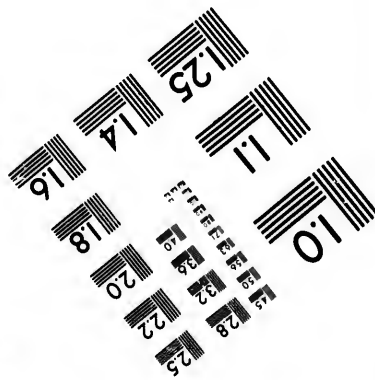
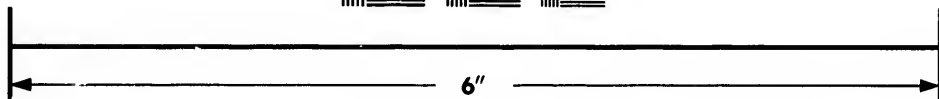
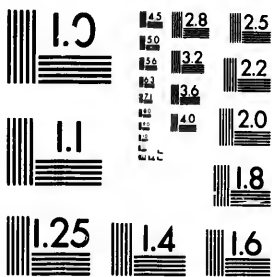


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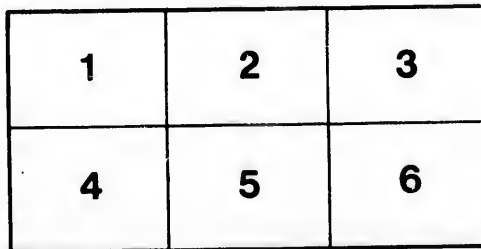
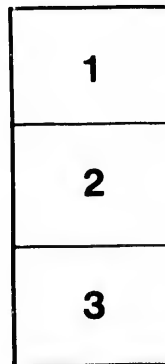
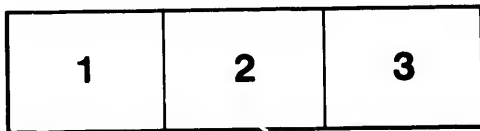
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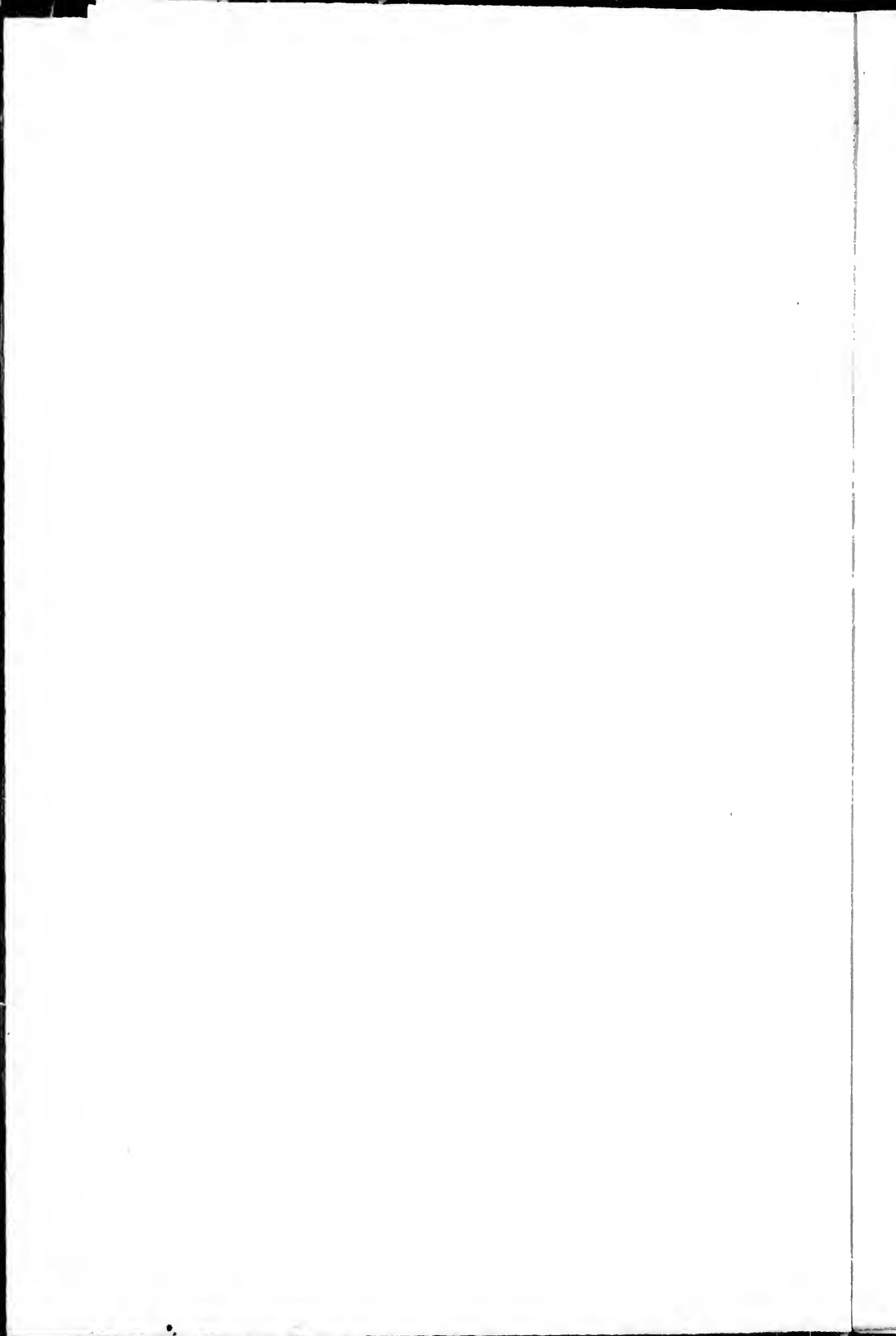
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A LETTER

