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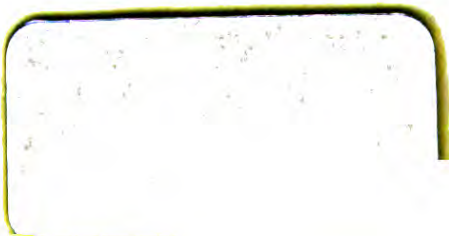
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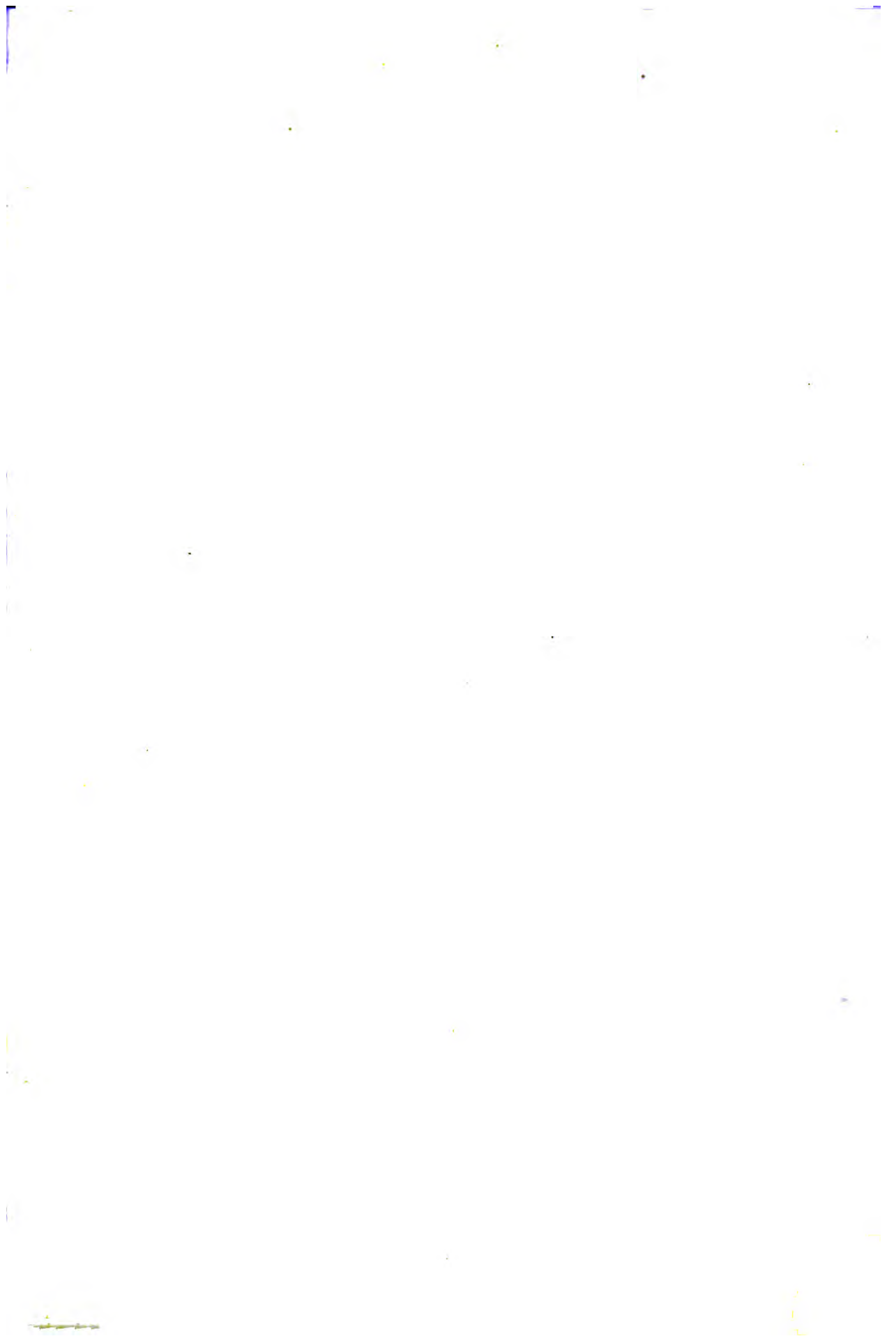
THIRTEEN

PASTORAL ADDRESSES.

Rev. T. Henry Jones, M. A.

