

Canon Liddon : a retrospect

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CANON LIDDON.

A RETROSPECT.

I have been asked by the Editor to say a few words on the Life of Canon Liddon, which—too long delayed—has recently appeared. I do so very willingly, because I owe much to him. I shall never forget the term I passed at Cuddesdon under his immediate influence. And though I saw but little of him in after life, I was brought into contact with him on two remarkable occasions; the first the never-to-be-forgotten Bonn Conference in 1875, the other, the *Lux Mundi* controversy, which arose just before his death. Though there were always some points of divergence between the Canon's views and my own, I was, and am, thoroughly with him in his views in regard to *Lux Mundi*, the well known manifesto of the neo-Anglo-Catholic school in this country. We entered into correspondence on the subject, but it was all too soon interrupted by his death. It will be a matter of satisfaction to me as long—it cannot be very long now—as I am spared to do work in this world, that a message of love and confidence was dictated to me on his death-bed.

Were it not for the Old Catholic movement the English Church would have remained a sealed book to the Continental public. The Protestant theologians, with the single exception of Professor Nippold, have painted our National Church as a creation of the State, a mere political compromise between divergent theological schools. Roman Catholic writers have exaggerated this view. They see in her, as Döllinger himself did for a long period in his busy career, only a theological non-entity and a practical failure. Even Old Catholics, however, know but little of one of the greatest preachers the English Church ever possessed. The only man who can dispute the

palm of precedence with him is Frederick Robertson. But immense as is Robertson's influence now, during his life-time it was confined to the thinking few. To the many Robertson was a heretic of a very dangerous type, a dreamer far beyond the reach of ordinary men and women. He would never have allowed the opportunity Liddon had, for many years of his life, of preaching to four thousand people under the dome of St Paul's Cathedral. And even if it had been offered him, it is doubtful whether his well-sustained arguments, striking illustrations, and deep sympathy for mankind—especially the more thoughtful of mankind—would have been anything but "caviare to the general" of his day. But Liddon was a power with all—with young and old, rich and poor, cultivated and ignorant. His personality was as attractive as his matter. His finely-outlined, clear-cut face, his winning smile, which often, even in the pulpit, set off his eloquence; his clear and penetrating voice, his ascetic appearance and bearing; his intense and infectious earnestness;—these appealed to persons who could not fully enter into his arguments, or understand his allusions. And his oratorical gifts were almost unrivalled. The great French preachers of the reign of Louis XIV, whom he was supposed to have imitated, fell far short of him in intensity of conviction, in simplicity and directness of diction, and in honesty and sincerity of purpose. Yet his language, though neither strained nor affected, was always scholarly, beautiful, and well chosen. His illustrations, though often elaborate, and elaborately worked out, went straight to the point. And next to his intense earnestness, his extraordinary clearness of arrangement and expression contributed to make him by far the foremost preacher of his day. I remember my sister coming home from St Paul's when he was once invited to preach there, before he was as generally known as he afterwards became—before he was Canon, and when his reputation was chiefly confined to Oxford—and giving me an outline of a brilliant and original sermon he had delivered on the renunciation of the world, which I had, years afterwards, an opportunity of comparing with the published sermon, and which I found to be, not only a generally correct account of his argument, but, in places at least, even verbally accurate. He was just as great with us students at Cuddesdon. His sermons in those days were always *ex tempore*. But he

held a dozen of us, in the little chapel—us, with whom he was in daily intercourse—as enthralled as were his mighty congregations in later years. And, like my sister, I can distinctly remember the very words he uttered, though forty-seven years have since elapsed.

