

life is to bear any resemblance at all to His, while, on the one hand, we may not doubt either His grace or His power, so, on the other, we dare not tamper with that which cannot be consented to without forfeiting His protection and assistance.

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

No. 33.

THE OFFICE OF ARCHDEACON.

AT one of the morning sittings of the Wolverhampton Church Congress, that most amiable, most able, but most pugnacious of dignitaries, Archdeacon Denison, fell foul of the Hon. and Rev. W. H. Lyttelton, who received his castigation in all meekness. A sense of disappointment was creeping over the company at this, when up rose the burly form of the victim's brother, the late Lord Lyttelton, who at once took his auditors by storm by saying, "What the use of an Archdeacon is I never have yet been able to find out." After a round of cheers and much merriment, in which the group of Bishops joined most heartily, the noble Lord went on in his quiet jocose way to add, "The chief duties of an Archdeacon, so far as I can discover, are to wear an Archdeacon's hat and discharge other Archidiaconal functions." This sally convulsed the company with laughter, and the doughty Archdeacon who had provoked it was not the least boisterous in applauding his witty assailant. If a scholar like Lord Lyttelton, one of the most brilliant of this age, if a Churchman like him, one of the most earnest, best read in ecclesiastical lore, and most thoroughly familiar with Church usages, did not hesitate to avow in an assembly of bishops, clergy and laity, his ignorance as to the uses and functions of Archdeacons, it has the appearance of presumption for us to state them. Our lamented friend spoke not wholly in seriousness, but as a witty way of expressing the very general doubt which prevails as to the utility of this office, and the more than doubt, the positive conviction, that while its *ancient* functions are no longer discharged, others are which do not appear rightly to the archidiaconate.

We will briefly describe the duties we have seen fulfilled by archdeacons, as such, what were the original primitive functions of this dignitary, and, seeing that the office and its duties and functions have changed much in the past, we shall venture to suggest the direction in which the needs of the Church call for future reform in them. Most persons living in the Diocese of Lichfield are familiar with the lithe athletic form of Archdeacon Moore, the beau ideal of this officer. The last time we saw him he was walking with firm step around the outer edge of a very lofty church roof, where a cat would tremble to run; he was cheerily bidding a churchwarden, "Come on, what are you afraid of?"—the said warden having two fears, one for his own neck if he moved at all, and a very well grounded fear that the Archdeacon would topple over down into the graveyard. This feat is not strictly an official function, but as the Venerable Mr. Moore had been bred a sailor, he inspected church structures with a thoroughness which used to inspire with mortal terror all who witnessed his tours around battlements, up steeples and other "coigns of vantage" for observation.

Another dignitary of this order we well remember was Dr. Creyke, of York, whose triennial visitations are a very early memory of ours. On "Visitation days," the town it was celebrated in

was all alive with bell-ringing, country clergy and churchwardens, accompanied by their wives and daughters, coming in on horseback, or in family phaetons, of all ages and shapes. Every decent inn-yard swarmed with ecclesiastical officials, and a stranger might have been forgiven, thinking that the function of the day was a local race, so full were the stables with horses, and so thick the air with stable talk.

Around the Crown Inn, the chief hostelry, the more aristocratic visitors assembled, such as an Earl or two, a few Lords, Honourables, Baronets, and Squires of ancient lineage, all for the day assembled as wardens of their respective village churches. After service, usually largely attended to hear the Visitation Sermon, the clergy and wardens gathered in the chancel, where the roll was called and presentments made; where, too, certain officials got soundly berated for neglecting their church fabrics. After this tedious business the Archdeacon proceeded to read in as monotonous a voice as possible a dreary dissertation upon some topic of special interest to himself, but usually respecting which most of the clergy and laity wholly did not care the snap of a finger; but it was an archidiaconal function to read such an address, and the duty was done and endured.

After from four to five hours attendance in church, the worn-out officials dispersed to the great event of the day, the *Visitation Dinner*. Then came the speeches, and all the town resounded with "three cheers and one cheer more" for the popular toasts, and at night the old town emptied out its ecclesiastical officials by all its roads, most of the wardens we fear not physically bettered or spiritually enlightened by Visitation day.

