

CHURCH REFORM.

No. VII.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.

THE practical duty of Church Reformers is the subject which I propose to handle in this paper. It is the last subject to which I shall invite public attention at present. I have now traversed the whole field of Church Reform. I have examined successively the Episcopate, Convocation, Cathedral bodies, our Public Worship, the Ministry, and the position of the Laity. Under each of these heads I have ventured to point out defects and to suggest changes. A brief summary of these suggestions will perhaps prove interesting and convenient to some of my readers.

(a) About *Dioceses and Bishops* I have made the following suggestions. Our Dioceses are much too large, and ought to be divided and subdivided. Our Bishops are too few, and ought to be multiplied until there is at least one in each county. The greater part of our Bishops had better have no seats in the House of Lords. Five representative Bishops, elected annually for the purpose, would be quite sufficient to defend the interests of the Establishment in the Upper House. The incomes of the Bishops, when multiplied and withdrawn from Parliament, might be halved. The autocratic power of the Bishops ought to be diminished, and they ought to be assisted by a standing Council of clergymen and laymen. The present mode of appointing Bishops to vacant Sees ought to be changed.

(b) About *Convocation* I have made the following suggestions. The two existing Convocations of Canterbury and York ought to be fused into one body, and form one Synod for the Church of England. Three clerical and three lay Proctors should be elected to represent each diocese. No ex-officio members, such as Deans or Archdeacons, should be allowed to have seats, unless elected as Proctors to represent any diocese. Bishops, clergy, and laity ought to sit, debate, and vote together in one and the same house.

(c) About *Cathedrals* I have made the following suggestions. The existing Cathedral establishments, as vacancies fall in, ought to be entirely suppressed and done away. Every Bishop who has a Cathedral in his diocese ought to be the Dean and Superintendent of his own Cathedral. Two perpetually resident paid Chaplains, appointed by the Bishop, and two minor Chaplains, would be sufficient to keep up the Cathedral services in an efficient state. The surplus income arising from Cathedral establishments, after

suppression, ought to be applied to increasing the livings in Cathedral cities, to the support of aged and superannuated clergymen, and to the founding of new Bishoprics in large counties.

(d) About our *Public Worship and religious services* I have made the following suggestions. The Order of Prayer for the Morning Service in every church ought, if the clergyman wishes, to be shortened, divided, and simplified. When the Lord's Supper is administered, the Communion Service ought to be read alone. The Baptismal Service, if publicly administered, ought to be shortened. Non-Liturgical Services in unconsecrated places ought to be largely increased, and encouraged by the Bishops.

(e) About *the Ministry* of the Established Church I have made the following suggestions. The Ministry ought to be vertically extended, by creating the office of Subdeacon, and admitting suitable candidates to it, after the age of twenty. The Ministry ought to be laterally extended by creating diocesan Evangelists, to be employed by the Bishop and his Council at their discretion, in any parish, where they may seem required, with or without the consent of the Incumbent. More care ought to be used in giving testimonials for orders to young men. Orders ought not to be indelible, and any one who wishes to give up the ministerial office for a secular profession ought to be allowed to do so.

(f) About *the Laity* I have made the following suggestions. The lay members of the Church of England are not at present in the position which they ought to occupy according to Scripture. Nothing ought to be done by Bishops, Convocation, or parochial clergy, without the advice and consent of the Laity. The Laity in every parish and congregation ought to have a voice in the appointment of their minister, whenever a vacancy arises. The Judges of Ecclesiastical Courts ought to be laymen. The sale of Livings ought to be entirely prohibited.

Such are the suggestions which I have ventured to make for the reform of the Established Church of England. The field, I am very sensible, is a wide one, and I am not so foolish as to suppose that all my suggestions must be wise. One thing only I can say with a good conscience:—I have written as a loyal friend to the Church of England, and with an earnest desire to increase her usefulness. This is the truth, whether men will believe it or not. Nothing

remains for me now but to indicate the line of action which the friends of Church Reform throughout England, ought, in my judgment, to take up.