Such were some of the characteristics of the greatest preacher of my time. If he were not so great a power outside the pulpit, in matters ecclesiastical, political, and social, it was for two reasons. First of all, in spite of the fact that he studiously avoided touching on controversial points, it was generally felt that he was in sympathy with a religious movement which, deeply in earnest as were its leaders, and immensely as they were to be admired for their learning, sincerity, and holiness of life, has never taken hold of the mind of England as a whole. And next, his religion was rather individual than social. It always appeared to me—though not so much so, I admit, in his later years—to be too highly coloured by mediæval ideals, and to aim rather at isolation from the world than at bringing about the regeneration of a people which, whatever its shortcomings, was nevertheless undeniably Christian at heart. Deeply indebted as I confess to have been to Charles Kingsley, and to his—and *my*—teacher Frederick Denison Maurice, I was myself never in perfect sympathy with Liddon's ideals and general ecclesiastical policy. Nevertheless, as long as he lived, I felt the highest possible respect for his clear and definite opinions, his sublime sincerity, his entire self-renunciation, and his devotion to his great work. And while I regretted that he so often found himself compelled to decline the office of Bishop, so often pressed upon him, I believe the instinct was a right one which told him that his true place was at the Cathedral Church of the greatest city in the world. As long as he lived, he was a witness for the demand of his Master that men should renounce all lower aims, and devote themselves loyally and even passionately to the task of following Him on His pathway to the Cross. And since that eloquent voice has been hushed in death, it appears to me that none has been found altogether to take its place. The protest for Christ—may I say it?—seems to me to have become less clear-sighted, weaker, and more wavering; savouring more, sometimes of self and self-satisfaction, sometimes of compromise and conformity with

a world which still needs sharp rebuke and firm guidance in the truth ¹).

I will not take up your space, however, with Liddon's career in England, or with his policy in regard to English ecclesiastical affairs. Those who wish to see what he was, as a man, as a divine, as an ecclesiastical politician, will find these things described in his life ²). I will confine myself chiefly to one point, his relations with Old Catholicism. His acquaintance with Döllinger commenced in 1870. The Vatican Council had been held, and Döllinger and his band of dissidents had been excommunicated. Liddon found his way that year to Munich, and called on the Old Catholic leader. He expressed himself "delighted with his conversation", and added "he is so sincere and simple as to remind me of Mr Keble";—no light praise from the mouth of an English "High" Churchman. "It was a privilege", he writes to another correspondent "to know him". In 1874 he attended the first *General Conference* held at Bonn. In his preface to the authorized report of the Conference he writes thus: "The Old Catholic body seem to hold out to the English Church an opportunity which has been denied to it for three hundred years. Catholic, yet not Papal; Episcopal, with no shadow of doubt or prejudice resting on the validity of its orders; friendly with the Orthodox, but yet free from the stiffness and one-sidedness of an isolated tradition; sympathising with all that is thorough and honest in the critical methods of Protestant Germany, yet holding on firmly and strenuously to the Faith of Antiquity—this body of priests and theologians and simple believers addresses to the English Church a language too long unheard, in the Name of our common Lord and Master." Preface, p. XXV.

He was again present at Bonn in 1875, and writes his impressions to Mr Gladstone and other friends. The citations from his correspondence, strange to say, shew very little enthusiasm for the skill, patience, and ability displayed by Döllinger in getting all present to sign the formula of concord there drawn up. But he says: "What Old Catholicism lacks as

¹) I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am speaking of the Church generally, not of the Chapter of S^t Paul's Cathedral.

²) *Life and Letters of Henry Parry Liddon*, by the Rev. J. O. Johnston. London, Longmans, 1904.

a popular force it seems to recover as a principle . . . If it should be a mediating influence, as seems not impossible, between the sections of divided Christendom, it may yet, in God's Providence, achieve a truly noble work. But here, again, prophecy is imprudent, and duty and prayer seem the safest thing." Life, p. 188.

