retainers who join

\* The following specimen from the 'Record' may suffice. 'The noble lord, in order to show the good which might be effected by those young ladies about to be married, related an anecdote of a lady who, during the existence of the Anti-Corn-Law League, refused to marry her suitor until he became a subscriber to its funds. Of course such an obstacle as that did not stand long in the way, although the gentleman did not approve of the Association. And if the young ladies present would follow a similar course with respect to the Ragged School Union, they would speedily increase its income to a considerable extent.' We purposely suppress the name of the noble speaker, as it is not otherwise known to the public; and we are anxious not to give needless pain to private feelings.

† It was our fortune once to hear one of these Judaisers advocate the notion that the 'Lost Tribes' are identical with Saxons, on the ground that Saxon is an abridgement of Isaac's son.

\* From the following advertisement it would really seem as if Religious Societies were sometimes got up in the same spirit as Railway Companies. 'TO RELIGIOUS AND BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES. A gentleman of high standing in address and knowledge in getting up, conducting, and corresponding with the public in aid of charitable institutions, is desirous of meeting with a confidential engagement, in the above capacity, either in town or country.'