

the dwellers were poor people, and were widely scattered, it would be almost impossible to procure the residence and the services of educated clergymen if the system of endowments was altogether done away with. And he did not mean to say that even in towns the gain to the people arising from endowments for the clergy was not very considerable; because in the due discharge of the duties of their sacred office clergymen must continually have to say things which must be, more or less, for the moment disagreeable, though wholesome, to the leading men of their flock. The tonic and bitter must occasionally be administered in things spiritual as well as in things temporal. He held, then, that to provide for men charged with such an office a decent competence, which would put them in such a position as that they might not be dependent on the humour or the direct favour of those among whom they were ministering, was an advantage the full extent of which could scarcely be calculated. For country populations and distant back-settlements he felt convinced that no other system than that of endowments such as prevailed in the Church of England would provide the right sort of clergymen to the number necessary for the carrying out of the Christian ministry in this country. The present endowments were insufficient, and the question therefore arose, how were they to be increased? In considering this question it must be borne in mind that the existing wants of the people represented only a part of the case; because the population was continually increasing and being spread. There was no use of thinking of meeting the difficulty by a division of the existing endowments. That would be like breaking up a crust in order to feed a number of hungry men. What they wished to do could, he thought, be accomplished on the principle of this association, which was similar to that acted on under the parliamentary enactment which had brought into a common fund so many of the endowments of the Church of England. In distributing its grants, the ecclesiastical commission acted on the principle of expecting local contributions. Well, under the Diocesan Society for augmenting poor livings, it was proposed that a grant from the society would be in most cases met by a grant of equal amount from local sources, and the doubled grant would draw an equal amount from the funds of the ecclesiastical commissioners. In the Church of England the clergy were rather to be encouraged to marry than dissuaded from entering into the married state; and it could not be expected that educated men would be found to undertake the duties of the clerical office, if, by so doing, they should be obliged to live on a pittance miserably insufficient for the support of themselves and their families. It was said by some present that a gentleman was not the man best calculated to visit the dwellings of the poor, and that the poor felt such to be the case. He disbelieved that altogether. He believed that if there was any meaning in the word "gentleman," it was that the person who bore the name had been relieved from the parrowing influences of a want of education and from the pulsing influence of selfishness.

The Right Rev. prelate concluded by calling on ARCHDEACON BICKERSTETH to move the first resolution. The Archdeacon mentioned that a lay impropiator in the diocese, Lord Howe, had given up tithes to the amount of £150 a year in favour of the Church. The resolution was as follows:—

"That the poverty of a large number of livings in this diocese is a subject which demands the careful consideration of all who are interested in the national church."

Mr. DISRAELI, who was received with much cordiality, said—My Lord, I rise to second the resolution which has been moved by the Archdeacon of Buckingham. The Archdeacon has placed the general scope of the question so fully before this meeting that it is unnecessary for me to dilate in any very great detail. The condition of the great body of the benefices of this diocese is not a satisfactory one; but I hope that the result of this meeting, and the result of many meetings like the present throughout the country, will prove that we have no cause to indulge in any despondency. (Cheers.) No doubt for a long time very erroneous impressions have subsisted in this country as to the remuneration received by the clergy of our church, and the amount of wealth and property which it possesses. I think that time has, to a certain degree, removed those false impressions; but when errors have been prevalent for a long period, and have been made the foundation of misrepresentations, it is difficult entirely to remove the consequences of their first impression. The fact is, the clergy of the Church of England are a poor and not a rich clergy; and it is for the sake of the country not principally for the sake of the clergy, that I venture to lay down that we should take care that the clergy should be fairly rewarded. If you wish to engage the highest education and the highest sense of duty in the performance of the sacred office, it is most inexpedient that you should offer those from whom you expect such a high fulfilment, rewards and remunerations which no class of society out of that service would accept. (Cheers.) With respect to the present excellent association, which is in its infancy, I remark that it has already effected some good. Of the small livings in this county, although we have only laboured one year, twenty-two have already received some addition, and I observe that of these twenty-two, eleven of the highest did not exceed £80, and the lowest is under £50 a year. (Cheers.) It is a fact which no longer will be disputed, that the clergy in our church, who have been described as a wealthy and overpaid clergy, in truth contribute to the service of the church from their private resources more than they receive. (Cheers.) I believe it is now upon record that of their incomes at least two-thirds is provided from their own private resources. (Cheers.) Well, that is not a position of affairs which is honourable to the country; but I don't wish to recommend the cause which I am advocating to-day by a mere sentimental plea. Not merely is this not honourable to the country; it is highly disadvantageous to the country. It is of the first importance, as I venture to think, that men of the highest education, men who are impressed with the highest sense of responsibility, should be invested with the administration of the sacred office, and we cannot expect this of the clergy: it would be foreign to the principles of human nature to expect it if we held out to them none of the inducements that animate other classes of mankind. (Cheers.)