All who know anything of this Conference know its disastrous immediate results. Döllinger met the fate of many other men who have had the misfortune to be far in advance of their age. The authorities of the Orthodox Church were inclined, from their side, to regard the formula, so fairly and carefully elaborated, as a surrender. Most unfortunately Dr Pusey, in England, took the same view, and openly attacked the document drawn up at the Conference. Partly from the fact that his relations with Newman had not been broken off by the secession of the latter, but had continued friendly, partly from the difficulty Dr Pusey had, even yet, in recognizing that union with Rome was altogether impossible, and partly from his fear of surrendering the undoubted truth which lies beneath the *Filioque* clause—a truth, however, which Döllinger had been careful to preserve—the great divine and scholar refused to countenance the agreement arrived at. Whatever modern scholars may say, personal influence is a force in the making of history. Liddon had ever looked upon Pusey as a father, and could not persist in any course which had not Pusey's sanction. So the Eirenicon reached with so much patience and pains remained, for the time at least, abortive. The Conferences were dropped. The relations between Russia and England became less friendly during the Russo-Turkish war of 1876, and Döllinger's great age afterwards prevented their revival during his life-time. Now that they have been revived, the relations of Anglicans and Old Catholics have ceased to be cordial; the English Church has gone her way, the Old Catholics theirs; and it is difficult, even impossible, for the present at least, to forge again the severed links.

Liddon was thus unable, in the life-time of Pusey, to shew any open interest in the Old Catholics. He did not come to Cambridge in 1881, when the Old Catholic Bishops publicly received Holy Communion with Bishops and priests of our Church. Nor did he display any anxiety that they should visit

Oxford. Nevertheless, his relations with Döllinger continued friendly. He deplored the abolition by the Old Catholics of clerical celibacy in 1888, an opinion he shared with Döllinger and other leading Old Catholics. Here, however, as I must personally feel, the theologian prevailed over the man. Enforced clerical celibacy, more than any other single error or mistake, is slowly but surely destroying the Roman Church. Its abolition is the "salt of the earth" which is preserving the Old Catholic Church for the part for which it is needed in the future. Canon Liddon was also dissatisfied with the position assigned to the laity in the affairs of the Old Catholic communion. I am constrained, on the contrary, to believe that, had not the laity been assigned that position, the protest of 1870 would long ago have ceased to be a living force. If I had not thought so previously, the recent Congress at Olten would have convinced me of the fact. But to return. When Döllinger died in 1890, Liddon's remark was "I cannot say what the removal of a mind like Döllinger's means to me, but I cannot write about it. I constantly think of that pathetic description of the reign of Jeroboam II: 'In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short'" (Life, p. 371). His attitude was not that of the modern High Churchman, who ignores Döllinger and all his work. By men of this last stamp Old Catholics are regarded as schismatics. Their work is *taboo*, and has for many years been consistently and carefully ignored—the favourite treatment, in these days, of whatsoever is unpopular or thought to be in any way inconvenient. Now that it has become the fashion to recognize Dissent at home, this attitude has become more inexplicable than ever. The Old Catholics did not secede; they were excommunicated. They embraced no new opinions; they only protested against the forcing of new opinions upon them. I do not wish to associate myself with the protest of the English Church Union against the public recognition of Dissenters at the recent consecration of Dr Gibson to the Episcopate. I feel that the attitude so long maintained by our Church towards Dissenters cannot now be defended, however reasonable and even necessary it may have been in the past. But I simply can neither understand nor explain the conciliatory line taken by men claiming to be High Churchmen towards separatists at home, when combined with the continued refusal to take any notice of those on the Con-

minent whose position is, as the citation from Dr Liddon made above¹⁾ plainly shews, scarcely distinguishable from our own.

