

the Virgin and Child, and beneath extends a curious old crypt.

But it is not so much the church which arrests the attention of the curious as a huge marble mask standing on the left-hand side on entering the portico, commonly known as *la bocca della Verità* (the mouth of Truth.) It consists of a cracked circular disc five feet in diameter, in the centre of which the features of a gigantic human countenance are traced in bold relief, with open mouth, closely resembling those grotesque representations of a full moon's face, so familiar in the nursery picture-books of our childhood's days; from under the thickly curling hair on the forehead project what seem to be two claws of a crab or cray-fish,—according to others, they are two ram's horns; but the marble is now so worn and discoloured by time that it is not easy to decide what the originals represented. On either side the holes through which nails passed to fasten it in its former position are still clearly discernible; previous to 1632 it stood exposed to wind and weather, against the outer facade of the church.

Many and varied are the conjectures as to the use of this effigy; was it originally intended to portray the Ocean, or a marine divinity, which would bear out the theory of the claws being those of a crustacean? was it a receptacle for the rain falling through an aperture in the roof of some temple (like in the Pantheon)? was it the sluice of a fountain, or one of the discs set in the pavement of public thoroughfares to carry off the overflow of gutters and fountains in rainy weather, or was it merely the ornamental mouth of a drain? Anyhow, from time immemorial the Roman populace looked upon it as a test-stone of truth, before which those accused of perjury or of bearing false witness were brought for judgment by placing their right hand in the open mouth; it was believed, had they sworn themselves, that the huge jaws would close, and prevent the hand from being withdrawn,—were they on the contrary the victims of false accusation, no harm would befall them; an epigraph found near this spot in 1632 establishes this fact.

(To be continued.)

### PROGRESS IN CHURCH WORK.

A recent number of the *Guardian* (London, Eng.) has given a very full tabulation of the information given in the new volume of the Official Year Book of the Church of England. Exhaustive forms of enquiry were sent to the incumbents throughout the land through the Rural Deans at the request of the Bishops, calling for particulars as to the work of the Ecclesiastical year 1892-1893, or the Civil year, 1892. Returns were received from 12,875 incumbents, being about 95 per cent. of the whole number, whereas for the previous similar twelve months they were obtained from only 12,299 incumbents, being about 90 per cent. of the whole number. To effect a just comparison between the total returns made for the later period, and those for the earlier one, it is necessary to bear in mind this wider area of returns, and, for the purposes of exact comparison, it would be necessary further to know whether the increase of returns comes from the smaller or the larger parishes. On this point we have no information, and we therefore cannot do better than suppose that the parishes which have now made these returns for the first time are, on the average, of similar importance to those from which returns have been obtained for both periods. To render the comparison effective we have added five per cent. to the figures given for the earlier twelve months before contrasting them with the figures actually obtained for the twelve months under review; the results are interesting and in some cases instructive.

The increase in the general work of the cler-

gy is shown by the fact that the number of baptisms has risen to 515,354, showing a nett increase of 2½ per cent., while the number of communicants has risen to 1,607,930, showing an increase of 6 per cent. The accommodation in parish churches and chapels of ease is now 1,421,961 appropriated sittings, and 4,334,926 free sittings, showing a decrease of 3 per cent. in the appropriated, and an increase of 4½ per cent. in the free sittings. The old system is losing ground, the new method is advancing; this gratifying fact is an evidence of the signs of the times, and that the efforts of the various societies which advocate the cause of free and open churches have borne fruit. To the free accommodations we must add 737,471 free sittings now given in mission rooms and similar buildings, showing an increase of no less than 10 per cent. The total accommodation for Church worship is now 6,494,358 sittings in England and Wales, or about 22½ per cent. of the population; 3,166 churches are now open for daily prayer, and 4,679 are open for private prayer, showing an increase of 4 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively. Another gratifying proof of the increase of voluntary church work is given by the fact that the number of paid choristers is stationary, while there are now 259,059 unpaid choristers, an increase of 7 per cent.

