

CHURCH ACTIVITY.

THE *Diocesan Calendars* for 1892 show that in every part of England and Wales the work of our Church is being carried on with increasing vigour, and is productive of increased results. For instance, it is reported from Ripon that there are 547 acting clergy and 65 licensed lay readers, that there is church accommodation for 171,357 persons, and that the average attendance at the Church schools is 48,588. In Liverpool the number of curates has increased from 120 in 1880 to 210 in the present year; while no less than 1,960 voluntary lay helpers have been enrolled during the last twelve years.

A STORY OF A HYMN.

A PARTY of tourists formed a part of a large company gathered on the deck of an excursion steamer that was moving slowly down the Potomac one beautiful evening in the summer of 1881. A gentleman, who has since gained a national reputation as an evangelist of song, had been delighting the party with the happy rendering of many familiar hymns, the last being the sweet petition so dear to every Christian, beginning "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." The singer gave the first two verses with much feeling and a peculiar emphasis upon the concluding lines that thrilled every heart. A hush had fallen upon the listeners that was not broken for some seconds after the musical notes had died away. Then a gentleman made his way from the outskirts of the crowd to the side of the singer, and accosted him with, "Beg your pardon, stranger, but were you actively engaged in the late war?" "Yes, sir," the man of song answered courteously, "I fought under Gen. Grant." "Well," the first speaker continued with something like a sigh, "I did my fighting on the other side, and think, indeed am quite sure, I was very near you one bright night, eighteen years ago this very month. It was just such a night as this. If I am not very much mistaken you were on guard duty. We of the South had sharp business on hand, and you were one of the enemy. I crept near your post of duty, my murderous weapon in my hand, the shadows hid me. As you paced back and forth you were humming the tune of the hymn you have just sung. I raised my gun and aimed at your heart, and I had been selected

by my commander for the work because I was a sure shot. Then out upon the night rang the words:

"Cover my defenseless head
With the shadows of thy wings."

Your prayer was answered. I couldn't fire after that. And there was no attack made upon your camp that night. You were the man whose life I was spared from taking." The singer grasped the hand of the Southerner, and said, with much emotion, "I remember that night very well, and distinctly the feeling of depression and loneliness with which I went forth to my duty. I knew my post was one of great danger, and I was more dejected than I remember to have been at any other time during the service: I paced my lonely beat, thinking of home and friends and all that life holds dear. Then the thought of God's care for all that he has created came to me with peculiar force. If he so cared for the sparrows, how much more for man, created in his own image; and I sang the prayer of my heart, and I ceased to be alone. How the prayer was answered I never knew till this evening."—*Christian at Work.*

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CONVICTION.

A MINISTER was one day called upon by one of his congregation, a young man, who professed to be dissatisfied with what he had heard on the Sunday before. "I was not satisfied with your reasoning," he added; "I have some points which embarrass me. I wish for an explanation." The minister listened patiently to his difficulties, which were of a deep and metaphysical character; and, when he had done, the minister inquired, "But are you prepared for death and judgment?" "I cannot say I am," was the reply. The pastor remained silent for a short time, and then said solemnly, "Let us pray." In his prayer he brought all these difficulties before God; and asked, in the most earnest manner, for God's saving grace. The young man retired; and complained afterwards to his friends that the minister had evaded his difficulties, and that as a subterfuge he had resorted to prayer. But that prayer was more powerful than argument would have been. That young man confessed so afterwards. He afterwards wrote to that minister, and said, "I was displeased with your sermon because I felt it to be true. I hoped to perplex you

by a discussion, and thus to ease my own conscience. But the Holy Spirit triumphed; and I am now a brand plucked out of the fire."—*Clayton.*

A LIVING HOPE.

A MISSIONARY travelling in India found a native dying. Anxious to speak to him the glad tidings, he knelt down, and putting his mouth to his ear, he whispered, "What is your hope for eternity?" The dying eyes were opened, and from the parched lips were whispered the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." After death, there was found, tightly grasped in his cold hand, a single leaf of a Bengalee Testament with that verse upon it.—*Exchange.*

A BISHOP IN AN EARTHQUAKE.

IN the course of a thrilling account of the recent terrible earthquake in Japan which Archdeacon Warren sends by mail, a remarkable incident is mentioned. He was entertaining as guests in his house at Osaka, Japan, on the night before the earthquake Bishop Bickersteth and his wife. The Bishop conducted family prayer before retiring and read the ninety-first Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, my God in whom I will trust. He shall cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge," etc. A few hours later the earthquake came and the room in which the Bishop had read these words was an utter wreck. A large chimney crashed through the ceiling, smashing the furniture and filling the place with bricks and timber. Had anyone been in the room at the time, death must have resulted. The room in which the Bishop was when the shock came was in another part of the house. That, too, was overtopped by a high chimney which was thrown down. But it fell in a direction opposite to that of the room in which the Bishop was and injured no one. At family prayer the next morning the Bishop read the same Psalm with a new feeling of its meaning.—*Selected.*

LEARNING.

Who learns and learns, but acts not what he knows,
Is one who ploughs and ploughs, but never sows.

—*Oriental.*