

DEFICIENCIES.

AT a time when a longing for Unity is beginning to manifest itself, and when Dissenters are showing that they too recognise the mischief of dissensions, and the frightful inroads made by infidelity amongst Christians, who are split into many sects and parties, it behoves the Church more than ever to consider what she can do to promote practical and abiding union. It is her duty, and her privilege, and her policy to do this, and to do it without delay. And yet, in truth, she has not very much to do in this matter, and there is nothing that she might not accomplish if only she would gird to the task in right good earnest. But has the Church ever yet risen to the occasion as though she believed that she is the one true branch of God's Church here in England, and that it is her bounden duty never to cease her labour, care, or diligence, until she hath done all that lieth in her to bring all into agreement in the faith and knowledge of God? Rather, has she not been satisfied to find herself growing, increasing, and enlarging? and has she not rejoiced rather in counting up her multiplying numbers than in taking measures to win over the myriads who are still outside of her communion in Great Britain?

The Church ought not to rest satisfied with increase or with enlargement only. She ought to aim, as being Catholic, to supply to all Christian people all that the Church's Lord would wish them to possess in the way of spiritual worship and means of grace. To be contented with anything less than this is to ignore some part of her commission and privilege. So far as the reasonable needs of the people are concerned, it may be asserted that it is not difficult to supply them. Indeed they are at last being supplied, but in a rather irregular manner. Far better so, however, than not at all. Thirty years ago the most daring person would not have ventured to do what the most hesitating now do almost without consideration. 'The powers that be,' have been entreated through many years past by 'peals,' and 'touches,' and 'grandsires,' and even by 'lugubrious tolling' of *Church Bells*, that they would themselves furnish whatever is needful for a people who are six times more numerous than when the present Office-book received its *imprimatur*, and who are varied by circumstances in their modes of thought and in their ways of looking at the same truths, to an extent that renders variety in the modes of worship legitimate and desirable. And this is nearly all that is required. If the Church had furnished what is wanting by authority it would have been the better way, and this has been persistently urged for many recent years. But it is now evident that what the Church does not furnish in the more regular way will be furnished, and is being furnished, in a way which, though impossible half a century ago, is likely to prove successful now. And, indeed, if the Church had risen to the necessities of the times in past days, as she is now striving to do, it is probable that Dissent would have been almost unknown.

For Dissent is nearly always the over-eager pursuit after some one part of truth which the Church has too readily allowed to slip into the background, and when once this account of Dissent is grasped, as it has been often asserted in Church Congresses, the Church will be in a fair way of absorbing all pious Dissenters. In very many churches, whose earnest clergymen are carrying on their work with vigour, additional, lively, and very congregational services are introduced, with apparently considerable success. A good and precious lesson might, for instance, be taken by any one who will attend the Cathedral of Freiburg on certain Sundays in the year. It is a service in which the people take considerable part, and in which one or two verses of hymn, are sung kneeling, probably six times during a service of about seventy minutes in duration.

But the 'deficiencies' of the Church must no longer continue. There is need for a lively but reverent extra service, in some places for Sunday afternoons, in some places for Sunday evenings; and other special services for special occasions are also required. If these had only been supplied a hundred years or more ago, they would have stimulated the clergy, and would have enabled them to supply what would probably have hindered nine-tenths of existing dissent altogether. Unfortunately, Church matters have not gone on in this manner, but now the actual necessities of the case, and the extremities to which the Church is driven, forbid delay, and force the most loyal and obedient sons of the Church to introduce modes and methods of dealing with the people which they would have much preferred to have received, in the first instance, for use from those in authority.

The revival of an old Evangelical method of inducing congregations to remain and practise the singing of hymns for the next Sunday, seems to be finding favour in some churches of high ritual, while carol singing is certainly very popular. If one or two minutes between each carol were used by the clergymen present for the utterance of one or two kind, pertinent, and telling observations, probably explanatory of something in the carol next to be sung, it is felt that much good would be effected.

Not now to multiply suggestions, it is evident that there are some hopeful signs of a desire for unity. The Church can encourage and guide it greatly by speedily supplying whatever is wanting. It is certain that she suffers from sundry 'deficiencies.' There is every reason why she should remedy these at once.

A thoroughly scriptural, evangelical office, whose structural arrangement should be similar to that used about six times yearly at the Cathedral of Freiburg, in Germany, would probably become one of the most popular, as well as useful, additional services which the Church could possess. Attention was drawn to this at the Derby Church Congress, and it is very much to be desired that the office should be compiled.—G. V. in *Church Bells*.

A TRENCHANT REPLY

WE recently inserted a very able communication from Mr. Holmestead, on the position of the Church of England prior to the Reformation. *The Week* took exception to the arguments so exhaustingly put, on grounds which we need not detail, as they are fairly stated in the following trenchant and conclusive reply. We may just add that Mr. Holmestead's position and conclusions have received recently the emphatic approval of Lord Selborne, one of the ablest lawyers, who ever sat as Lord High Chancellor of England. We regard the proposal to compromise with dissent in regard to Church property as a confession that the properties coveted are indeed rightfully held by the Church. If she is keeping what is not hers, then let the true owner assert his rights, but if the Church is only holding her own, as is the case, holding what her children gave to her, then we affirm that it would be fraudulent in her to compromise with dissent, for she would rob the coming generations of that to which they also have a just claim.

AGNOSTICISM.

THERE is much that is specious in the Agnostic system, but it admits of a very obvious answer. There are other facts in the world and in human history besides those which are visible, audible, tangible; facts of a most pressing and imperious kind, which can not be ignored by any system of Agnosticism. There are facts relating to the human spirit as real, as true, as certain as any of those of which science can take account by observation and experiment. The facts of moral spiritual intellectual history are as really and truly facts as the avalanche that thunders from the heights, or the express train that rushes across the country. Though materialism may argue that thoughts are only the secretion of the brain, yet such secretions have to be taken count of. Take the history of any striving, struggling heart and mind. The sacred resolve which a man makes "in his heart, his hour of penitence or remorse, his aspirations after truth and goodness, his hopes, his yearnings, his aims, are all as veritable facts in his history as any facts around him in the phenomenal world. You may deny the facts of revealed religion, but you cannot deny these facts of the human consciousness. They are inward facts which constantly find their expression in outward facts. And when Agnosticism confesses its incompetence and disinclination to deal with such facts, it virtually confesses that as a system of thought it is maimed, limited, and imperfect. One whole hemisphere of fact is shrouded in darkness. The facts of the human spirit are the very facts of facts which bring action and reaction on the whole external natural framework of human life. The cold and dreary negations of the Positive Philosophy can only tell us of dead impersonal laws; they take the life out of humanity, and reduce the breathing, sensitive, earnest human being to a *caput mortuum*.

It is here the power of the Christianity has evidences. T numerous and thought and i labour of a life to arrange the their accumu its strong int adaptability t It has full sy effort to exan and to deciph in truth the li self directly t fact. As the lock, so Chris the human sp in our aspirat and in our ab moral depths in our joy; it it scatters the nates the sho Assuredly rel was made for cifully passed ticism into t religion have the horrors o sweetness an handed over, impersonal loving, divi His laws a safety of Hi ministrants, angels regar giver we be reconciled t How wond show us His combined w each one o hath measur hand, and m comprehend measure, and and the hills we have the love and pit shepherd; l arms, and ca gently lead Rock.

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