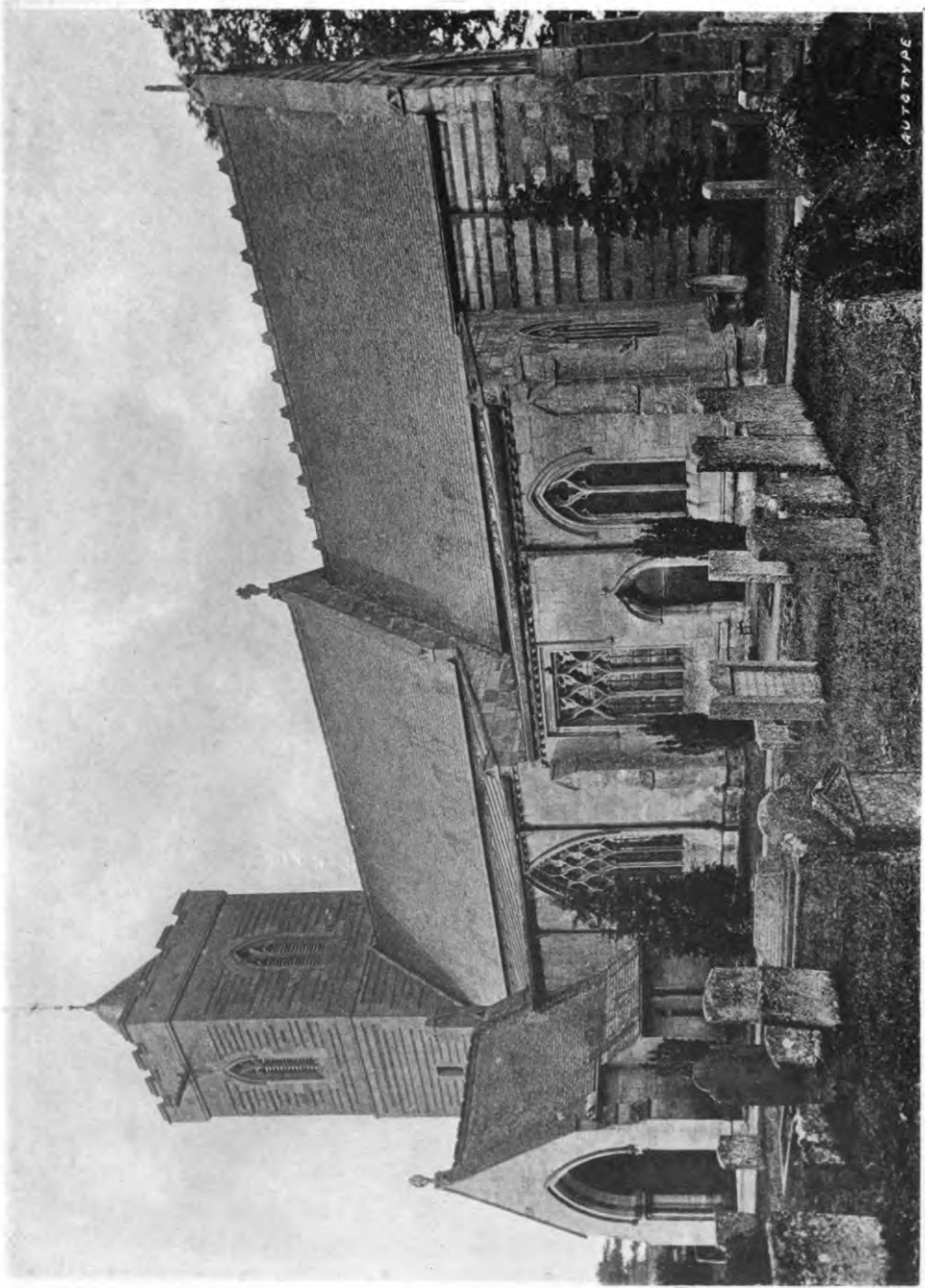
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AUTOTYPE

THIRTEEN
PASTORAL ADDRESSES,

FROM

THE RECTOR OF ASHWELL

To his Parishioners,

*PRESENTED ON NEW YEARS' ALMANACKS,
FROM 1876—1888.*

"A word in due season, how good is it!"

PROVERBS xv. 23.

LEICESTER:
PRINTED BY CLARKE AND HODGSON,
1888.

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28 AUG. 1919
OXFORD

TO
The Dowager Lady Burrell,
OF
OCKENDEN, CUCKFIELD,
THESE FEW WORDS
OF ENCOURAGEMENT, COMFORT AND CHARITY
TO MY LITTLE FLOCK
ARE DEDICATED, BY
HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,
T. Henry Jones, Master of Arts,
RECTOR OF ASHWELL,
RUTLAND.



THIRTEEN PASTORAL ADDRESSES.



I.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

DO me the favour to accept this Almanack, and give it a place for the new year on your cottage walls. It will, I am sure, be valued by those who are in the habit of daily opening their Bibles; and it may be that those,—if there are any,—who have not this good custom, will be won, at least, to let their children look out the Daily Text.

