

The Church Guardian.

Upholds the Doctrines and Rubrics of the Prayer Book.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

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ECCLESIASTICAL NOTES.

THE CHURCH DEFENCE INSTITUTION—ABLE SPEECH BY THE BISHOP OF DURHAM.

The annual meeting of this institution was rendered memorable by the remarkably able and telling speech of the Bishop of Durham. We are glad to be able to furnish our readers with several extracts from this powerful effort.

His Lordship began by saying:—

An exceptional crisis demands an exceptional effort. This is the fact which I wish to impress upon your attention to-day. A large and unprecedented addition has been made to the electoral roll; whole masses of men excluded hitherto have been admitted to the franchise. A leap has been taken in the dark; and we cannot foresee the consequences—social, political, or ecclesiastical. Now, I do not dwell on this fact from any feeling of misgiving, still less of despair. I have great confidence in the sobriety and judgment of the people of England, if only they be accurately informed. This is the duty which falls upon the Church Defence Institution. Is she in the position to bear the strain which will be put upon her in this crisis? The answer to this question depends on the support which you will accord to her. I say that it is very important that correct information should be diffused among the people. I think I may fairly say that the masses who will be introduced to the franchise in my own diocese are not certainly inferior in education or intelligence to those in other parts; but I am quite sure that the misapprehension abroad amongst them in matters relating to the Church is very serious. It is generally believed that the clergy are paid out of the taxes, and that they receive not less than £700 a year each. I have heard that said more than once; and it is really a revelation when you point out to such persons that in the Budget there is an estimate for the navy and an estimate for the army, and you proceed to ask where there is any charge for the maintenance of the clergy. I mention this fact to show how very great the ignorance is, even among those classes which are credited, and rightly credited, with a certain amount of superior intelligence—the mining population in my own diocese.

FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH.

What Church is more free than our own Church of England? What are the two tests of freedom? They are surely these—*freedom of opinion*, and *freedom of practical development*. Does not the Church of England enjoy both these to a very large extent indeed? Her *freedom of opinion* has been indeed thrown at us as a reproach. I confess I look upon it myself as our glory. So long as there is a loyal adherence to the main doctrines of Christianity, and a loyal and practical obedience to the Church, so long as both these exist, there is very little latitude of opinion allowed; and I am quite sure that the Church is a great gainer from that freedom—from the existence of schools of thought as they are called—and for the reason that no man or school of men is perfect all round, and if you try to expel one school of thought from the Church, why the

Church must be impoverished to that extent. And then I ask myself whether this freedom is not due, to a very great extent, to the fact of the Church being established. It seems to me that the fact of Establishment secures this freedom in two ways. First of all, the broad *axis* of the law is held over all parties. The triumphant majority, whatever it may be for the moment, has no power to oppress the minority. And then, secondly, by the fact of Establishment, the clergy are brought into direct contact with the mind of the nation, and are thus put in harmony with the manifold and varied interests of the nation. These two facts, it seems to me, are a most valuable guarantee against narrowness. But I turn to the other point—*freedom of practical development*. Has any Church—I had almost said from the beginning—has any Church in recent centuries shown anything like the capacity of practical development which the Church of England has exhibited during the present generation? Do we speak of missionary enterprise, whether at home or abroad? Look at her various evangelistic agencies. Do we turn to the educational movement? The Church was the earliest in the field of primary education, and at this very moment educates fifty per cent. more children than the Board Schools, and many times far more children than the other religious bodies. Do we look, again, at philanthropic works? Turn to the statistics of your Hospital Sunday, and you will find considerably more than two-thirds of the whole amount contributed come from the contributions of the Church of England. Freedom, therefore, we have—freedom of opinion, within reasonable limits, and freedom of practical development to a very great extent. Of course, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there are difficulties here and there, that perplexities and difficulties will arise, that now and then the shoe pinches; but it must be so with every human institution, and this is a calculation of more or less.

"LIBERATION."

But what am I to say of that word "Liberation?" When I strike off a man's fetters, when I open the prison doors to him, when I disencumber him from debt, I can understand how I can speak of "liberating" him; but when I strip him of his clothes, when I rob him of his purse or of his watch, when I turn him into the street as naked as when he came into the world, why then I should consider that it is a real abuse of terms to speak of it as "liberation." Now is this extravagant? Is this a caricature? I would ask you to refer to the programme of the Liberation party with regard to the Disestablishment of the Church which they put forward a few years ago. I need not dwell on that programme; you know how they meant to make a clean sweep of everything. I like to hear a spade called a spade. I confess I should feel much more respect for this movement if it bore some other name. If a man said to me, "I hate the Church of England; I want to make it as weak as I can, and to do it all the injury I can," why I might not agree with him, but at all events I should see where I stood with him. But when he speaks of "liberating" me, I confess that I have a little difficulty in understanding what he means.

THE CHURCH NOT MAINLY AN ESTABLISHMENT.

If I have viewed the Church hitherto mainly as an Establishment, it is not because I have forgotten the higher aspects of that institution. God forbid that I should counsel her to place her strength in this fact. It is because I believe that the Church of England, more than any other body in this kingdom, represents the true Church of Christ, because she approaches more nearly than any other body to the Apostolic order and Apostolic doctrine, because I seem to see in her continuous history the providential hand of God, because the works of the Holy Spirit are abundantly manifest in her later career—it is for these reasons that I venture to predict for her, if she is only true to herself, a magnificent career in the future. But for this very reason I feel bound to do the utmost that in me lies to avert measures which will in any way fetter or hamper, which will impede or delay, the high destiny which I confidently anticipate for her.

PROBABLE RESULTS OF DISESTABLISHMENT.

It is usual, I suppose, on these occasions to dwell chiefly on the injury which Disestablishment would do to the work of the Church at home. Certainly, I have no intention of attempting to minimize that injury. Many rural districts would probably for a time be paganized; and in the great centres of population in all probability the immediate consequences would be very serious. If the Church of England is not the Church of the lowest of the poor and of the outcasts of this kingdom, then certainly no other body is. This position she owes to the fact of her parochial organization. In the largest town in my diocese, the Borough of Sunderland, during the six years of my episcopate, no less than five Dissenting chapels have been purchased by the Church and are now used for mission services. Now I do not blame these Nonconformist bodies for this. It was the necessity of their position. They were congregational, if not in name, at least in fact. As the neighborhood deteriorated, the congregations migrated to more respectable localities, and the chapels were obliged to migrate also. The Church of England thereupon stepped in, and vindicated her proud title as the *evangelist of the poor*. But I want you, before I sit down, to take a wider view of the question. I ask you to regard the Church of England in relation to those *daughter communions*, the *American and Colonial Churches*, and through them to *universal Christendom*. These daughter Churches are extending daily, spreading with the spread of the English people. This seems to me to be a most important factor in the future of Christendom—the kernel of its strength, and the hope of its union. Now it is extremely important that the Church of England should be in the position to do a mother's duty to these her daughter Churches; but this she cannot do if she is suddenly placed in a position of utter destitution, casting about for ways and means, and obliged to abandon whole districts because there is no adequate support for her spiritual agencies. Anyone, therefore, who realizes to any degree this great potentiality of the English Church in the future, will do his utmost to preserve intact that great inheritance which she has received from the past.