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TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE

St. George's Society,

OF

QUEBEC.

IN RELATION TO

THE CHORAL SERVICE OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



BY GEO. J. MOUNTAIN, D. D., D. C. L.,

BISHOP OF QUEBEC.



QUEBEC :
PRINTED AT THE MERCURY NEWSPAPER OFFICE.

1857.

(For Private Circulation only.)

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QUEBEC, 24th April, 1857.

Sir,—

As you waited upon me officially, a few days ago, though not of your own movement, but in consequence of some representations made to you by certain members of the Managing Committee of the St. George's Society, respecting the manner of performing the services of the Society's anniversary, I feel it incumbent upon me, in order to prevent any misapprehensions which might otherwise go abroad upon the subject, to address to you the remarks which here follow.

I must premise that I am not in the habit of exercising any kind of interference with the arrangements for service on St. George's day,—the Cathedral being placed, for the occasion, at the disposal of the Society, and the Choir making their preparations, upon which they bestow much time and pains, in concert with the Committee. Upon the approach of yesterday's celebration, as there had been found reason, before you spoke to me, to forego the intention of performing the full choral service of the Church of England (to which it appears that exception was taken by the gentlemen above mentioned, but which, as being *characteristically* a feature of *English* usages, had been thought, in other quarters, appropriate for the particular occasion,)—I judged it best to let the day pass off, before troubling you with any communication, or promoting any discussion upon the subject. But although I had nothing to do, nor had any of the clergy, with the original proposal for a regular choral service, I cannot, in the situation which it has pleased God that I should hold in His Church, allow it to be supposed for one moment, that I am a party to the condemnation of a known, recognised, established, hereditary practice of the Protestant Church of England, preserved to us uninterruptedly, except during the overthrow of the Church Establishment in the success of the Great Rebellion, from the times of the Reformation:—A practice which I have never entertained the idea of introducing as our established mode of worship here, but to which, *in itself*, in common with a vast proportion,—I suppose I may be warranted in saying the vast majority of our clergy and laity,—I profess myself sincerely and strongly attached.