I have added some information that I have thought might be useful.

Born like yourselves in this little County, and known to many of you through the long residence in the immediate neighbourhood of honoured Parents,—universally beloved and respected,—I have additional reasons, besides my obligations as Rector of the Parish, for going about among you as a friend, and trying to do good as far as I have the power.

* Please to observe carefully the picture at the top of this Almanack, and ponder on the meaning of the precious text it illustrates. See how—in the unsearch-

* Picture of the keeping of the old Passover.

able wisdom of God—this record of the old Past becomes a prophetic type, and a clear shadowing forth, of our deliverance from bondage and from the Destroyer. See! *The Lamb had to be slain*, but this was not enough, *there must be personal application of the Blood*, but this was not enough to give them strength for their departure from Egypt, to serve their God and Saviour, *The Lamb had to be eaten*.

Some among us, it may be, on looking back on the past year, will find that they have lost much spiritual good through their own neglect of the appointed means of grace. God's day, God's House, God's Word and Sacraments.

With the New year, let such resolve, by the Holy Spirit's help, to begin a new life; and for past accumulations of sin distressing the conscience, apply to the Atoning Sacrifice of the Saviour's death as the only remedy. THIS, the illustration above beautifully and strikingly points out; "WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD I WILL PASS OVER YOU." Be sure that only as in all humility, but in all confidence, we rest upon IT, can we start afresh on the journey of life with anything like courage.

The great moral malady from which every Parish suffers is *Sin*, and there is only one remedy—TRUE RELIGION; this would cure all our ills; this would help us out of all our difficulties, and bring peace to all homes, and to all hearts.

The House of God is the place wherein by the grace given from above, living stones may be fashioned for a Holy Temple in the Lord. Let us come and

worship in it. No one who attends the services there in humility and sincerity can be ignorant of what God requires, or need motives to follow that which is good. Let us there bend our ears to things heavenly and eternal, and then embody our faith in our practice, and go forth to serve God honestly and humbly in our daily duties, remembering that the one end and aim of all the ordinances and services of the Church is to bring us in penitence and faith to the atoning blood of Jesus, to lead us to grasp the pardon offered through the Saviour, and to strengthen us in the ways of holiness and peace.

And let us guard against a superficial unpractical religion—a religion of words alone. Let us watch against that dangerous readiness to dispute about its deepest mysteries, which may be often found where the very simplest Christian principles are wanting, and the very plainest Christian duties are neglected.

Religion we must remember is intended to make us humble-minded, teachable, slow to speak. To seek after a deep silent growth in grace, to feel much more than we say; to take up our daily trouble, and bear it patiently; to guard our thoughts; to mistrust our own hearts; to blame ourselves for many things which the world would never blame,—striving all the time to order our lives according to God's Holy Word. This is a religion which, though it may not be noticed or applauded by those who value a loud profession and many words, will give the only true support in time of adversity, when we draw near to the close of life, and as we enter the dark valley.

I think that even those who neglect public worship altogether, may be reminded by this Almanack, that God has divided our days into sevens, and that the first and best of the seven is the LORD'S DAY, given us specially to remember, that if all days are precious, Sundays are infinitely precious—that on the use of them our eternal destiny often hangs, and that to lose them may be to lose our souls. The old year with its many memories passes away and becomes part of eternity. Let us start afresh with a new year. Let us commence it as the Israelite of old did, by calling to mind God's love and mercy: "WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD I WILL PASS OVER YOU." And let us make personal application of this "Precious Blood."

I feel it due to you to state that so far as I have yet been able to visit among you, I have been welcomed with much kindness: and see no difficulties before me, but such as I feel sure might be overcome *if my health were thoroughly re-established*, and succeeding as I do one who has laboured earnestly among you for a quarter of a century, and whose devotion, piety, and learning, is recognized by the whole diocese,—I will only add the more earnestly, "*Brethren Pray for us.*"

And now let me, at this blessed season, as one who feels the reality of our brotherhood as members of one great family, shake hands with each of you in spirit,—whatever your opinions,—and wish you, as I do in all love and kindness, a happy new year.





II.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

I WAS so glad to find that you valued the Almanack last year, and was so much gratified to see you give it a place on your Cottage walls, that I feel great pleasure in offering you another, and with it my hearty wishes for a HAPPY NEW YEAR. Let me add to this a prayer, that the Lord our God may fasten upon our hearts some of the daily texts it contains.

* We have in our picture this year, an illustration of the power of persevering prayer.