The aspect of the financial work of the Church is less satisfactory, and this is perhaps due to the gradual shrinkage of income during the last few years in all classes of the population. Clerical incomes arise, in great measure, from tithe, from endowments, and from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; the portion arising from pew rents was £245,232, showing a decrease of 2 per cent., while the proportion of offertories allocated to this object was only £114,513, a decrease of 2 per cent. It is clear that the duty of the laity to maintain their clergy is not yet recognized as widely as it should be, in view of the fact that the total of clerical incomes shows a decrease of 1½ per cent., while in many cases in both town and country they are lamentably small. The total voluntary offering to the Church is stated in the Official Year-Book as £5,401,982, which is about on a par with that of the preceding year; the proportion spent on fabrics has diminished, while in general work there has been an increase, especially in the provision made for lay-helpers and Church expenses; the new endowments to benefices have doubled.

On the whole there is no ground for dissatisfaction with either the work of the Church or the lines on which effort is now mainly concentrated; but there is abundant ground for continued liberality and self-sacrifice on the part of all Churchmen.—*Monthly Paper of the Open Church Association.*

### A KEY TO UNDERSTAND MYSTERIES.

The mind of a pious workman, named Thierney, was much occupied with the ways of God, which appeared to him full of inscrutable mysteries. The two questions, "How?" and "Why?" were constantly in his thoughts—whether he considered his own life or the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world. One day, in visiting a ribbon manufactory, his attention was attracted by an extraordinary piece of machinery. Countless wheels and thousands of threads were twirling in all directions; he could understand nothing of its movements. He was informed, however, that all this motion was connected with the centre, where there was a chest which was kept shut. Anxious to understand the principle of the machine, he asked permission to see the interior.

"The master has the key," was the reply.

The words were like a flash of light. Here was the answer to all his perplexed thoughts. Yes; the Master has the key. He governs and directs all. It is enough; what need I know more? "He hath also established them for ever; He hath made a decree which shall not pass."

### JOHN WESLEY AND THE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.

(From the *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*.)

SIR,—The following letter has been sent by me to the Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the Belfast organ of Irish Wesleyanism. As I do not think he will print it, perhaps you may think fit to give it a place in your paper:

SIR,—I was sorry to read in a recent issue of the *Christian Advocate* the comment you make on some words used by the Archbishop of York in the late Synod of his clergy. His Grace, in strict accordance with the teaching of the Catechism of the Churches of England and Ireland, said, "the two great sacraments of the Christian Church have for their central purpose the union of the soul with the Saviour. By Baptism, the union is primarily effected; by the Holy Eucharist, it is continued, maintained, and strengthened." Your comment on these words is this, "undoubtedly many souls are misled to their eternal ruin by such teaching." Your censure involves the Church of which I am a clergyman, but I do not mind that. What I regret to see is that your remark is a censure upon John Wesley himself, and as a nilometer it marks the down-grade departure from his teaching of those who assume his name. When 53 years of age, in his "Treatise on Baptism," Wesley wrote—"by water, then, as a means, we are regenerated or born again. Herein a principle of grace is infused which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long continued wickedness." Was John Wesley misleading people to their eternal ruin by such teaching? And in regard to the Holy Eucharist, Mr. Wesley, in his preface to his "Hymns on the Lord's Supper," writes thus—"this sacrament, by our remembrance, becomes a kind of sacrifice, whereby we present before God the Father that precious oblation of His Son once offered. To men the Holy Communion is a sacred table, where God's minister is ordered to present for God his Master the passion of His dear Son as still fresh and powerful for their eternal salvation. And to man it is an *Altar*, whereon men mystically present to Him the same sacrifice, as still bleeding, still suing for mercy."—[From Church Tracts No. 1, "John Wesley's relation to the Church," Charles & Son, 61, Middle Abbey street, Dublin.] The shaft of your censure, aimed at his Grace of York and the Church of Ireland, passes beyond and lodges in the Rev. John Wesley. As there may still be a remnant who are not quite ashamed of John Wesley and his words, I shall ask it of your candour to print this letter.

JAS. FREDK. NEWELL.

Rectory, Kilbehenny, Aug. 26th, 1894.

The Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, 42 Donegall street, Belfast.

### The Daughters of the King

We have had several enquiries lately as to this sister society of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Church Daughters, and would be glad to have all information possible about it. Where is the head centre in Canada? How many chapters or branches are there in Canada? Where are the rules and regulations for formation of circles chapters or branches to be obtained? We hope that some of the DAUGHTERS will furnish us with early and full replies.—ED.