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FUNERAL AND MOURNING REFORM.

That such a reform is necessary becomes more and more apparent to the religious mind and to persons of good taste and refined feelings. It is not simply the expense which is incurred, though this often seriously incumbrates the surviving members of a family, but the display, so ill-timed, and so repulsive to the feelings that should influence people at such a solemn time, which makes one wonder how such customs have so long prevailed. No doubt, the present manner of conducting funerals is a reaction to some extent from the black, sombre, and doleful funerals of former days, when the Christian hope of immortality, and the expression of thankfulness at the release of the departed from the burden of the flesh, which the Church's service gave expression to at the grave, seemed a hollow mockery, viewed in the light of the surroundings. But while it was felt that public Christian opinion demanded a change it was left in the hands of the undertakers to give expression to a better Christian feeling, and they, with the best intention, no doubt, have provided a condition of things which must give infinite pain to the mourner and jar upon the feelings of all Christians. In England a decided change for the better has taken place, and, as in the case of the lately deceased Archbishop of Canterbury, funerals are being made as simple and inexpensive as possible. As showing the progressive feeling upon the subject in England we quote from the report of a recent meeting. "A meeting of the Church of England Funeral and Mourning Reform Association was held recently in the Church Institute, Leeds. The Rev. Dr. Gott, Vicar of Leeds, in taking the chair, said that the Association had gained the almost unanimous support of the upper classes, and that among many Yorkshiremen who had given their adhesion were the Archbishop, the Bishop of Ripon, Lords Ailesbury, Fitzwilliam, Zetland, Faversham, Harewood, Wharnccliffe, Cathcart, Mulgrave, Cranbrook, De L'Isle and Dudley, Manchester, Wenlock, Middleton, Hawke, and Derwent, the Lord Mayor of York, and the Mayor of Leeds. He thought that funerals should be conducted, as far as was possible, by relatives and friends. Preparing the coffin and lowering it into the grave should be about the only work which had to be paid for. The late Archbishop of Canterbury was one of the patrons of the Society, and by his own express desire the undertakers did the least possible work, and the rest was done by his nearest and dearest friends. The meeting subsequently passed the motion

unanimously that it was desirable to promote a better appreciation of the idea of Christian burial." We quite endorse Dr. Gott's views that "preparing the coffin (and lowering it into the grave) should be about the only work which had to be paid for." Let all else be done by the loving hands of relatives and friends, and let everything be done decently and in accordance with the dictates of a sure and humble trust and confidence in God's promises and mercy, and yet free from any appearance of assumption and show.

THE FIRST STEP FOR THE CHURCH TO TAKE.

THE New York *Sun* recently had the following as a leading article. When the secular press feel called upon to speak in this fashion of what is generally supposed to concern only congregations and nobody else, it shows that the question is being recognized as a great public one, demanding the attention of the Church as a body. We are glad so influential a paper has spoken out in this manner and we hope the days of pewed churches are numbered. Feeling their truth we reiterate the *Sun's* words: "No question of greater weight can come before the clergy and laity, and no one upon whose right settlement the welfare of the Church more depends."

"The subject of free churches received attention at the late Episcopal Convention, but it did not get that proportionate share of consideration to which its importance entitled it. No question of greater weight came before the clergy and laity, and no one upon whose right settlement the welfare of the Church more depended. Yet the Convention put it by without enunciating the Christian principles with regard to it, and without coming to any definite decision as to the means of making churches free."

"As things are now, most of our Protestant Churches, especially those in the large cities, are merely houses of worship for organizations of men and women who have purchased the right to regularly occupy seats in them. In some of the Churches the cost of a pew is so great that only a rich man can afford to buy one. In others, the pews are rented to the highest bidders at an auction sale, and generally there is not only a first charge for the purchase of the pew, but also an annual assessment on it, which is considerable. An eligible pew in some of the fashionable Churches costs originally about as much as a comfortable house, and the annual assessment on it would pay the rent of many a citizen."