Let us take the kindly hint, and learn as we read that chapter which so graphically describes, how for six times Elijah's servant saw no answer, but at the seventh—"a little cloud," which soon overspread the heavens and descended in blessings, on the parched and famine stricken land—not to despair ourselves, because often we have to wait long,—and even if there be one among you who says, "Ah! but *my* cloud is a cloud of trouble," even then be sure that by prayer which faints not—it will become to you—

"Big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head."

* A picture of Elijah praying for rain.

The past has not been an uneventful year with us, for that cannot be so considered which has witnessed a Confirmation. It was a grave time for us all, old and young, God-parents and Candidates. You ought to give them the benefit of your prayers, that those who partook of that sacred rite may have heavenly help to fulfil and seal by their lives the solemn vows they have thus renewed.

In the review of mercies bestowed during the year that is gone we recall with gratitude our joyful Thanksgiving Service, when we went up to the house of the Lord with gladness, rejoicing one with another in the goodness of our God. It was a special comfort to me to see persons of various shades of religious opinion able to join with us on that day; the amount of the collection for our new church clock was over thirteen pounds.

For more than twelve months we have travelled together the journey of life; for twelve months we have together trod the "old paths" of the Church; and, in obedience to her rules, have paused at the appointed Seasons to consider separately the great doctrines of the Gospel, and the duties which are their practical result.

I know that with some all days are reckoned alike. Some think that such Seasons may have been very well for old-fashioned folk in bygone times, but in these days of enlightenment and progress they appear only as worn-out remnants of an ancient superstition. I believe that many such persons, on closer inquiry and deeper study of human nature, will change their views.

For myself, I am convinced that the observance of these Seasons is more needed than ever; and that if the Church blotted them from her Calendar, the recollection of the great realities they commemorate would soon be blotted out too. And is it not reasonable, that while in our own families we have special days of remembrance, as Birthdays, and Wedding-days, the Church (reckoning all her members to be sons and daughters of one Holy Household) should keep with solemn reverence His Memorial Days, of whom “the whole family in heaven and earth is named?”

Who that at CHRISTMAS watches by the cradle of the God-child, and ponders rightly on the mystery of Incarnate Love, but must become more humble, more ready to say to Him for whom there was no room in the inn at Bethlehem, “*Come into our hearts, O Lord!*”—more willing to recognise the great truth, that if Jesus has gone into heaven with our flesh to represent us, He has left us His poor on earth to represent Him; more awake to the lesson taught by the green and glittering leaves which in their solemn beauty adorn God’s House, and shadow his own hearth, that the Christian life has a secret, mysterious inward power which uprises amid the deadness of nature, and brings forth fruit to the glory of God. Who that walks in spirit with the Wise Men at EPIPHANY, following the golden footsteps of the Guiding Star, but must long to render to his Lord the offering of an obedient heart? Who that, during the forty days of LENT, with contrite spirit meditates on the Saviour in that waste wilderness, “by His fasting and temptation” suffering for us, but must

seek to become more watchful against sin, more manful in resisting it, more determined, by Christ's Grace, to make the body his servant, instead of serving it? Who that, remembering his own sins, kneels beneath the Shadow of the Cross on GOOD FRIDAY but must become more penitent, more full of love? Who that, as a true disciple, strives year after year to enter into the *true* meaning of EASTER, ASCENSION, WHITSUNTIDE, TRINITY Festivals, but must become more solemnized in his thoughts, more calm under trial, more anxious to rise from the grave of earthly things, to side with God in every question, to grow better fitted for that blessed place whither our Saviour Christ has gone before? Surely with such a man Public Worship shall cease to be a mere propriety; Praise shall cease to be a mere song; Prayer shall cease to be a mere bending of the knee. Year after year he will experience more and more the blessedness of knowing the Eternal God to be his reconciled Father, his Saviour to the uttermost, his Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide!

I cannot but remember, as I write, the solemn fact that so many firesides this Christmas will have "one vacant chair." This should remind us how near we ALL are to the end of our day of grace. The very next soul summoned to eternity may be *yours*, my Friend, whose eye now rests on these lines. If we knew, indeed, that our lives were limited to this one year, how much in earnest we should be! Why, then, should we be careless, since we do not know whether we may be spared to close its first month—first week—first day?

Believe me when any of you are prospering, I rejoice ; when trouble comes upon you, I sorrow with you ; above all, I desire for you the unspeakable gift—salvation and eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I too, with you, have suffered bereavement, and have laid under the shadow of the dear old Church at Burley, in which for forty-nine years he so faithfully ministered,—in the midst of the people he so affectionately cared for,—and by her side who was his true help meet in all things,—the mortal remains of a beloved father, who has been gathered like a shock of corn ripe in its season, leaving a bright example to his parishioners, to his children, and to his children's children.