I cannot close this article without a brief reference to the *Lux Mundi* controversy, which clouded Liddon's last years, and even hastened his death. It is somewhat painful to note throughout Mr Johnson's book—and it is even visible in the concluding chapter written by Liddon's attached friend the Bishop of Oxford—the apologetic tone adopted toward a man who did in his day a work so inestimable. Admiration for his gifts, deep reverence for his single-mindedness, full appreciation of his *foresight* and *insight*, seem now, even in the case of those who most sympathized with him when alive, to be replaced by a mournful confession of his weaknesses, and failures to grasp the spirit of the age. As far as the *Lux Mundi* controversy is concerned, I cannot but feel that he is right and his critics are wrong. The question is one, not of detail, but of principle. The Catholic Church has unquestionably, from the first century to the nineteenth, put the authority of Scripture in the forefront of every controversy. Did the criticism which is now so widely accepted confine itself to the assertion that there is a human element in Scripture, and that in this human element the same sort of errors are to be found as in other productions of the human mind, it need excite no alarm, and provoke no opposition. But it notoriously goes much further than this. It attributes grave errors to the history as a whole, as well as deliberate mis-statements on matters of the greatest consequence. Thus it is the general authority of Scripture which is attacked, not details more or less insignificant. The latter involves questions of no great importance. The former is fundamental. If Wellhausen and his school are right, we cannot be sure that the history of either dispensation has been correctly handed down. Or rather we can be sure that it has not. And thus the Christian Church possesses no sufficient information on the subject of God's Revelation of Himself, of which she is the "witness and keeper". This is a very serious accusation to bring against her. It strikes at the very foundations of the faith. Therefore we are bound to ask: On what grounds is this accusation brought? What principles make it necessary to

¹⁾ P. 759.

reconsider the unanimous verdict of the Jewish and Christian Churches on a point so vital to their claims on our allegiance? Nothing short of the most rigid demonstration would justify us in so vast an alteration in the bases of faith hitherto generally accepted among Christians.

Has criticism achieved such a demonstration? Canon Liddon is at least an expert in logic. Döllinger too, was no novice in the region of historical criticism. What is their verdict on the nature of the arguments on which such sweeping results are supposed to have been obtained? This is what two men very different in character and attainments, but each of them excellent judges of reasoning, have to say on the subject.

“In September I spent four days with Döllinger at Tegernsee, and among other things we talked over Wellhausen’s ‘Prolegomena’. ‘I could not get on with it at all,’ D. said: ‘It is full of unproved assumptions.’ Any one who takes the trouble to read it carefully will, I think, share this opinion.”

Letter to C. T. Redington. *Life*, p. 361.

If this be a correct statement of the case—and the opinion of Döllinger and Liddon is endorsed by many other persons equally well able to form an opinion on the nature of arguments—it is perhaps a little premature to assume that these learned men and great thinkers were altogether mistaken. The fact is, that as Liddon, and even Pusey saw before the close of his life, a great and not altogether satisfactory change has been passed over the Tractarian party in these latter days.

“High Church principles”, he writes in 1884, “are more widely diffused than they were; but they are held in *a much feebler and less emphatic form* than was the case some years ago . . . It *differs alike in intellectual consistency and in moral intensity*; but in virtue of this it is much more popular. Before his death, Dr Pusey noted the change with sorrow, and since he left us, as was natural, it has become more marked.”

Life, pp. 332, 333.

The Italics in the above extract are mine. It expresses far better than I can do what I have long felt. The High Church party, *as a party* (I speak not of individual members of it) appears to me to be now in the same position that the “Evangelical” party was in when I was a youth. The “salt”