Before doing this, however, I ask permission to say a few parting words to some of my readers. As I expected, my papers have brought down on me a legion of correspondents. Some are favourable and some are unfavourable; some are complimentary and some are not; some bid me "go ahead," and some bid me "turn astern." I am quite unable to reply to them all. I can only ask them to accept my thanks, and to believe that I am grateful both

for kind encouragement and for candid strictures. To four classes of critics, however, I must say something in self-defence.

(1) Some of my readers think that *no Church Reform is needed*. They are quite content with things as they are —Dioceses as they are, Convocations as they are, Cathedrals as they are, Services as they are, Clergymen as they are, Laymen as they are. They want no change! Their policy is “*quieta non movere*,”—to maintain a masterly inactivity. Their favourite text is, “Meddle not with them that are given to change.” Their cry is that of Lord Melbourne: “Why can’t you let things alone?”—There is something touching in the Arcadian simplicity of these worthy people. Dwelling apparently in some happy valley of Rasselas, they cannot understand why every one is not content to sit still. They do not see that our venerable mother will die of dignity if she does not take medicine. With these excellent critics it is useless to argue. We have no common ground to start with. We must agree to differ.

(2) Some of my readers think that Church Reform may be a desirable thing in the abstract, but they regard it as totally *impracticable and impossible*. They look on me as a sort of visionary enthusiast, who has a “bee in his bonnet,” and have hardly patience to read what I say. Well, that cry “impossible” has often been raised against novelties, and I am not surprised to hear it again. Winsor was called an enthusiast when he proposed to light London with gas; Stephenson, when he advised the use of the locomotive on railways; Lesseps, when he originated the Suez Canal. I am content to wait. A few years will show who is right and who is wrong. “*Solvitur ambulando*.” Scores of things are thought impracticable, simply because men will not attempt to do them.

(3) Some of my readers think that to attempt external Church Reform is *downright wrong*. They are ready to denounce me as a carnal-minded backslider for propounding it. They say that what we want is not more Bishops, or new Convocations, but a revival of true religion, more preaching of the Gospel, more faith, and more prayer. All very good! For twenty-five years, I may humbly remark, I have written, and worked, and preached, and laboured, in this direction, to the best of my ability. I hope to do so to the end of my days. But why is all this to prevent my seeking Church Reform? You might as well tell me that I am not to urge on a man sobriety, cleanliness, and economy, because these things are not converting grace, and cannot save his soul.

(4) Some of my readers think that Church Reform is *positively dangerous*. They shrink with horror from the idea of multiplying Bishops and vivifying Convocation. They regard me as a kind of Ishmael, whose hand is against everybody, and whose suggestions would ruin the Church,—or as a kind of Jehu, who “drives furiously,” and would upset the whole concern. They tell me that ten more Bishops, like some on the bench, would blow

the whole Church into the air, and that the remedy is worse than the disease. "Talk no more of reforms," they cry; "let us hobble on as we are."—Well, we must agree to differ! I do not believe that one of the reforms I have suggested would imperil the Church, if it was only accompanied by the safeguards I have named. The greatest peril, to my mind, consists in the policy of total inaction, and in doing nothing at all.

Is the Established Church of England in danger or not? This is the broad reply I make to all who object to Church Reform, and refuse to consider it Danger or no danger? Yes or no? That is the question.—What! no inward danger, when the Real Presence, the Popish Confessional, and candle-blessing are found rampant on one side, and the Atonement, the Divinity of Christ, the Inspiration of Scripture, and the reality of miracles, are coolly thrown overboard on the other!—What! no outward danger, when infidels, Papists, and Dissenters are hungering and thirsting after the destruction of the Establishment, and compassing sea and land to accomplish their ends!—What! no danger, when myriads of our working classes never enter the walls of our church, and would not raise a finger to keep her alive, while by household suffrage they have got all power into their hands!—What! no danger, when the Irish Church has been disestablished, the Act of Union has been trampled under foot, Protestant endowments have been handed over to Papists, the thin edge of the wedge for severing Church and State has been let in, and the Statesman who did all this is still Prime Minister with an immense majority!—No danger, indeed! I can find no words to express my astonishment that men say so. But, alas, there are never wanting men who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, and who will not understand.