I commend you to God's gracious care and protection for the coming year. May it be marked by fresh tokens of His watchful care, and by His abundant blessings to each one of you,—blessings from heaven above, and, as far as His loving wisdom sees it good, from earth beneath, in heart and home, in basket and in store ! And, not merely because it is a good old English custom, or the language of social compliment, but with a sincere and earnest concern for your welfare, I again wish you a happy new year.





III.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

EIGHTEEN hundred and SEVENTY-EIGHT! We have climbed another hill in the pilgrimage of our brief life, and from its height can look backward into the past and understand a little of its meaning; but an impenetrable veil hangs in mercy before our future. If the ascent of this hill has been rough travelling to some—if storms of sorrow, sickness, bereavement, have buffeted others—why, we, who have through all been watched over and spared, have the more reason to crown its summit with our pillar of thanksgiving to Him who apportions both our sorrows and our joys.

Our Almanack now has its own place in every house and cottage, and its Daily Text is a household word in many families. I heartily desire that its effect may be to lead us to love God's Word more sincerely, and, like David, to hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against Him.

Let me suggest to you that it would be well to preserve your Almanacks, not only as a memorial of

Parish incidents, but it may be as a personal memento of greater things.

I have so many opportunities now, of speaking to you face to face, that there is little need of penning you a lengthy address; the pith of what I always say is,—that real religion is the only remedy for all our ills—If the fear of God influenced everybody there would be an end to most of the miseries that afflict humanity: the wounds of social and domestic life would be healed:—honesty, sobriety, truth, and peace, would prevail.

There is no doubt that the year now closing upon us—deeply inscribed as it is on the tablet of our private remembrance, as bringing bereavement and heart sorrow to some of you, has been also in many respects one of Public adversity; at Home—depression of Trade, commercial failures, agricultural disasters—abroad, War and a terrible famine in our Indian Empire; we ourselves had enough of gloomy and ungenial weather, in our season of ingathering—to make us keep our Harvest thanksgiving with a chastened thankfulness, and a more grateful remembrance of Him, Who alone can give one ray of sunshine, or one breath of wind to dry our crops, or to enable us to house them when reaped.

We have reason to hope that during the past year good in various ways has been effected. We will not be discouraged. We will remember that the gloomy clouds and weeping skies of the past summer did not altogether ruin the seed sown; and as we go on in our work and labour of love, we will call to mind and trust the promise (Psalm cxxvi. 6).

I congratulate the Parish on the possession of what I hope will prove—a good Eight-day Clock, as regards “things temporal” it will prove useful, and as travellers to eternity—as regards “the things eternal” what a sermon it preaches to us on the unutterable importance of time!

I came across the following verse the other day which conveys the lesson in a very solemn way:

“I ask'd a dying sinner, ere the stroke
Of ruthless death life's 'golden bowl had broke;'
I ask'd him, What is time? 'Time,' he replied,
'I've lost it, Ah, the treasure;' and he died!”

We have only indeed to recall the events in our own little Parish of last March, and the two precious lives so suddenly called—to remind ourselves that—The day of our death is indeed as much unknown to us as the actual day of the Second Advent. But it is in anticipation of both events that we are told to “watch and pray always.”

Yes, the Almanack of 1877 was the last Almanack to be read by some, whose years have since come to an end “as a tale that is told.” So this year of 1878 may be the last year of probation that the Great Master gives to some, before He calls on us to render an account.

I am glad that some of you have followed my advice of last year and have joined the “RUTLAND FRIENDLY* INSTITUTION” at Cottesmore.

The warming apparatus of our Church has been thoroughly repaired; our Clothing Club shows an increase of subscribers. The School Buildings are

* See Appendix.

now, I hope, weather-proof: the Schools themselves, Day School, Night School, and Sunday School, are in good working order.

* Look at the picture for this year and suffer your little Children, O Parents! to “go to Jesus, and forbid them not,” for your children’s sake and for your own sake, send them regularly, and back up the teaching and instruction of the excellent Mistress of the School. Be sure that it will profit *you* too, in the end, that they shall have learnt to honour and obey their parents, and to do their duty in the state of life to which it may please God to call them.

Our Collections for Church Mission† double those of 1876: I hope some more of you will take Missionary Boxes.

Our congregational singing is rather better since our practice nights, but there is great room for improvement.

And now if any of you have disappointments and regrets as you close the year, do not despair, but rather turn your regrets into prayers, and your prayers into labours, and with diligence follow Him whose all-encompassing love lifts up the fallen, stretches forth His arms to those farthest off—He who as at this time in His stable birthplace for our sake began His earthly life—who yearns over the wanderer, and can sympathize with the most sorrowful—who wishes all and every one to turn to Him, and find in Him a new life, a new Christmas, and a happy new year.

