

A CENTURY AND A HALF OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

The future historian of our Church will assuredly record as one of the most hopeful events of a memorable year, the world-wide celebration of the third Jubilee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Occurring at a season of controversy and division, it has served to reassure many a faint heart by bringing before us the contrast between the barren isolation of 1701, and the prolific vigour of 1851, and it has enabled us to realize that expansive power which has been so distinguishing a characteristic of our Church in latter days.

The circumstances attendant on the celebration at home are known to all. The crowded congregations at Westminster and St. Paul's, and the assemblage of eminent persons at the platform in the Year of Jubilee with unusual solemnity. But more remarkable still have been the gatherings continued throughout the autumn in our various cathedral cities and large towns, the religious services where thousands have met to join in the highest ordinances of our religion, the attentive meetings, and the sermons preached during Advent in the several parishes of the land. There has been a greater abjuration of party feeling, a more hearty co-operation called forth in the prosecution of this work, than on any similar occasion, we venture to think, for many a year past. Such a demonstration might certainly have been expected on behalf of a Society which is really doing so much work, and which has contrived, to a great extent, to keep aloof from the strife of party,—but it is not the less gratifying because it seemed to be justly due.

Similar tidings have reached us from all the various quarters of our Colonial Empire. From June, when Barbadoes took the lead, down to the present month, in which the great dioceses of Calcutta and Madras have been occupied in their commemoration, the sound of praise and thanksgiving has passed on from land to land. It has been heard in the remote hunting grounds of the Red River, and along the iron-bound coasts of Labrador, in the noxious swamps of Guiana, and the rising settlements of New Zealand; it has travelled from the Himalayas and the Ganges to the Chinese seas and the Australasian continent. Nowhere has the call been disregarded. Two instances deserve special mention. Of the South African Church, it may be said emphatically, that "the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of liberality;" for it is a singular fact that the Jubilee offering sent by the Cape diocese at a period of war and depression, in token of its gratitude to that Society whose fostering care it so well repays, has exceeded the average amount which would have been collected on an equal number of parishes at home. Another infant branch of our Church—that planted in Borneo—has given a scarcely less touching proof of its affection; for a contribution has been forwarded from Sarawak, collected at the offertory on a day when a special service was held, and when five new communicants, Chinese converts, were added to the congregation.

If we travel across the Atlantic, where an independent and self-supporting Church has for nearly seventy years been entirely cut off from all connexion with the venerable Society the debt of gratitude has been owned with pleasure and filial pride. The daughter Church of America was specially invited to manifest to the whole world "the close communion which binds the Churches of America and England in one." Her Bishops welcomed with the greatest warmth the letter of the English Primate. One after another, from Maryland and New Jersey to Alabama and Louisiana, they responded with hearty zeal. They expressed an earnest desire for unity, they asked for a more frequent communication, a more sustained and intimate communion between the Churches. Nor have they been content with an interchange of letters, or mere expression of sympathy borne across the waters. The Bishop of Tennessee echoed the same sentiments as St. Martin's Hall, in a speech, the simple reality of which could not fail to strike all who heard him. Jubilee services have been held, and sermons preached very generally throughout the great Republic. Trinity Church, New York, witnessed, on the 16th of June, a celebration which put to shame our doings in the old Abbey of St. Peter. It was "crowded to its utmost capacity, and more than two thousand persons went away from the doors unable to find an entrance." There was a special service appointed for the day. The offertory collection amounted to 3,232 dollars devoted to diocesan missions; besides 5,000 dollars voted by the Vestry of Trinity Church for the endowment of the Missionary Bishopric of Cape Palmas. "There was one incident," says the New York paper, "which ought not to be passed over. All the old communion plate of the parish was used in the services of the day, most of it having been presented by the Crown of England, specially by 'Good Queen Anne.' Mr. Harrison brought up the offerings of the parish in their oldest almsdish—the gift of King William the Third."

We might multiply details of similar celebrations throughout the world. At no other period since

the Reformation could our Church have witnessed such a Jubilee. On the British portion of the continent of North America, at the end of the seventeenth century, there were but four clergymen. The Church in the United States has now its 35 Bishops and 1,600 clergy. In our own colonies, only two generations ago, there was not a single Bishop; now we have an Episcopate, multiplied year by year, already numbering 24 sees and 1,200 clergy. And this remarkable expansion, this wonderfully rapid growth, has taken place at an accelerated ratio in our own days, before our own eyes. Sixteen of these sees have been added within the last twelve years. Are these the signs of a deserted or falling Church? Is this the fruit of a dead branch severed from the true Vine?