The Established Church of England is in danger. There is no mistake about it. This is the one broad, sweeping reason why I advocate Church Reform. There is a "handwriting on the wall," flashing luridly from the other side of St. George's Channel, which needs no Daniel to interpret it. The bell has begun to toll for the funeral of the Irish Establishment. Her grave is dug, and the mourners are going about the streets. Who shall say that a coffin is not already being made for her English sister?—The old Italian enemy of Protestantism has tasted blood in the last twelve months, and she will never be content till she has tasted more. There is a current setting in towards the disestablishment of all national Churches, and we are already in it. We are gradually drifting downwards, though many perceive it not; but those who look at the old landmarks cannot fail to see that we move. We shall soon be in the rapids. A few,—a very few years,—and we shall be over the falls.* The English public seems drunk with the grand idea of "free

* Some men think language of this kind dangerous and unwise. They say it hastens on the evil which we fear. I cannot agree with them. Silence about disestablishment will not

trade “in everything, in religion as well as in commerce, in Churches as well as in corn. Even the Master of the Temple tells Harrow school, “I expect and half foresee disestablishment” (See Dr. Vaughan’s sermon on “Progress the Condition of Permanence”) Quiet, moderate men, like the Bishops of Ely and Rochester, calmly discuss its consequences. The daily press is constantly harping on the subject. There is not a respectable Insurance Office in London that would insure the life of the Establishment for twenty years! And shall we sit still and refuse to set our house in order? I, for one, say God forbid!—Shall we wait till we are turned out into the street, and obliged to reform ourselves in the midst of a hurricane of confusion? I, for one, say God forbid!—The experienced general tells us that it is madness to change front in the face of an enemy. The skilful American driver objects to shifting luggage in the middle of a deep ford. If we believe that danger is impending over the Church Establishment, let us not wait till the storm bursts. Let us gird up our loins while we can, and attempt Church Reform,

I must drop this part of my subject here. I turn from those who object to Church Reform, to those who are its friends. They ask continually, What can be done? How shall we set to work? What may we expect? What are our prospects?—To these questions I shall at once proceed to supply an answer. I shall give that answer with unfeigned diffidence, as I do not pretend to have more eyes than other men. But I shall give it with the utmost frankness. This is no time for mincing matters, and beating about the bush. A pilot must speak shortly, sharply, and plainly, when the ship is in the breakers. Nothing, I know well, can be done without an Act of Parliament. But how shall we obtain Parliamentary action? From whom must the first impetus come?

(1) In the first place, we must look for *nothing from the Bishops*. It is impossible, with all the cares of their present large Dioceses, that the Bishops can take up so complicated a question as Church Reform. Many of them, it is commonly reported, see no necessity for any change. Some of them, judging by recent “Charges,” appear to think the unhappy divisions of our Church a most useful, salutary, elysian, and delightful state of things, and to regard the various schools of opinion as excellent checks on one another, or as Kilkenny cats, which will finally eat one another up, except

prevent the movement creeping on. Talking about it will not accelerate the movement. Refusal to look at the idea of disestablishment was one of the things which shipwrecked the Irish Church.

If any man thinks I am an advocate for disestablishment, he is totally mistaken. I hope to fight against it to the last, as an act of enormous national folly, and a gigantic national sin. It will bring miserable spiritual destitution on rural parishes. It will probably split the Church of England into pieces. But I am quite sure that the most likely way to prevent it is to look it calmly in the face, and reform our Church betimes.

their tails.* In short, they are not, as a body, united, and it is useless, under such circumstances, to expect from them any large measure of Church Reform.

After all, Bishops are only flesh and blood. They can hardly be expected to propose any large diminution of their own dignity and importance. We cannot expect Bishop Wilberforce or Bishop Magee to play the part of Quintus Curtius, in order to fill up the yawning gulf in our ecclesiastical forum. We cannot expect these able prelates to bring in a Bill enacting that their own Dioceses shall be cut in two, their own incomes halved, and themselves exiled from the House of Lords, in order that they may retire, like Cincinnatus, into provincial obscurity! The idea is preposterous and absurd.