The Choral service being, in a good measure, confined to Cathedral and Collegiate Churches and the Chapels of some principal Colleges at the Universities, and the Cathedral Church here being used as the Parish Church, and even the surpliced choir, (a feature of many Parish Churches, as well as of all Cathedrals at home,) having been, for some years, suspended, on account of the difficulty of keeping it up without endowment,—that service is unknown to residents here who have not been in England, or have happened, when visiting England, not to become acquainted with it. It is therefore very easy for persons who have, more or less a taste for agitation, and for attack upon the Church,—(I think, although they may certainly mean well in what they are doing, a very unfortunate taste for themselves as well as for their neighbors,)—to excite a feeling of jealousy and suspicion of innovations, at the very mention of a Choral service. But you, Sir, who were born and bred in an English Cathedral town, (of which same town, I happen also to be a native, myself,) are perfectly aware that the practice in question is not the *mark* of a *party* but a *standing practice of the Church of England*; and possibly you may not be indisposed to echo, in relation to solemnities performed in this manner, twice a day through the week, in all the Cathedrals, the sentiment of Southey, *May they continue for ever!* Tastes will differ: and different minds will be affected in a different or even in an opposite manner, by the same thing; but there are thousands and thousands of true-hearted sons of the Protestant Church of England, who feel the Choral service to be something both sublimely and touchingly devotional; and it is upon record that the celebrated George Herbert, a burning and shining light in that Church, being in the habit of frequenting the Cathedral services of Salisbury, near to his own cure, was wont to say that he felt his participation in them, to be a kind of heaven upon earth.

A few years ago, the Dean of one of the English Cathedrals, took upon himself to set aside some of the prominent characteristics of the Choral service in that Church, and to substitute a performance more like the ordinary Parochial use. The congregation, however, at once and in a body, rose up against the change, and appealed to the Bishop, (resident in another

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city with which, ecclesiastically, the See of that in question is incorporated,) claiming it as their *right* to have continued to them, the practice received from their fathers and loved by themselves. The day will probably come, though it may be very distant, when the Churchmen of Quebec will be provided with Cathedral, besides the ordinary Parochial service, and will appreciate it as it was appreciated in that English Cathedral town. In the mean time, I have the fullest reason to know that it was a great disappointment to many persons here, that they could not, at least on *one* special occasion *in the year*, have the gratification of hearing the full Choral service, which would have been performed in a manner not to do discredit to any Cathedral at home; and such features of it as were introduced on St. George's day, were welcome to their hearts. There was, however, no blame attaching to anybody for the curtailment, the propriety of which, I myself, for reasons which I thought sufficient, agreed to and affirmed. But if it is supposed in any quarter, that I am chargeable with authoritatively originating the relinquishment of the full choral performance, as admitting it to be *per se*, objectionable or undesirable, and that I was influenced in favor of that relinquishment, by any article written in the papers, I only desire to say that I never saw any such article, and scarcely heard what was its tenor. It may have been very properly expressed, and prepared in a very proper spirit—I am entirely willing to believe that it was so—but whatever may have been the nature of the *particular case*, it must evidently follow, if the course of the Church, as a *general principle*, is to be dictated by the authors of anonymous communications, and *that* in papers conducted under the auspices of persons who dissent from her, (to whom, however, I do not intend the slightest disrespect,)—it must, I say, most evidently follow that the regulation of her proceedings would precisely be placed at the mercy of the most ill-informed as well as the most ill-disposed members of the community. And, with whatever good and pure intentions such anonymous communications may be made, it would be well for the framers of them to pause and consider, before they launch their production, that they cannot possibly more oblige or better serve any parties belonging to other communions, who may have evil will to our Zion, and especially within the Church of Rome,

than by circulating all over the Province and beyond it, the impression of dissatisfaction, distrust and dispute existing within the bosom of the Church of England. I thank God, however, that, if these do exist, they are groundless here. In the whole of the three Canadian Dioceses, there is not, I believe, one Church where practices have been introduced which could give reasonable ground of offence, nor one clergyman who has attempted any such equivocal usage. I thank God, also, that I believe, there is no more united Diocese in the Empire than this poor Diocese of Quebec.

What single good object can be pointed out, to counter-balance the mischief of these anonymous communications, it is difficult to understand; and they are the more to be deprecated because all the authorities of the Church, if recourse, in the natural order of things, were had to them, would be found freely accessible and ready to receive suggestions as well as to afford information and reasonable satisfaction to parties so applying.

If a precedent is sought for considering the service in question as appropriate to the special anniversary celebration of a charitable institution, I would beg leave to furnish one which is here extracted from the March No., in the present year, of the *London Ecclesiastical Gazette* :

“ His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury has appointed “ Wednesday, the 13th of May, for the celebration of the 203rd “ Anniversary Festival of the sons of the Clergy. The Arch- “ bishops and Bishops will attend the **FULL CHORAL SERVICE**, “ commencing at 3 o’clock, P.M., in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and “ be there met in state, by the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs.”