We hope, therefore, we may venture to look forward to some permanent results from this Jubilee celebration. It has been "sanctified by the closer communion of the English and American Churches." In many a parish throughout England it has been "blessed by the healing of jealousies, the silencing of controversy, and the restoration of peace and charity." The same harmonious co-operation which has been available for the spread of the Gospel abroad, would give a mighty impulse to a like work at home. Who can doubt that concord among Churchmen would speedily secure for them an increase of the Episcopate at home, a greater freedom from State control, and a fuller development of our own inherent strength? And if in any degree the religious solemnities of this year shall have tended to the advancement of an united and energetic course of action, the Jubilee will deserve to be viewed, not as the mere gala day of a great Society, but as an important epoch from which to date the commencement of a more vigorous growth, an increased progress, and a more extended usefulness to our Church in every part of the globe.

SCENES IN OUR PARISH.

NO. XV.

A TALE OF LOW LIFE.

(Concluded from our last.)

I looked towards the bed; was it possible that such a change should have taken place in so short a time? Could sickness have done it? Not sickness alone. Grief and care make fearful ravages, even when health and ease of circumstances struggle against their effects; but when they come in the hour of nature's trial, what wonder if the faint heart sinks under them! Such a wreck, so sudden, so entire, I never saw before; I trust never to see such again. Terror and sorrow had done, in one fortnight, the work of years. The bright eyes were sunk and dim; the lips were parched, and the finely-formed cheek was pale and hollow. O how those expressive words of the Psalmist were whispered in our ears, with a fearful repetition: "When Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, Thou makest his beauty to consume away. Man in his best estate is altogether vanity." Poor Martha evidently remembered us as we drew near the bed; but she could not speak without an effort which it seemed almost death to her to make. With a trembling hand, however, she lifted up the coverlid, that we might see her infant; but when we made the customary remarks on its healthy appearance, and expressed the usual good wishes that it might live to be a comfort to her, she did not smile. From her, all earthly hope seemed to have passed for ever. Her husband so I learnt from the neighbours, had, as she said, always been kind to her; and she took pains to deserve and to keep his affection. But I fear neither of them knew that "except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it." The fairest fabric of earthly happiness, unless founded in the fear and love of God, is but a house built on the sand, which the first storm of temptation will cause to fall. A time of distress, such as our young people had never before known, came on; labor was scarce and provisions were dear; and it was said that Thomas made use of disonourable means for supplying their necessities. It was said so, yet there were those who had known him a long time, and who still expressed entire dependence upon him; and perhaps I can scarcely judge; yet I fear the suspicions entertained against him were but too well founded. Thus much I know, no man's morals, be his rank in life high or low, are to be depended on, in a time of trial, except so far as the grace of God upholds him; and Thomas knew nothing of that only refuge in the day of trouble. Are any disposed to say that they are "not as other men are?" At any rate, let them add with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee; and those who only hope to plead "God be merciful!" will at least feel compassion toward a fellow-sinner. The poor wife heard the news that her husband was thrown into jail suddenly; and the effect of that news was fatal to her. She made an effort to visit the prison, and when there, she was almost happy, for she was with him; and it was not till she was sternly ordered to leave him, and she returned to her lonely room, that she felt the extent of her misery. Her illness came on, but her only exclamation during her hour of agony, related to her "poor husband!" Her infant was laid beside her, but no smile of welcome beamed upon it; and when the nurse told her it was a fair child, her only answer was "Fairer if her poor Father could see her."

Her strength failed, for she lay awake hour after hour, and night after night; and when, at last, nature was completely exhausted as she slept, her dreams seemed to be full of fearful and mournful images, for she started often, and often wept.—"You have been asleep a long time," said one who stood by her when she awoke: "Yes," she answered, "I have been dreaming all night long of my burying, and that Thomas might not come to it;" and she burst into tears and wept again. "If any one ever died of a broken heart," said the doctor "she will." O it was a melancholy sight to see,—a fine, healthy, beautiful creature, thus in the pride and prime of life, brought down to the brink of the grave; not by a sudden stroke,—for the young tree that is felled, falls with all its graceful foliage, and all its thousand blossoms, and in all its beauty,—but like one shivered by the lightning; in one moment, indeed, and yet every leaf seared, every spray withered, and every flower fallen, before the axe of the woodman cuts down the towering forester.