"Rich men have, of course, the right to buy privileges in Churches if they are purchasable. When they give money for the support of the preaching and other services they have a right to demand that they shall get some positive advantage in return. Moreover, it is very convenient for a family to know before they start out for church that they will be sure to find seats together in a desirable place, and that nobody else will be allowed to get into the reserved places. Men buy tickets to the theatre and the opera days before the performance, in order to be certain about that matter."

"We must not forget, too, that after reserving for themselves all the seats they themselves want in their Churches, the pewholders are willing that the back pews on the ground floor, or the pews in parts of the galleries, shall be freely opened to the outside public. They would stare with astonishment at any stranger who assumed to enter their pew, but whoever likes may occupy one of the seats left for outsiders."

"Ministers and vestrymen say that the only way to support Churches is to thus sell the seats. They can obtain a sure income in that way, and there is no other which experience proves to be feasible. They must gratify the selfishness of men even in the house of God, if they expect to get money out of them. That may be true; but if it is true, then we have to make the humiliating confession

that Christianity can only be supported in our cities by that sort of arrangement. Great and costly Churches can only be maintained by gratifying the love of class distinctions, when Christianity expressly teaches that all men are equal before God, and that they are poor or rich, clean or unclean, in His sight, only according to the measure of their spiritual acquirements."

This is why the free church question is so important. The movement to break down the pew system is a movement toward the establishment of a logical and consistent Christian practice. The present practice does violence to the Christian theory, and can only be defended on grounds of prudence which are at war with that theory. Whatever may be the doctrines preached and professed in the Churches, men are differently treated in them, and the difference is based on distinctions not recognized by Christianity, and even expressly denounced by it.

"The practice of the Churches is, in truth, such as to build higher the walls of separation between the rich and the not rich. As one of the Bishops of the Episcopal Church remarked, so long as it continues there will be a growing antagonism to the Church on the part of many. They will ridicule such an exhibition of Christianity, and turn away from such preaching of the Gospel. When they can enter churches with the same freedom and the same lack of consciousness of their material position which they enjoy at a political meeting, they will perhaps feel that they are indeed treated as equal citizens of the spiritual commonwealth."

"Not until every Church becomes God's House, in which all men at all times are equal and all have equal privileges, will the theory of Christianity be realized in their management. When that is accomplished the first step will be taken; but afterward genuine Christianity must be preached in the Churches, and their members must exemplify it in their lives, if the world is to really be reformed after the model drawn by Christ."

DR. WILLIAM PIERCY AUSTIN, FIRST BISHOP OF GUIANA AND OLDEST COLONIAL BISHOP OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

We insert a sketch from "The Banner of Faith" of the venerable Dr. Austin, who is now in his 76th year, and has been Bishop of Guiana upwards of forty years.

At the late Lambeth Conference Dr. Medley, first Bishop of Fredericton, and Dr. Austin, first Bishop of Guiana, the two oldest Colonial Bishops of the Church of England, walked together.

Dr. Medley is now in his 78th year, and has been Bishop since 1845. Although older than Dr. Austin the latter has been a Bishop three years longer.

We are very mindful just now of "Our Bishop," for on August 24 (St. Bartholomew's Day) he completed the fortieth year of his episcopate.

"He must be a very old man, then," perhaps you will say.

Well, not so very old; before the year closes he will be seventy-five. You must not think of him as a white-haired, feeble, decrepit old man. He is nothing of the sort. He is a fine, erect, hearty, noble-looking man of not under 6 feet. Last year he went through a visitation that would have tried the endurance of some of the young men of the Diocese.

We are very proud of "Our Bishop." I am speaking of the *Bishop of Guiana*—the first and only Bishop of that see. He is the only Bishop of the Anglican Church, now alive, who has completed forty years of active service—and that service has been all in the same diocese. Active service, literally; for the Colony of British Guiana has a scattered population of various races, and travelling is not so easy as it is made in England. When the Bishop goes up a river to visit the Indian Missions, he must go in the tent boat, and