has somewhat lost its "savour" since the party has basked in the sunshine of popular favour, and has enjoyed the patronage of leading politicians on both sides. Time was when the High Church party was exposed to the purifying fires of affliction, and then its leading maxims were submission and endurance. A very different attitude is now assumed. There has been much arrogant and high-handed resistance to authority, and a spirit of compromise, not on things indifferent but on things essential, has been slowly growing up. The "Catholic party", as it styles itself, in our Church is inclined to say *non possumus* in matters of ceremonial and on secondary points of doctrine, but to make concessions on points which have hitherto been regarded as primary, when these are supposed to be opposed to the spirit of the age. For myself, I can see no escape from disruption for our Church and from the consequent cessation of her present relations with the State, save in a new movement, which, while it jealously guards the benefits which the Tractarian movement has secured for us, sets itself deliberately to prune away the excesses of that movement, and to correct its mistakes. It aimed at the reform of abuses in the Church of England which, in the early part of the last century, threatened to be fatal to her existence. But it made the mistake of looking too much to Rome for guidance. What we need now is a recurrence to first principles. We need to recollect that what is truly Catholic must have been held "*semper*", as well as "*ubique*" and "*ab omnibus*". And we must not forget that the Church of England *since* the Reformation has, amid whatever shortcomings, shone out more gloriously than in any other portion of her history, and has borne the most splendid fruit in the career of the nation whose teacher she has been.

Above all it is necessary to hold fast the supreme authority of Scripture, and to maintain that the Church of God, first the Jewish, and then the Christian Church, possesses the true tradition, in all essential points, of God's Revelation to mankind. Whether every detail be complete and accurate is a matter which need not be insisted on. But anything approaching to formal inaccuracy in the Scriptures as a whole will render it impossible for any one to ascertain in what Revelation consists. Such a broken and unstable "pillar and ground of the truth" can excite no enthusiasm, solve no difficulties, attract

no disciples. All that, under such circumstances, will remain of Christianity will be, on one hand, the controversies of schools, more or less sceptical, and always most uncertain, in their character; and on the other the undisputed verdict of an infallible Church. The history of the Continent of Europe shews that the Church of Rome has been able, for four centuries, to hold her own against bodies of Christians who have been “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”. The Church of England has been, and it is to be hoped will be allowed to remain, what Döllinger called her in 1881, a “great bulwark” against superstition and infidelity. But she must not surrender her reverent attachment to Holy Scripture, or her “candlestick will be removed out of its place”. As Liddon once said, on a memorable occasion, *Non hæc in fœdera veni*. A chaos of uncertain and conflicting opinion on first principles can never be the deposit of faith which Christ’s Church was called into being to hand down.

Perhaps I ought to apologize for the frequent use of the personal pronoun in this paper. But I can assure my readers that it is in no arrogant spirit that it has been used. I have simply wished to emphasize the fact that in these pages I am only expressing my own individual opinion. I am conscious that men of ability and character will question what I have said, and that it will be repudiated by most of the organs of religious opinion in the English press. *Valeat quantum valet*. I claim no infallibility. I only claim to have served the Church of England loyally for nearly forty-eight years, and to have viewed her from other than a party stand-point for the greater part of that time. I have long hoped and prayed for better times than those through which we have been passing for the last twenty years; and I think now I see the dawn of those better times at hand. Among other blessed results of that day, when it arrives, will be, I trust, a more cordial understanding between ourselves and the successors of that noble band of men who in 1870 protested against the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope.

J. J. LIAS.

Our readers will complete with pleasure the preceding article by the following reflections, which also have been written by

Chancellor Lias and first appeared in "the Church of England League Gazette" (p. 201-203) last August.

«...I expressed my conviction that the great Tractarian movement had done its work; that the principles in it which were of permanent value had been absorbed into our Church system, while those which were open to question had of late been very seriously exaggerated, and their exaggeration pressed on the Church to an extent and with an insistence which had become perfectly mischievous; that the Evangelical party had been undergoing a transformation which has hardly as yet been accomplished; and that the old sober, solid, moderate type of Churchmanship, which was in the ascendant from 1850 to 1860 had, from a variety of circumstances, almost ceased to exist. Before we pass on, it may be well to reiterate, and if possible to reinforce, this expression of opinion. In the former paper mention was made of the fact that the ritual movement was not identical with the Tractarian movement, but was a modification, and even to a considerable extent a caricature of it. This statement may be defended on various grounds. First, the Tractarian leaders were not Ritualists, and it is notorious that they gave to the Ritual movement only a very qualified approval. Next, it must be admitted by every rational Christian that ritual is not a principle of the Christian religion, for its Founder distinctly neglected and even disparaged ceremonial considerations, but a mere detail, alterable according to times and circumstances, and the habits and customs of different ages and peoples. Thirdly, the thoughtful observer will not have failed to remark that while to preach a doctrine is in general simply to ask for consideration and toleration for an opinion, to embody that doctrine in ritual is to endeavour to enforce it upon the congregation or Church in which it has been preached. It is this attempt of the innovators in ritual to compel the members of the Church of England to endorse their private opinions which has long been the source of uneasiness, and has now assumed such proportions as to threaten the Church, if it be not promptly checked, with disruption; and this must soon be followed by disestablishment and disendowment. It should be further noted that the doctrines the promoters of the ritual movement are desirous to force on the Church are not the fundamental doctrines of