Above all, we must never forget, that, with rare exceptions, our English Bishops have never initiated great popular movements. It is not the genius of their order, They have generally been followers, and not leaders, of public opinion. Boldness, aggressiveness, inventiveness, constructiveness, have seldom been their characteristics. They rarely move unless they are pressed into action. They avoid, as far as possible, all risk of collisions.—It may be they are right. Perhaps in the long run they adopt the safest line. The history of Laud, who ruined himself and the Church of England, is a standing warning against much episcopal independence of thought! But, judging from the experience of the last two centuries, English Bishops are never likely to be leading Church Reformers.

(2) In the second place, we must expect *little or nothing from Convocation*. It is utterly improbable that this anomalous assembly, which can do nothing without Royal license, will ever be allowed to originate Church Reform. Its proceedings are already regarded with a little chronic jealousy. It is more than doubtful whether any Government would ever trust it with legislative power of the pettiest description. It is quite certain that the House of Commons would never tolerate the slightest shadow of statute-framing by any body but itself. Above all, the very constitution of Convocation makes it most unlikely that it would ever propound any really valuable reform.

* How any sensible Bishop can regard our “unhappy divisions” as useful and salutary, is to me perfectly astonishing. At present an English lay Churchman who moves about much in England, may hear the most contradictory doctrines taught in church pulpits about the atonement, the inspiration of Scripture, the Lord’s supper, baptism, auricular confession, the eternity of punishment!—And yet some Bishops tell him complacently in their Charges that it is wholesome and useful to have all schools of thought represented in the Church of England!—Might not a layman well ask them what he is to believe? Might he not inquire whether they expect him to have one creed in one parish and another in another? Might he not request them to inform him what answer he is to make to his children if they say to him, “Father, what is truth?”

Can we imagine, for instance, this little clerical Parliament putting the extinguisher on its own head, amputating its own superfluous limbs, and deluging itself with an infusion of laity? Can we imagine Deans and Canons performing the Japanese operation of “happy despatch,” and proclaiming the uselessness of the Cathedral system? Can we imagine Archdeacons snuffing themselves out in cold blood, passing a “self-denying ordinance,” and voting

that there shall be no *ex-officio* members in the Church’s synod? He that expects such things has more imagination than I possess. I expect no thorough measure of Church Reform from Convocation.

(3) In the third place, we must not dream of anything from *the Parochial Clergy*, as a body. A few of the Evangelical section, and a few of the High Church section, I believe, are honestly in favour of Church Reform. The vast majority, I suspect, are entirely opposed to it, and want no change.

The ruling maxims of a good monk in the middle ages were said to be three,—“Semper subesse superioribus— legere breviarium taliter qualiter,—et sinere omnes res eo vadere quo vident.” I often think, when these mediaeval worthies left the world, their mantle must have descended on the rectors, vicars, and perpetual curates of Old England. At any rate, if we have not put on their clothes, we have drunk deeply into their spirit. For resolute unwillingness to admit the necessity of change,—for steady dislike to anything new,—for persevering adherence to old paths, whether good or bad,—for inability to see the need of adapting ourselves to the times,—for all these characteristics, I believe there is no class in England to be compared with the Parochial Clergy. Reforms of any kind are not much in our line.

Like Bishops and Deans and Archdeacons, the Parochial Clergyman is only flesh and blood. Can any man in his senses suppose that one Incumbent out of ten will like the idea of an active lynx-eyed Bishop in every county making an annual visitation of every parish, and taking stock of every nook in his diocese,—an annual Ruri-Decanal Synod, comprising laymen as well as clergymen,—an energetic Churchwarden or parochial Lay Council poking him up about his doctrine or ceremonial,—a Diocesan Evangelist invading his parish and arousing the spiritual appetite of his people? If many rectors and vicars did not instinctively shrink with horror from the very idea of such revolutionary work as this, I am much mistaken in my estimate of human nature. Oh, no! Your average English clergyman is a worthy quiet man, who views with suspicion anything like stir, movement, sensation, progress, steam, violent exertion, perpetual motion, or express speed. He thinks these things savour of excitement and agitation. He deprecates the very idea of changes in this direction. They are just as obnoxious to him as the steam thrashing engine was to the old labourer who

used to flourish a flail all the year round in his master's barn. From the bulk of the parochial clergy we must expect no help in seeking Church Reform.