Fifty three years ago, when the Cathedral of *Quebec* was first opened for public worship, it was opened with *full Choral Service*, the part of the Choir itself being performed by Choristers in their surplices. If any member of the Church, whose opportunities of being familiar with this service, have been deficient, should desire to inform himself more fully and correctly upon the subject, he cannot do better than to procure *Jebb’s Choral Service of the Church*, by no means an expensive work, published by *J. W. Parker, West Strand, London*. All persons who have the prayer-book in their hands, may see that the *three Creeds*, the *Litany*, and the *Gloria in Excelsis*, besides the Psalms and Canticles, are *even in*

parochial use appointed to be *sung or said* (in some of the instances, *said or sung*.) They may also see, in the order for the *burial of the dead*, that the *Priest and Clerks*, preceding the corpse, are to *say or sing* the introductory sentences of that service.

I have only two more remarks to make. First, that even if any persons among us hold the usage here in question, to be objectionable, they can hardly regard it as an honest part to smother and keep it out of sight as if the Church of England did not own such a practice. For a condemnation of the Choral service, whether well or ill founded, undeniably and of necessity, involves a *censure upon the Church of England*, and as such we must deal with it: we cannot, consistently with common truth, attempt to make the Church more acceptable in other quarters, by *suppressing* the fact that this service is a part of her system.

Secondly, that it seems to me very undesirable to encourage that unenlightened and undiscerning Protestantism, (for I find it impossible to regard it as having any other character,) which confounds with superstitious practices or leanings, certain accessories and circumstantials attaching to the English ritual, and in some instances to that of the continental Reformation in Europe, which are not essential parts of Religion itself, but which have venerable claims upon our regard, many of them retained from the remote ages of a Christianity still pure and sound before God,—and which are wisely adapted to promote reverential and devotional effect in public worship. It looks like a want of safe and clear discrimination, a *defective apprehension* of the *real nature* of the anti-Scriptural errors repudiated by *Protestants*, as such, and of the *grounds* of that repudiation, to suppose that the use of a surplice, (for example) or the intoning of portions of the service, are things of the same stamp with those errors, or falling within the same category. We might, exactly, upon the same principles, raise an outcry against the use of bells—against steeples or arched windows in Churches,—still more against the revival, in all the branches of Protestantism, of mediæval architecture in places of worship,—or against a black habit as the ordinary dress of Ministers, all of which are derived to Protestants through the Church of Rome. This subject is much too large to enter upon here: but I am bold to say that the world has seen few

wiser or better men than the compilers of the English prayer book ; and I recommend to all persons who desire satisfaction upon such points as are here noticed, an attentive perusal of the *Preface* to the Prayer Book, and the paragraphs headed "*Of Ceremonies, why some be abolished and some retained,*" as well as a reference to the explanatory Canon (the 30th) respecting the sign of the cross in baptism ; the explanatory statement subjoined to the Communion Office, respecting the practice of kneeling in the reception of the holy Communion ; and, finally, the 34th Article of Religion, all of which will, directly or indirectly, be found to bear upon the subject of this letter, and from all of which it will appear that the Church of England, while she disclaims the idea of insisting upon the conformity of all the Churches of different countries, to one ritual or of the necessary perpetuity of external forms appointed by ecclesiastical authority, is quite prepared to defend her own received practices and to recommend them *to the dutiful observance of her children.*

These observations, Sir, you will perhaps take an opportunity to communicate to the gentlemen, for their consideration, who expressed to you their objection to the Choral Service. Who those gentlemen are, I do not know, nor do I, in the most distant manner, question their motives, but I trust that neither they nor any others will do me the gross injustice to suppose that because, for the reasons which I have explained, I have felt called upon to notice the subject as I have done, I am disposed to spend my strength and exhaust my zeal upon forms, whatever claims they may have to our attachment and respect. The agitation of the subject is not imputable to me. But, whatever becomes of myself, I will say, in conclusion, that men who are attached to the system and usages of the Anglican Church, are cruelly calumniated, if it be thence supposed that they are not alive to the grand and paramount objects of the Christian Ministry : they prove themselves, in abundant instances, to be the very men whose ardent aim is that which is the life and soul of all Religion, **TO MAGNIFY THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS and TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD,**—in that cause, glad *to spend and be spent.*

I am, Sir,

Your faithful humble servant,

G. J. QUEBEC.

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