the Christian faith, but opinions which grew up in later ages on secondary questions, such as the nature of the Presence in the Eucharist, the character and limits—or *absence* of limits—of priestly power, the absolute necessity of the Episcopate, the authority of the Church, and other points of a similar kind. If we add to this the existing tendency to exaggerate the extent to which either doctrine or ritual can be regarded as binding on the conscience, and to misrepresent very seriously the meaning of the word Catholic, as applied to each, the ritual movement must be felt to have gone very far beyond the limits of comprehension, wide as they are, which the Reformed Church of England has most wisely laid down.

Of the transformation which has been passing over, what is called the "Evangelical party" this is hardly the place or time to speak. But it would seem clear that as a party it is no longer open to the reproach of narrowness which the late Sir Walter Besant brings against it so bitterly in his *Autobiography*, and that modern Evangelicalism would be able to enlist his support by its repudiation of sacerdotalism, a point on which he strongly insists. Modern Evangelicalism might also appeal to the less extreme members of the Broad Church party. The moderate Broad Church party, like the moderate High Church party, has, in recent developments of opinion, almost ceased to exist. Maurice and Kingsley, Plumptre and Dean Alford, as well as many others noted for their attachment to the essentials of the Christian religion as distinct from the tenets of particular theological schools, would protest as strongly as any one else against the recent attempt to attach an undue importance to criticism, to the almost entire exclusion of the historical side of Christian evidence, and of the universal testimony handed down in the Divine Society from the time of the Apostles to our own.

There would thus seem to be a need for a rearrangement of parties in the Church of England. In ecclesiastical, as in secular politics, the old war-cries have lost their meaning, and new combinations, and, it may be added, new appellations, are required to express new needs. We proceed to consider what should be the aims of Churchmen at the present crisis and for what objects they should unite. When we know what we want, we shall easily find a suitable name for it.

The basis of union should, I am convinced, be no narrow one. Theology, like all other sciences, is progressive. Its progress in the past has been hindered by ignorance, by prejudice, by violence and passion, and most of all by persecution of a more or less virulent character. During the past half century a freer interchange of opinion has caused a more rapid change of view in theological questions than had previously taken place for centuries. The teaching of the Christian religion has been found to need some adaptation to the changed conditions of society introduced by scientific discovery and the growth of individual freedom. The "wise householder" must bring out of his stores "things new," as well as "old." But while the expression of doctrine may, and indeed must, receive a different shape in different ages, and while the conclusions drawn by human reason from first principles may require considerable modification, we must not forget that limits to the freedom of opinion are necessarily involved in the profession of membership in any society whatever, and therefore in the Church of England. The first principles of Christianity must be taken for granted in every branch of the Christian Church. And in the National Church of this country, if it is to remain national, a belief in the necessity and general soundness of the Reformation in the sixteenth century is also a *sine quâ non*. We cannot accept, as some would bid us do, a new Christianity invented in the twentieth century of the Christian era. We cannot venture thus to fling aside the garnered wisdom of the past. Neither, on the other hand, can we admit that, some seven centuries ago, the climax of theological perfection was reached, and that we must not dare to question the theological definitions then laid down. We are bound to maintain the old principles of our religion against scepticism on the one hand, and against superstition and over-dogmatism on the other.