* Picture of Jesus receiving little children. † See Appendix.

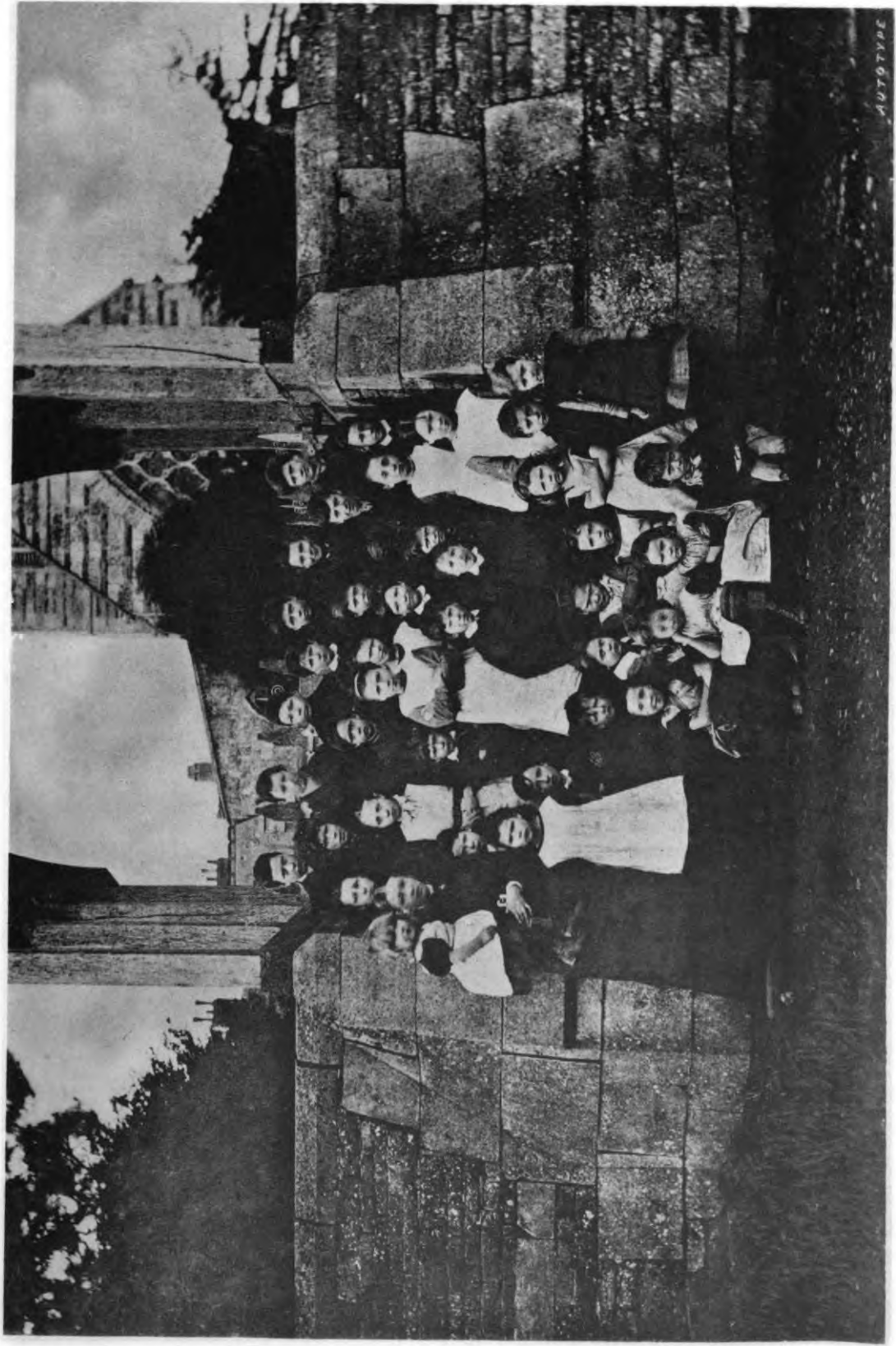


IV.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

I WISH you a HAPPY NEW YEAR. I know that as each Christmas comes round, you look now for your Almanack as for a welcome friend; and I trust that you will find this sheet not less interesting than those which have gone before. We have twelve illustrations instead of one; while each of the three hundred and sixty-five day-journeys that we have to travel in the coming year, has its own sacred motto to aid in upholding our goings in the right path, “that our footsteps slip not.” Our Almanack for this year is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which has followed the example of some individual clergymen, only asking to be exonerated, as is but fair, from all responsibility with regard to local matter.