(4) In the fourth place, we must build no hopes at present upon *the House of Commons*. That remarkable assembly, no doubt, is the most powerful institution in England, and does pretty much what it likes with every question. Nothing, we may depend, will ever be done in the matter of Church Reform, unless the Lower House of Parliament is the doer of it. But the House of Commons is eminently the representative of public opinion, and unless public opinion brings Church Reform to the front as a great question of the day, there is little chance of its getting even a hearing in St Stephen's. The House of Commons is now composed of such heterogeneous elements that it naturally dislikes religious questions, especially questions affecting the Established Church of the realm. And no wonder. Such questions evidently cannot be discussed without causing heavy collisions. A day may come when constituencies may insist on their representatives taking Church Reform in hand. At present it seems far distant.

Something, I admit, might be done, if the cause had a champion in Parliament who could command the ear of the House. A Lay Churchman who possessed the high principle and eloquence of Wilberforce, or the strong sense and unwearied perseverance of Cobden, might yet do for Church Reform what the one did for the anti-slavery cause, and the other did for free trade. He might bring forward the question every year with courteous importunity, and win a place for it by his able advocacy. He might gradually plant the subject in the minds of thinking men, secure a patient hearing for his arguments, and rally round him a respectable party of adherents. But it is vain to pretend that we have any such champion at present. Secular questions absorb the intellect of rising politicians. Church Reform requires an advocate in St. Stephen's who shall be a man *per se*, a man of one subject, and a man of one thing—not a bore, not a fool, not a fanatic of the "Praise-God Barebones" style, but a man of sense, a man of tact, a man of imperturbable good temper, a man of undeniable power, a man whose character commands the respect of his opponents, and whose motives are above suspicion. Such a champion of Church Reform might do wonders if he could be found, and make a glorious position for himself in ecclesiastical annals. But where is such a man to be found? I cannot tell. Our Egypt yields no Joseph at present, and our Senate no Pym or Hampden. From the House of Commons we must expect nothing at all.

(5) In the last place, we must place our main dependence, under God, upon the *individual efforts of Church Reformers* throughout the length and breadth of the country. This may seem a "lame and impotent conclusion" to arrive at, but I can arrive at no other. It is vain to wait for Bishops, Convocation, Clergy, or Parliament. They will work no deliverance for us. The friends of Church Reform must take up the matter with their own hands, or

else nothing will be done. The classical waggoner, when his waggon had stuck fast in the ruts, was told by Hercules not to sit still crying and roaring for help, but to put his own shoulder to the wheel. The friends of Church Reform must not be content with constantly screaming out, "Something ought to be done." They must cast off all dependence on Hercules on the bench, or Hercules in Convocation. They must take off their own coats, and set to work in a business-like way to do something themselves. Every Church Reformer must put his own shoulder to the wheel, and do his duty.

What is the first thing to be done? My answer is short and simple. We must begin by *informing the public mind*. We must try to create, educate, and direct public opinion. We cannot possibly force Church Reform down people's throats, however much we may be convinced of its desirableness ourselves. We must go to work as the "Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers" did, and patiently sow light and information, before we shall reap any harvest. The ignorance of most people on the whole subject of Church Reform is vast and profound. Myriads of Churchmen have a vague idea that our Church Establishment needs reform, but they have not the smallest definite conception of the special things that need to be done. This ignorance we must attack tooth and nail, and leaven the country with information. We must let in the light on every comer of our huge ecclesiastical machine, and show the public what repairs are needed, and how its usefulness may be increased. Once create a steady, wholesome current of public opinion about Church Reform, and the thing will be done.

What means shall we use for spreading information? Again my answer is short and simple. We must use those old and tried weapons which in every free country are the prime agents of all reformation. We must use *the press and the platform, the pen and the tongue*. We must set men thinking, talking, and considering the whole question of Church Reform. We must invite them to read short statements of the defects we want remedied, and the best probable remedies. We must court the fullest inquiry into the facts of our Church Establishment, point out its admirable qualities, and ask men to assist in getting such a noble institution rearranged, readjusted, and improved. Once set the great stone rolling, and it will clear a road for itself. Once set the middle classes and intelligent artisans reading and thinking about Church Reform, and I have strong hope that something would be done.