Such scenes are happily no longer visible; Archdeacons indeed are seldom either seen or heard of officially engaged. The early Archdeacon was clearly a Deacon, the name now-a-days is an absurdity, for no Deacon ever is in this Office. The primitive Church had a more active sphere for the diaconate than now exists. It was founded by the Apostles to provide men who would be the business agents of the Church—servers of tables, who were of especial use as the lieutenants of the Episcopate in its administrative labours. From this direct personal relation to the Bishop, the Arch-Deacon, who was primarily what his title implies, principal Deacon, presiding over these officials in their organization, came to be spoken of not only as the "eye," but also the "heart" of his Bishop.

The rule was, that on promotion to the priesthood the Archdeacon resigned that office. It was, however, natural that as the duties of the chiefs of the diaconate came to be so akin to the dignities of the episcopate that a higher order should gradually assume these functions, hence some nine centuries ago Deacons rose no longer to be Archdeacons; but this office, with its misleading name, came to be the privilege and the honour of the priesthood.

Hence came about the assumption of Episcopal dignity and functions, as seen on Visitation days, when clergy and laity were lectured and disciplined by the functionary with great pomp and circumstance, and bishops too often did duty by deputy. Now, the two ancient phrases, "eye of the Bishop" and "heart of the Bishop" indicate what the ideal Archdeacon must be. He who undertakes to see for another should have straight eyes, with exact powers of vision, neither afflicted with strabismus, nor with "long" or "short" sight. Eyes which are constantly drawn from their true centre, the Catholic Church, by the attractions of dissenting

flattery, or by the seductions of Rome, or by party interests, are not fit for archidiaconal work; they will lead the Bishop into some ditch or bog. Eyes which magnify the immediate present and see not the horizon of the future, are bad guides; they may lead the Bishop to sacrifice the Church's interests to some local temporary cry. Eyes which see things afar clearly, but all near hand as in a fog, cannot be trusted for service in duties which demand the prompt seizure of circumstances as they pass, and a thorough mastery of the needs of each day as they arise.

No party man can be honestly an Archdeacon; his vision is not true, it has that painful defect of apparently looking at one point when it is gazing elsewhere; he will look to his party when the Church should fix his entire attention. Then to be "the Bishop's heart" demands gifts and graces of rarest charm and sensitiveness. He who takes this office should have the faculty of drawing men into sympathy with diocesan work; he should inspire personal devotion to his Bishop, and stir clergy and laity alike to warm-hearted, whole-souled harmony with diocesan enterprises and devotion to Church interests.

To elevate one to this high dignity for mere compliment is to degrade both the appointer and the appointed, and to give a worthy Archdeacon to a diocese is practically to give it the help of another Bishop. The reform we desire to see is a return to primitive order: the restoration of the diaconate not as a mere stepping-stone to the Priesthood, but as a permanent office, the arch or senior Deacons being more immediately for the personal service of the Bishop. When invited to the archidiaconate, any active parish priest might well give the reply of the Olive, the Fig tree and the Vine, and decline to leave the richness, the sweetness, and the inspiration of the pastorate for mere administrative duties. We believe it best for himself, and for the clergy, and for the Church, that the Bishop should see all he has to oversee officially with *his own eyes*, and that every pulse in the diocese should beat in direct responsive sympathy with the beating life of his own loving, Catholic heart.

BOOK NOTICES.

THE COMMUNICANT: a Manual of Devotions for Holy Communion. Edited by W. O. PURTON, Rector of Kingston-by-Sea. London: Elliot Stock. 1881. 12mo. cloth, pp. 127. Price 1/6.

As this Manual is contributed to by, amongst others, Bishops Ryle and Rowley Hill, the Dean of Chester, Canons Clayton, Bernard, and Prebendary Cadman, it may at once be taken for granted that it is not likely to contain any high Sacramentarian views; and strong and frequent stress is laid upon the Lord's Supper as being for *remembrance*.

The Meditations and Prayers are plain and sober, and such as doubtless will suit those whose tone of devotion is not of a very high or fervid nature.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN LETTERS AND IN LIFE. An Oration. By RD. S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Co. 1881. 8vo. paper, pp. 57. Price 50cts.

This Address was delivered in Harvard University, and also at New York before the Association for the Advancement of Science and Art, in April last. It deals with such subjects as Man's Control over Nature: the Supernatural Element in Life, Poetry, and as illustrated in European and American histories, all of which were handled with considerable force and ability, so that it is no