



CO-OPERATION, AND SOME OF ITS LESSONS.

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—ROM. xii. 5.

THIS is the Church of Christ St. Paul is speaking of, and they are spiritual gifts, not material possessions, with which his mind is occupied. Yet in his view the Church is a body of fellow-workers—

AN ASSOCIATION OF CO-OPERATION—

and in that Church each man has his own gifts from God. Each part of that co-operative body has some share in the production of the Church's gifts—and every one must use those gifts in distribution—not for his own but for a common benefit. Here is the spiritual pattern for every material counterpart of co-operative productive distribution.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

In every great social reform, based like co-operation upon considerations of moral principles, there are two leading safeguards, which should be prominently brought to view: (1) Adherence to the first principles, and, (2) The glory of God.

(1) And for first principles we have to go back, in
XII. 6.]

spite of what men may call the exigencies of the present, or the developments of first ideas, to the commencement of Co-operative work. We are all familiar with the history of the beginning of the co-operative movement—how grand ideals fired the enthusiasm of such men as F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and Thomas Hughes, and led them to such experimental efforts as should teach men how to apply Christ's law of love to social problems of their day. London became the chief arena for their work; and probably because their work was deep and high, its progress was more slow. It was left for a few unknown mill hands to give practical expression to part, at least, of what those thinkers said, and in 1844 a few working men of Rochdale showed the way. Suspecting that

THEIR HUMBLE WEEKLY PURCHASES

were not all that they might have been in excellence and purity they said to one another, "Why should we not club together sufficient money to purchase wholesale, and to retail to ourselves as we shall require these simple necessaries?" They sent to Manchester and bought their chest of tea and hogshead of sugar, and each one of their number was supplied with tea and sugar from this common stock; paying ready money for it, and giving the same price for it as they had been charged at the shops. When all the tea and sugar had been sold they agreed to divide the money which was then realised amongst themselves, in proportion to the capital which each individual had