What special machinery shall we employ for carrying out our designs? This is a question which I had rather leave to others to answer. What is good in one locality is not good in another. I have little faith myself in brand-new Societies. Such agencies are too often noisy, expensive, useless affairs, and do more harm than good, by making men shuffle off their own responsibility, and leave to others what they should do themselves. Such agencies are apt to assume a defiant, combative tone, as if they would

knock any one down who disagreed with them, and thus create prejudices instead of winning friends. I have far more faith in the unbought, unsalaried, voluntary exertions of all Churchmen who are friends of Church Reform. Every Church Reformer must set to work in his own neighbourhood, and, like the builders in Nehemiah's days, labour opposite his own house. If there was only one man in each town or rural deanery who would begin regularly agitating the question of Church Reform, and constantly bombarding his neighbours with wisely-chosen tracts about it, I think much might be done. John Wesley's maxim, "All at it, and always at it," is a maxim which would be found most valuable by Church Reformers. Once more I say,—Only enlighten the public mind and fill it with information, and the question would ultimately settle itself. The one thing needful is to spread light and knowledge. Give me in every county the "one man" system! I doubt whether Noah's ark would ever have been built, if it had been left to some modern "Committees."

How long will it be before Church Reform is obtained? What chances are there of the movement succeeding? These are questions which I cannot possibly answer. The English people are notoriously slow to move in new directions on any subject at all. Like nature, "*Anglia nihil facit per saltum*." It took many months of miserable disorder at Balaclava and Sebastopol, to convince us that our army administration needed any reform at all, and was not a perfect system? How many years will it take to convince Churchmen that there is anything wrong with the Church?—It took years of patient agitation to carry the objects of the Anti-Slavery Societies. How much longer will it take to remedy ecclesiastical defects?—In truth, I know not whether God means to allow us time to reform our Church at all, and whether all our efforts may not, like Josiah's reformatations, prove "too late." One thing only I know. Our business is to work on patiently, and if we cannot get all that we want, to get all that we can. Let us not despise bit-by-bit reforms. Let us accept them with thankfulness, as instalments, so long as we find principles are admitted, and the train is set in motion. Better a thousand times creep slowly forward, than not move at all. Let us, for instance, make a practical beginning, by pressing everywhere and in every way the rights and duties of the laity. Let us summon churchwardens all over the land to take up their rightful position, and to become genuine champions of the Church of England. Let us urge the admission of the laity into rural-deanery synods, and leave no stone unturned to obtain it. These things may seem trifling and insignificant to some. They are not so in reality. They are a beginning; and that is half the battle. Come what will, and come what may, one mighty principle must never be forgotten by the friends of Church Reform: "Duties are ours, and events are God's."

My task is done, and I hasten on to a conclusion. I leave the whole subject with a somewhat heavy heart. My hopes for the future of the Church of

England are less than my fears. The clouds in the ecclesiastical horizon are dark and lowering. There are evil symptoms abroad in our Zion which fill me with alarm.

(1) One evil symptom is the *general low standard of ministerial holiness and decision*. I speak of the whole clerical body, without reference to schools or parties, and of my own section of it as much as of any other. We are not up to the mark of our forefathers in many respects. Our fine gold has become very dim. Our locks seem shorn like Samson's. We are not the thorough-going "men of God" that we ought to be, and our influence on the public mind is proportionately small. I tremble to think what would come out, if the Church of England were suddenly disestablished and disendowed. We are, many of us, quite unfit and unprepared to meet such a catastrophe. I say it to our shame. Oh, that God would revive us! Oh, that revival might begin at the sanctuary!