But with her bitter tears, other thoughts came. She was a sinner, a dying sinner, she said; O who would come and show her the way to heaven. She listened to the beautiful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and seemed to feel that He, of whom the Prophet spake, was bruised for her iniquities; and she responded with a fervent assent to the Psalmist's expression of humiliation, contained in the fifty-first Psalm. She accepted gratefully, though with a dull and dying ear, and with exhausted attention, the kind instruction administered to her, by one able and willing to give comfort and advice. Ah! why had she not sought it before? Why had she not listened in the hour of her health? Nay, that is no question for us. Have we not ourselves "pulled away the shoulder, and stopped the ear, and refused to hearken?" It becomes us thankfully to take our station, now, in the vineyard: but to bless His mercy, who calls even at the eleventh hour.

It was the evening of an October Sunday. The red leaves yet danced, rejoicing in the mild air; and the yellow sunshine smiled on the last flowers of the year: the daisies sprung among the long grass on the graves, as freshly as they had done in May; and the last degenerate crop of golden cups and starwort glittered as if to show how fair their predecessors had been. The congregation was dismissed, for the afternoon service was ended, and the parting blessing had been given; but there still remained two or three scattered groups. There were mothers who came to return thanks for their deliverance from their "great pain and peril." Little children brought to be washed in the water of baptism, and presented in faith and hope to their merciful Saviour. Grave fathers thinking, perhaps, of new exertions to be made in answer to the calls of an increased family; and young sponsors, serious yet evidently pleased with their interesting office. I left my accustomed seat, and went, as I sometimes do on such occasions, into the gallery behind the font. I was alone. The christening parties went into the Vestry, and I sat looking on the empty seats and the silent aisles, which, as the evening closed, became every moment more and more dim. The rising wind in the tossing chesnut branches, was, for a short time, the only sound I heard; and then a light was placed on the communion table, and an orderly party knelt at the rails, and there arose a sweet, clear voice of praise and thanksgiving. It ceased and the train moved down toward the font. There was the priest, in his simple dress of "linen, clean and white." Long may such a dress be a meet emblem that thy priest's, my country's church are "clothed with righteousness!" And when he had taken his station at the font, the light which was needed, and yet which struggled imperfectly with the fading gleam of evening, shone on a varied and pleasing group. The elder women's scarlet cloaks formed a bright contrast to the long white robes in which the infants were arrayed; and the mothers, and the young female sponsors wearing their best,—light cotton gowns, silk shawls, and new straw bonnets, formed, for a poor country parish, a very gay assembly. Do not quarrel with my word,

"The innocent are gay—the lark is gay."

I assure you, that as the service began, there was a silence which spoke of the mind's attention, and of the heart's prayer.

The priest took one fair child after another in his arms, "received him into the congregation of Christ's flock, and did sign him with the sign of the cross;" and one mother after another stepped tremblingly forward, and took her own precious one and folded it to her heart; feeling more than she had ever done before, all the depth of a mother's love and pouring on its young head all the fervency of a mother's blessing. There was a pause, and two or three persons dressed in shabby mourning, which had evidently been worn for many a relation and many an acquaintance before,—brought to the font, an infant, whose sickly form, and weak, moaning cry, told more than the narrow band of crape round its cap, or the rusty black shawl in which they had wrapped it, a tale of "father and mother's forsaking." It might be fancy, but I thought the tone of tenderness, in which the minister had addressed each unconscious child, as it lay in his arms

was yet more tender, when he looked on this one. The mothers, I thought, gazed with deeper love on their own happy children, as the cry of this little motherless one reached their ears. The fathers looked graver, and there were tears in the young women's eyes:

And well the gathering tears might start
As they named the infant's name:
Whose mother had died of a broken heart,
From mourning its father's shame.

Poor little thing! it was come into a troublesome world, to be sure; it was tossing on rough waves, but the frail bark was soon to be in port, where no storms come. The woman whom the parish officers engaged to nurse the child, proved extremely careless of it; and the next thing we heard, was, that in consequence of her neglect, it had met with a frightful accident; and the overseers removed it to another nurse. Having heard thus much, I could not of course be surprised, when passing one winter's day through the church-yard, I saw a little, narrow grave, dug in the part called the poor's ground; and heard upon inquiry that it was for Martha's child. It was buried that evening. No knell had tolled for it when it died. No mourner stood by the grave; the nurse brought the unornamented and nameless coffin under her cloak, and there was no pall to cover it. It was of little moment; the grass and the spring violets grow there, in token that being "sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power;" and the spirit so forsaken, so lonely on earth, found, doubtless, a bright and innumerable company to welcome it at the gates of heaven.

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