The improvement and increased attendance at our School is a subject of general congratulation. The favourable report of Her Majesty’s Inspector last February is worth a place in our Almanack. He says—“This little School has regained its efficiency under the present Mistress. The order is good, and the results of the examination in elementary subjects show



AUTOTYPE



careful teaching." The practical fruit of this commendation has been that the Government Grant was nearly double what it has ever been since Ashwell School has been under Government Inspection. I am anxious to see an improvement in Sewing and Knitting, of which a good knowledge is now required by the Education Act. To encourage perseverance in this department, I print the names of those who in the past year obtained Prizes for Knitting from the RUTLAND SOCIETY OF INDUSTRY.

I will mention here that our Night School, held at the Rectory, has been well attended last year, and that seven of the lads passed the Government Examination at Oakham.

It will interest you to know that I have induced many of your children to commit to memory whole chapters of the Bible. This is *not* ordered by the Government; but will, I think, be approved of by every right-minded person. Passages of Scripture learned in childhood often bring comfort and direction in after years, when trouble, need, sickness, or any other adversity come upon us.

Small as our Parish is, I should be glad if you would help me to form a Branch of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND TEMPERANCE SOCIETY here.*

* For example, could not we sign something of this sort?

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
I resolve, with the help of God, to abstain from all intoxicating drinks as beverages (except at my meals), from December 31st, 1878, to January 1st, 1879 (inclusive), and to promote Temperance with all my power.

Signed _____

It might tend to check those frightful habits of intoxication, waste, and low language, which are so degrading to the body and fatal to the soul.

I thank those of you who complied with my wish by taking Missionary Boxes. The result, as I anticipated, has been a considerable increase in the Contributions. The Collection for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1876 was £5 5s. 6d., in 1877 £11 2s. 4d., in 1878, £13 11s. 0d. We have also aided Home Missions, by sending a collection of £2 7s. 6d. to the Additional Curates' Aid Society.

Let us be sure also of this—that in proportion as we live as Christians we help forward Christ's kingdom, and aid in our humble degree, towards the fulfilment of the prayer that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Again this year, death has carried away some whom we hoped might have journeyed with us a little further; and again, with infants in their earliest bloom have been laid in the grave, others who had been permitted to pass the bounds of man's allotted pilgrimage on earth, and were the Methuselahs of our parish. We know indeed for certain none of the things which are about to befall us. This only we know, that during the past God's loving care has been all-sufficient, and as our day, so our strength has been. We are all rapidly hastening onward to a world where "they reckon not by years."

Standing on the threshold of the New Year, looking back on the past unfolded page, and forward to the dim and unknown future, I think of the blessing which

maketh rich, to which no sorrow is added. May it crown the coming year to you! From my heart I wish it, in the very words of God's priest of old:

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

This is the key to true, abiding happiness: this is the secret of a happy new year.





V.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

AS long as we live, we shall always, I think, remember the GREAT RAIN of 1879. Many of us can recollect the cloudy skies and dripping Harvest of 1860: and some few even the wet, cheerless, and memorable year of 1816, when the price of the quartern loaf rose to one shilling and sevenpence. Still, taking the United Kingdom as a whole, the trial could scarcely have been greater to those connected with land, than it has been for the ten disastrous months of the year now closing upon us. The long, wet, and bitter Winter, the ungenial Spring, the disappointing shadow of a Summer, and the culminating catastrophe of a steady down-pour during the ingatherings of an unfruitful Autumn, will make Landowners, Farmers, Gárdeners, and all whose interests are bound up with Agriculture, mark 1879 with a very *black mark* indeed.

All this following hard upon four deficient Harvests, and when other important affairs of the country are at a dead lock amounts to a NATIONAL CALAMITY; for the interests of Agriculture are so great, and so widely spread, that they are identical with the interests of the whole community.

A Royal Commission has taken up the inquiry as to whether the prevailing agricultural depression is of a temporary or permanent character—and how far it can be remedied by legislation. But many think the crucial question to be—How far we can go on competing with America in the open market? For myself, I cannot believe that the Land of old England, and especially the “Rut” or “Red” land of our little County will ever go out of cultivation; nor can I agree with those who recommend wholesale emigration. I would rather say, let us look forward to the future, not only without misgiving but with cheerful hope. A few weeks’ dry weather has wrought a wonderful change, manifold fruit-buds show great promise for a future year. All things look brighter; trade is improving, and vegetation has a capacity for enduring hardship beyond what we could surmise. Let us work on with patience, intelligence and activity; let us above all, returning to the simpler ways and faith of our forefathers, look with prayer to the Personal living God who stands behind His own Laws, and administers them on a plan of His own. Let us decide to be happy and contented at Home.