(2) Another evil symptom is the *seemingly endless estrangement of good men from one another*. Of course there can never be real harmony between Evangelical Churchmen and ultra-Ritualists or ultra-Rationalists. There is an utter want of common ground between them. There is a gulf which cannot be passed. If they are Churchmen we are not. Whatever some newspapers and some Episcopal Charges may please to say, mere "earnestness" is not a sufficient bond of union. There is no cement in mere vague "zeal."—But how long is the miserable misunderstanding between Evangelical Churchmen and *moderate* High and Broad Churchmen to go on? Is this a stream that can never be bridged, forded, or crossed? I cannot and I will not believe it!—On the one hand, it is high time for Evangelical Churchmen to understand that justification by faith is preached and Popery disliked quite as much by many who are "High" and "Broad" as by themselves, and that many who talk of "Baptismal Regeneration" mean no more by the phrase than was meant by good Bishop Hopkins. (See Hopkins on the two sacraments.)—On the other hand, it is high time for moderate High and Broad Churchmen to understand that Evangelical clergymen are not all Antinomians and fanatics, and that they do use the Prayer-book honestly, and do value the ministry and the Sacraments, and do believe the Nicene Creed!—At present the ignorance on both sides of one another is simply scandalous, disgraceful, and astounding. Oh, that God would pour upon us the spirit of unity! I tremble to think what would happen if Disestablishment suddenly came down upon us! Without a better understanding than there is at present, the Church of England would infallibly go to pieces. I want no one to give up a jot or tittle of which he believes to be God's truth. We need not change or sacrifice one of our cherished opinions. But surely we ought to try to understand one another.

(3) Another evil symptom is the *wide-spread apathy and indifference which prevail among lay Churchmen about the future of any ecclesiastical*

questions. There is a want of rallying power which bodes ill for our constitution. The feeling of the vast majority, even of thinking men, seems to be that "it is all a muddle and confusion, but we suppose it will last our time." I advise them not to be too sure. The deluge may come rather sooner than they think. "Tomorrow shall be as this day," was the saying of many in Noah's time. Yet the flood came suddenly, and destroyed them all.—"Tomorrow shall be as this day," was the saying of Belshazzar's companions at his feast. Yet that very night the Persian army broke in, and the feast ended in bloodshed, destruction, and confusion.—"Tomorrow shall be as this day," was the saying of Louis XV.'s profligate courtiers. Yet many of them lived to see Church and State upset, and the guillotine at work in the streets at Paris.—"Tomorrow shall be as this day," was the feeling of Irish Churchmen three years ago'. Yet a sword was hanging over their heads at that very moment by a single hair, and the year 1870 sees them stripped, plundered, and turned out of doors!—Oh, that we may not see something of the same sort on our side of the Channel! Oh, that English Churchmen would try to be in earnest about other matters beside hunting, and shooting, and dancing, and dressing, and farming, and railways, and cotton, and iron, and coal! Oh, that they would take up Church matters in a business-like way, and "set their house in order" while they can!

I see these three evil symptoms, and I honestly confess I am afraid. Were it not that I believe that nothing is impossible with God,—that the greatest works are often begun by small minorities,—that the darkest hour of the night is often that which precedes the morning,—that in Church work light is often evolved out of a chaos of mist, fog, tangle, and obscurity, so that God may have all the glory,—were it not that I believe all this, I often think I should fold my arms and sit down in flat despair. But I remember all this, and take comfort. A Christian, like a Roman consul, must never despair of the ecclesiastical republic. So long as a plank is left in the old Protestant Church of England, I shall pray on, and work on, and not despair.

I am not infallible, any more than the Pope. I freely confess that many of my suggestions may prove unwise and many of them impracticable. Be it so. But one thing, at any rate, I have the satisfaction of feeling, as I lay down my pen. My conscience acquits me of the least desire to hurt my beloved Church. I have a deep conviction at present that I have suggested nothing but that which is for the benefit of the Church of England, the good of my country, and the glory of my God. I AM FIRMLY PERSUADED THAT THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IS IN DANGER, AND THAT SOME CHURCH REFORM IS GREATLY NEEDED. In circumstances like these, and with such feelings, it becomes even a country clergyman like myself, to raise a warning voice, and to try to do his duty.

London: William Hunt & Co., Holles Street, Cavendish Square.

[ONE PENNY.]