

Dominion Churchman.

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THE WORKING CLASSES AND THE CHURCH.

We are told that "the greatest work of the present age" is "to bring the working people under Christian influence." In England the lament has been widely expressed that whatever may be the progress of the Church, there are yet large masses of the working classes which are lost to us. Among mechanics, infidelity has made great progress, showing among other facts how true is the statement of the poet that "a little learning is a dangerous thing." These working classes in England have not ranged themselves so entirely under the Nonconformist banner as might have been expected on their becoming alienated. A large proportion of those who have left the Church embrace unbelief. The hold which the Church has upon the working classes in England is much greater than any other religious body can pretend to claim. The old Pelagian "high and dry," was fast alienating all who did not belong to an Erastian aristocratic connection. The Evangelical movement directed comparatively few of its efforts towards keeping the masses in union with the Church; in fact that movement had, in many of its aspects, a decidedly contrary effect. It was not till the Oxford revival began to exercise its influence in the Father-land that it was felt both the sinew and the bone would melt away from the church if some more decided effort were not made to bring its influences to bear upon the masses of the population. That effort was made, and is still being made; and the result is that the Church in England is three or four times as strong in the affections of the nation as it was before the passing of the "Catholic Emancipation Act" of 1829. It was the passing of that Act, we may remark by the way, that convinced a few zealous minds that something must be done to sustain the English Church; and hence the Oxford Movement, which has resulted, as most zealous movements do, in a certain amount of mischief, and in an immensely preponderating amount of good. No such corresponding improvement, however appears to have taken place in the Church of the United States; and in Canada, it is to be feared that our efforts have not been so persistently directed to this object as they might have been. The subject is one which deserves our

most serious attention; and we cannot do anything better than endeavour to profit by the mistakes that are acknowledged to have been made elsewhere. At the late Church Congress in the United States, a paper was read on the subject which is full of interest, and which we give in another part of this issue. From our exchanges across the border we learn: "All over this land the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening every day. Splendid churches are being built in every large town and city in the land, but not for the labouring classes. A very small proportion of the working-men are under decided Christian influences, perhaps not one in ten of those who make their living by their hands, respond to the call of the church bell on Sunday. Any one who will go through the narrow lanes and streets of our cities, on the Lord's day, will see crowds of men standing on the street corners, or reading the Sunday papers in their homes, while their wives and sisters are for the most part at home preparing the Sunday dinner." Now one reason assigned for this state of things is that in building a church, the first question is, How can it be made to pay? And so, "it must be placed out of the reach of those who have very little to contribute." The result of which is, as *Our Church Work* says:—It would be easier for a man in plain attire to face a cannon on a battle field than to walk up the aisle of one of these fashionable churches.

There are several suggestions we should like to offer for this unfortunate state of things, which does not appear to be quite so bad, either in England or in Canada as in the United States. It may be that republican institutions, after all, have a tendency to separate the classes more than any other. We will only mention, just now, one institution which should be cultivated as much as possible in order to meet this want, and that is, a Church Reading Room, where suitable arrangements can be made for every one to attend at any hour of the day to read the best current literature, both ecclesiastical and secular. An institution of this kind was started some time ago in Toronto. It had no party object. But unfortunately it had a party name:—"The Church Union," and therefore it excited party opposition. More unfortunately still, it changed its name to one which gave no indication of its real character; and

then it failed. We know of some institutions in other parts of the country which have been more successful, perhaps because they had no party name. We would instance the "Churchman's Association" at Bolton, Albion, diocese of Toronto, which we believe meets with a very fair amount of success.

THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER'S PASTORAL LETTER.

We have not very often, of late, met with a document more important, or better suited to the present times, than the "Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese of Winchester," by Edward Harold, Bishop of Winchester. Bishop Harold Browne is eminent for his large theological attainments, and also for his general learning. He is a man too, of calm judgment and of ripe experience; so that his utterances upon any subjects of general ecclesiastical interest are entitled to the profound respect of the Church at large. The candor and ability of the writer of this document are discernible throughout; and by some it is regarded as possibly being "an informal manifesto on the part of the more sensible members of the right reverend bench," or at least a trumpet call to all who would preserve the Church of England against those without who wish not well to our Zion, and those within who are too dull to see where her peril and her safety lie. We gave a very short epitome of the *Pastoral Letter*, in our last week's issue; but on re-perusing the original document in full, we are satisfied that it demands far more consideration and study. The position assumed by Bishop Browne must be a lofty one, when in treating subjects about which there has been the most angry contention, he has laid down so many principles of the most important character, which all must respect, and has said so little for either of the contending parties to find fault with. This is the more remarkable when we find the Bishop has without scruple, entered rather fully into the more urgent Church questions and Church dangers, and has certainly given a very complete and clear-sighted estimate of them. It is intimated that some will be disposed to accuse his Lordship of "trimming" between two parties. Upon which the *Guardian* rather jauntily remarks:—"Were it even so, we might rejoin that the ship is more likely to