The only way of escape from the confusions of thought and opinion which distract us at present is, the present writer believes, in union on the basis broad but definite, (1) of acceptance of the Christian Creeds, (2) of reverence for the authority of Scripture, and (3) of sincere attachment to the Prayer Book as the embodiment of the principles on which the English Reformation of the sixteenth century proceeded.

This does not, of course, involve the assertion that the Prayer Book is perfect, and cannot be improved. But it does involve the admission that the general principles on which it is drawn up are sound and cannot without danger be abandoned. Within these limits the largest possible freedom of opinion should be permitted. It is impossible to maintain a National Church, save on a broad and liberal basis, especially in times of inquiry such as these. On the other hand this basis must be definite or the National Church must cease to exist. Englishmen will not long trouble themselves to maintain a communion which witnesses to nothing, stands for nothing, and teaches nothing, any more than they can be induced to support a body which is not a Church, but a party or a sect.

The first and most important step toward a better understanding between Churchmen so urgently needed, at this moment, is *education*. The old broad and liberal basis of the Church of England is threatened from more than one side. In various directions organizations are at work to narrow the liberty hitherto enjoyed by Churchmen. If the English Church is to be maintained as the Church of the nation, the work of these organizations must be counteracted. She must not be converted into a High Church, a Low Church, or a Broad Church sect, nor must she be refashioned so as to suit the particular "wind of doctrine" which happens to be prevalent at the present moment. She has behind her a glorious history, especially since the Reformation. She must not let that history be forgotten, nor put out too rashly from the safe moorings it has provided for her. The laity of England, as a body, care little for niceties of doctrine or of criticism. They hold firmly to the belief in God and the supernatural, and in the supreme importance of conduct in conformity with the example of Christ. If we are to restore their attachment to their Church, which has received some severe shocks of late, we must deliver them from the tyranny of foregone conclusions, under which they have so long groaned. We must put before them a religion which is at once reverent, rational and manly. We must not distract them by ingenious theories, nor disgust them by doctrinal subtleties or what they look upon as ritual puerilities, nor alienate them by assuming the "lordship over God's heritage," but we must approach them in the spirit of the

original teachers of the Christian faith. Instead of repelling Nonconformists or driving Churchmen into Nonconformity by ceremonial or theological eccentricities, we must endeavour to bring about a better understanding among Christians by laying stress on the great truths they hold in common. We must, moreover, abandon the "isolation," by no means "splendid," in which we have lived and of which, it is to be feared, we have boasted, for centuries. We must study the condition of religion in other lands, and we must be better equipped for the study than we have been for many years past. We must inquire why France, Spain and Italy are throwing off the yoke of Ultramontanism, and why it has proved "too heavy for them to bear." We must investigate the condition of Protestantism in Germany, and we must seek for its fruits, not in the number of people who can be induced to attend Mass at five o'clock in the morning, nor even in the number who attend Church habitually, but in the moral condition of society at large. The Church of England, by her exclusiveness and rigidity, is losing ground in the colonies, and it is to be feared it is not gaining ground at home. Statistics were recently given in the Diocesan Magazine of Quebec which emphasize this fact in a somewhat startling way. The truth is, we have plenty of energy and zeal, but at present it is misdirected. We must revise our methods, we must conduct our work on different lines, or we shall lose the proud pre-eminence of which we have been wont to boast. Nothing but a broader, a healthier, a manlier and more practical spirit than that which at present is in the ascendant among us can render us what we desire to be—what we might and ought to be—the Church of the British Empire. To awaken such a spirit is the task which the Church of England League has very wisely attempted and which, we may trust, under the Divine blessing, and with the support of Churchmen, it is destined to achieve. »
