

A CHARGE.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,—

Nearly four years have passed away since I had an opportunity of addressing you collectively; for at the usual period of holding my Visitation last summer I was absent in England on matters of the utmost importance to the future progress and well-being of the Church in this Diocese.

INTRODUCTION.

It is with grateful acknowledgements, therefore, to that merciful Providence which has preserved me during a long and arduous journey, that I find myself again among my brethren, and able to enjoy the privilege of once more laying before them a condensed notice of what has taken place in the Colony and in the mother country, affecting our communion since we last met, as well as a brief review of our present condition and future prospects.

Indeed this interval of four years has been more pregnant with events vitally affecting our Church, both at home and abroad, in her spiritual and temporal interests, than any previous period of her history.

In truth, the pressure from without, and her unhappy divisions within, have been such as to try men's principles, and call up the most serious reflections. Especially has it been a period to convince those who preside over her affairs of their manifold deficiencies, their need of greater watchfulness, and of the growing necessity of still abler and better men more fitted by long experience, sound learning, and keener spiritual discernment, to enable them to meet with success her increasing difficulties.

It is true that we in this distant corner of our Lord's vineyard have been till lately in the tranquil enjoyment of many precious blessings without any great mixture of alloy. And even now, when the storm seems to be approaching, we have much for which to be thankful, and feel encouraged to believe that God's dealings with his Church in this Diocese will continue to bless her, notwithstanding the troubles and adversities with which she may be assailed.

They are indeed the less to be dreaded, because they are chiefly of a temporal, and therefore of a transient character; but even should they multiply and become more and more gloomy, what are they but trials for our good, so long as we possess God's holy Word—his blessed Sacraments in all their pureness and integrity, the Book of Common Prayer, and full liberty to meet for divine worship every Sunday, and at all other reasonable and appointed times to consecrate the same to our Redeemer with penitence, prayer, thanksgiving, and praise.

When we last met in Visitation, our Clergy numbered one hundred and eighteen, and they are now about one hundred and fifty; an increase which ought to encourage us to still greater exertions in our Divine Master's service.

The general extension of the Church in the new as well as in the old settlements, has been equally favourable, and continues most promising in all parts of the Diocese. In our larger towns, congregations and churches are multiplying with joyful rapidity, and the erection of a new church does not seem to lessen the congregations already formed.

We have now upwards of two hundred places of worship open every Sunday, and it is hoped on all the festivals of the Church; besides many Stations where the services are celebrated at longer intervals.

The Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more frequently administered,—Holy Baptism more reverently and seasonably celebrated, and candidates for Confirmation are more carefully prepared, and regularly increasing at every Parochial Visitation which I make in travelling through the Diocese. The result of my tour of confirmation in 1849, gave an increase of nearly one thousand over that of 1846.

Moreover there is a growing reverence for God's house, and His worship is gaining ground among young and old.—A spirit of offering the Lord's part begins to be felt in many congregations, and if carefully and kindly fostered may be made to spread through the whole Diocese. Private and family prayer is becoming more general, and a stronger feeling entertained, that as we are immortal and must soon pass into another state of existence, the present world ought not to engross the whole of our time and affections. To all this I am most happy to add, that the blameless life of my Clergy, and their faithful zeal and untiring diligence in the Lord's work is in this Diocese the rule with very few exceptions.

We have indeed had our casualties among the rank of our brethren since my last Visitation, as must ever be the case in this transitory world—two were found wanting and permitted quietly to depart—two had scarcely commenced the exercise of their sacred functions when they were called away from the evil to come;—one in the prime of manhood, while successfully employed in his ministerial duties, and giving the brightest promise of long and affectionate usefulness, was summoned by a mysterious Providence to depart to a happier sphere and to still more blessed occupations,—five were aged and tried laborers in the Lord's vineyard, and we trust ready to appear in his presence, and over whose graves we might say with the humble confidence—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit for they rest from their labors."

Affectionately do we believe that the record of all those our departed brethren is on high, and having lived and died in faith and entered into their rest, they have left to us all, and more especially to their parishioners, the memory of the just which is blessed, and an example to follow their faith in order to enjoy the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday to-day and for ever.

Our great Institution, the Church Society, is daily gaining ground and increasing in strength and usefulness. It is gradually pervading every corner of the Diocese, and it is hoped that in a very short time we shall have no mission without a Parochial Association, carrying out with willing hearts all its objects to the best of their power and ability.

It must be the grand instrument of the Church, in promoting under her guidance and direction the various secular and spiritual schemes which she has already commenced, or may hereafter adopt, to unite her members, extend her influence, and combine their energies towards her stability and support. By such united efforts only will she be enabled to fulfil her mission, and by the divine blessing to make this land the garden of the Lord.