But it is not a surprising thing that the Church of England should be a poor church. Although in the aggregate its income may be very considerable, still if you look to its distribution, as is now very well known—though by some that too is doubted—you will see that it offers to the great body of the clergy a very small stipend. It is not, I say, at all surprising that the Church of England should not be a rich church, because the Church of England has been despoiled. (Cheers.) That is not a fate peculiar to the Church of England. Other churches have been despoiled; but there is this peculiarity with regard to the Church of England in this matter, that in other countries when the property of the church

has been taken away from it, whether the plea was right or wrong, I am not now, of course, considering; but in other countries when the church has been deprived by the state of its property, at least that property has been applied to public and national purposes. That has not been so in the case of the Church of England. The property of our church has been granted by despots and tyrants to their minions, thereby establishing, centuries ago, families who by virtue of the possession of that property—not by public service—have for generations absorbed a great portion of the government of this country, its power and patronage. (Cheers.)

Well, in these circumstances of aggravation, as regards the spoliation of the church in this country compared with the spoliation of the church in other countries, I find matter of consolation and of hope, because we live in an age when communities are governed by the influence of opinion, and when individuals are regulated in their conduct in a great degree by conscience; and I cannot for a moment believe that the estimable descendants of those original appropriators of church property, when they learn—and in a country of free discussion like the present they must now, all of them, be well informed upon the subject—when they know that men of the highest education are, from a sense of duty and devotion, dedicating their lives to the comforting of the people, and receiving for their labours stipends which even menials would refuse, I cannot but believe that the estimable descendants of the original appropriators, in the satiety of their splendour, must feel an impulse that will make them apply a portion of that property, thus years ago unjustly obtained, to purposes of a character which society will recognise, and by its approbation reward. (Cheers.) And I think what we have heard to-day, and what we know of the action of this society, justifies that expectation. The Archdeacon has just mentioned the instance of our highly esteemed neighbour Lord Howe, which is a most gratifying case—(cheers)—and I learn that shortly after the furnishing of this society—it is but due to the Duke of Bedford to mention it—a communication was received from his Grace couched in a spirit worthy of his high position and the respect which is entertained for him, which showed that he completely recognised the justice of the principle which I have indicated, and that he feels it to be his duty, as it has been his performance, with respect to all those miserably paid livings on his own estate—possessing, as that family does, large ecclesiastical property—to raise in every instance these low livings, not to a considerable amount, but to a rate at least adequate to sustain a clergyman who is performing parochial duty. (Cheers.) Well, then, I see we have a right to expect—I am more sanguine than the Archdeacon on this point—I think we have a right to expect that a portion of the property that was alienated from the church under circumstances that could not prevail and be justified in the present day, will yet find its way to the increase of these livings.

But, my lord, I should not be acting with candour to your lordship, if I concealed my opinion that there is little hope of any large action on the part of the class to which I have referred in this respect, or indeed, I will say that there is much chance of any great exertion to be made by the laity of the church generally, unless the church itself takes a more definite and determined position than it has occupied during the last twenty-five years. During that period there has been a degree of perplexity, of hesitation—I will say, even of inconsistency—in the relations between the church and the nation that has damped the ardour and depressed the energies of churchmen.