

ANGLO-CATHOLIC CHURCH NEWS

THE CHURCH AND THE MISSION FIELD.

Speech by the Bishop of Rochester.

If there is one thing which, more than another, gives evidence of the real, living interest taken by old country Church people in the work of the foreign mission field, it is the splendid gathering that takes place in every corner of England, on or about St. Andrew's day every year. On November 26th the annual missionary meeting, organized by the Junior Clergy of London, in connection with the venerable society for the propagation of the Gospel, was held in Exeter Hall, London. Evidently there was a fear least there would not be room for all; for no sooner were the doors thrown open, than the seats began to be rapidly filled up. A large proportion of the audience had a goodly time to wait till the proceedings commenced; but, they did not allow themselves to get wearied. Mr. H. W. Richards, the talented and devoted organist of Christ church, Lancaster Gate, played one mission hymn after another, and the voices of the audience, taking up the soul-stirring words, made the whole building vibrate with their heartiness. At 8 p. m., the chair was taken by the Lord Bishop of Rochester, and with him on the platform were the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Bishop Barry (late Bishop of Sydney), Bishop of Rockhampton, Archdeacon Sinclair, Canon Scott-Holland, etc. The opening prayers were said by Prebendary Tucker, secretary of S. P. G.

The Bishop of Rochester then rose and addressed the meeting. He said that the sight of such a meeting as that, with the thought of the subject that had brought it together, was one that might well thrill the heart. He had heard something of these gatherings with his ears, but it was good indeed to see the sight thereof, and to know that what was here doing was going on elsewhere in the country. Londoners might be glad to know that in his old town of Leeds the same thing had happened. There they used to cower in a half-filled Church Institute; now, they had gone to one of the great halls of the town, and were obliged to have an overflow meeting. It was a great change from the missionary meeting of the past; it was the change from a duty conscientiously learned to an enthusiasm really penetrating to the heart. It meant that we were slowly learning, very slowly, what a great cause it was which called for our help. Slowly we were learning how great it was in responsibility, in difficulty, but also in opportunity and in privilege. It seemed as though the beginnings of our missionary work as a Church might almost be compared with guerilla fighting. Guerilla warfare, with

its loose order and formation, sometimes did brilliant things. It gave magnificent opportunities for personal prowess and individual distinction; positions were captured, but they were soon lost again; successes were won, but nothing very much, nothing in proportion to the effort made; seemed to follow from them. But if, as the contest proceeded, that fighting developed into regular warfare, then things were done, it might seem, with less of the halo of romance about them, but with infinitely more effectiveness and weight. He could not help thinking that the Church had to some real extent committed herself to this warfare of the Cross against the powers of darkness and the evil that is in the world, and when that happened, then we began to see what the measure of it was. For example, we found that it needed different kinds of troops and different sorts of methods. We felt today, as we did not feel awhile ago, that there must be a steady call upon the Church for wholly devoted and consecrated lives if the bolder ventures of the mission field were to be attempted. We felt again that these lives must in some cases—he would gladly see them multiplied ten-fold—he grouped and gathered together in brotherhoods. (Cheers.) As he said that word might he be allowed to pause a moment to say that there had been put in his hand a letter which informed him how that Mr. Whitehead, of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, had left for India that same morning with five colleagues. (Cheers.)

Well, but we knew also that there must be other methods than those; there must be what he might call the lighter troops—there must be those men who, taking with them the freshness and robustness of their English youth, would go out, say, for five years, and then come back, infinitely stronger and more experienced men, to take their part in the work at home. (Cheers.) We had learned, too, what women could do, and the greatness of their work even in such places as China—the devoted memory of a martyred girl from his own diocese recalled that to him—or, Central Africa, where one would almost think that even the courage of men would shrink back from the deadly climate.

There was room for them there; and we had learned what they could do at home, in organizing support for missions, and in giving their wonderful touch of sympathy to those who were already engaged in the mission field. As we went about this work, and its problems were opening out before our eyes, we felt that, like a great army it needed a great and instructed intelligence department. We knew what we owed in the past to the great societies for what had been laid up in their archives and brought out, as the records of one of those societies had been by Prebendary Tucker, for the help and instruction of the Church. Where should we be without books of that kind? But we had got now the Board of Missions; and though

it was still in a very early stage of its life, even there, largely under the fostering and guiding hand of the Bishop of Durham, we had seen what it was to go with careful and thorough science into the whole matter of missionary work. How the scale of the subject of missions increased as we dealt with it! Was it not true that, as the army increased, there must be a great war-chest behind it? As we were learning that this great work could never be done unless the great law of charity reached the hearts of Churchmen, unless persistent proportionate almsgiving became a habitual practice throughout the Church. But behind all these things, behind the recruiting, behind the intelligence, behind the money, there must be the vital force of the Spirit of God. In the English army what was it that wins? It was English spirit, and English patriotism, and undying zeal for English honor. That was what we must learn—zeal for our Master, zeal for His cause, the conquering and irresistible zeal of those who were really convinced that the gift which He brought into the world was the gift that the whole world needed, and not any section of it alone. So it was that as we had gone about this task with a little more energy, we had begun to learn what was the most difficult of all conversions, namely, the conversion of ourselves. It was the old story that they who were full were inclined to sit still, and be content with doing nothing for others. We had been fed at the table of His dainties, and we had been too much inclined to think that all was well. What was it that was changing in some degree, this lethargic condition? Whence came it? It came, we trusted, by the moving of the Spirit of God over the face of the home waters. But the Spirit of God moved by certain methods, and seized its own occasions and opportunities; and he believed that what was stirring the life of the Church of England and raising it to a higher temperature in this matter of missions, was nothing less than the reflex action of the efforts, small and inadequate as they might have been, made by our fathers for this great cause. It was from the mission field that there came home the life which went out again to rouse and reinvigorate the mission field. Nothing had so convinced us—had it?—of the mission, the meaning, the validity and the truth of our Church as what she had been called to do over the face of the globe in the last half-century—(cheers)—in the extraordinary extension of her work and of her Episcopate which God had granted to her. Nothing so strengthened our faith in Christ and His Gospel than to see how race after race had been touched and become converted. He remembered hearing a Frenchman boast at the outset of the Franco-German War that they would very soon beat the Germans, because, the war beginning in the height of summer, their Zouaves and other troops, who were accustomed to the fierce sun of North Africa, would be able to