“ Let others over land and sea
 For gold and pleasure roam,
 This is the sweetest spot to me
 My quiet *Ashwell* Home.”

I deeply sympathize with all who have suffered, especially, as is but natural, with those in my own native county; yet, I regret to say, greater and more material disaster has befallen others whose lot is cast amid the heavy clay land in the South and East of England;

there, every sheaf seemed to wear its crown of thistle-down ; the lightness of the ear was painfully apparent, and the withered potato haulms tainted the damp and heavy air.

We have had a National Visitation, but National Visitations never take place without National Sin : individuals are judged in the *next* world, but Nations are always—necessarily—judged in *this*. We have offered prayer in our Churches about this plague of rain and waters : but prayer is answered on certain conditions. Have we as a nation fulfilled those conditions ? May it not be that Great National Prosperity has not conduced to National piety ? Those who fear God will think of this.

It may be that among all classes—of late years—there has been too much of making haste to be rich, too much speculation ; almost amounting to National Gambling. If so, is it not well to hear the Rod of the Almighty ? The Rod is for children : It is well for the child to heed this gentle chastisement ; if not, and he grows up incorrigible, the broken law visits him with severer measures, and God's capital punishment on Nations are the Sword, the Famine, and the Pestilence. We ourselves had a sufficient share at any rate of the National Calamity to make us keep our Harvest Thanksgiving with a chastened spirit. I was sorry to have to omit the Annual HARVEST FESTIVAL and SUPPER ; for this latter brought masters and men together, and greatly helped to roll away the reproach so often cast on working men in the country, that they can never meet together without exceeding the bounds of moderation.

And now look at that honest man in the illustration which crowns this Almanack. He is a sower* in those far off Eastern Lands where they plough with oxen and scatter the corn broadcast. He is the Sower under those glowing skies where ages ago Ruth gleaned, and Boaz invoked God's blessing on the reapers, and the Universal Father gave to the great human family there as here, their bread; and if storm or tempest cast a gloom over the Sower or the Reaper there, as here, at once the Rainbow spans the sky with its Halo of Glory and reminds them, as it does us, that we may in the long run sow securely under that Covenant arch which was consecrated to assure us how seed time and harvest should not cease.

The old world fable that where the glittering feet of the Rainbow rested, there was always hidden treasure has its true side. The hidden wealth is not fairy treasure, but the golden harvest, the result of God's blessing on steady, truthful, patient industry.

But look closely at our friend in the picture, he looks to me as if last year times had gone hard with him, but hope springs eternal in his breast, and he sows, for his hope is in God. He has done his part, the land is well prepared, and now, he sows. He has not to manufacture the seed, God gives the living seed, and all depends on the soil on which the seed falls.

And in the Parable you will remember this startling thing happens—there are three failures, and only one success; and the heavenly meaning put upon this

* A husbandman sowing seed in the East.

earthly story, by the Great Master, makes the matter graver still; for the seed is the Word of God, and our hearts are the soil, and His Church on earth the sower: and the first hears the word and does not mind it; and the second, minds the word, but does not keep it; and the third keeps the word, even talks of it, but does no practical good with it; and it is only the fourth in whose memory the seed germinates, and takes root, warms into an impression, ripens into a purpose, grows like seed corn, and is seen above ground at last, in good deeds, to the glory and praise of God.

There is no need then either for the earthly or the spiritual sower to be restless or over anxious; the result is with God; the hidden laws of the spiritual are as secret as the laws of the vegetable kingdom.

We cannot lift the veil, but our labour will not be "in vain in the Lord." God will give that last mysterious touch both to the natural and spiritual seed—in answer to prayer—and will over-rule the fluctuating weather, and the fluctuating states of the soul—and on Him in fact—all hopes of a harvest temporal or spiritual hang. Shall we have a good harvest next year? Will the angels reap a good harvest for God's garner from the Churchyard of Ashwell? Thou knowest, O all wise God!

I ask for an extension of the prayers of all God-fearing people, that I may have a fresh lease of strength to fulfil my duty of sowing the seed of the Word of God.

Of our agricultural success in 1880 we shall soon

know: of our spiritual success—the balance sheet is not finally made up until the GREAT DAY.

“Grant, O Harvest Lord, that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.”

I will now, as usual, mention a few matters in which both Pastor and people have a common interest. Some of the most lasting influences are those which proceed without pretence or fuss; and our Village School, under its faithful Teacher, is doing its work, not the less efficiently, because quietly and without attracting much notice; yet if children are to receive the full benefits of the School, Parents should endeavour to exercise a very firm control over them out of school, and in every way back up the authority of the Mistress and the Minister.

I print in another part of this sheet the list of Prize Knitters, and of those who obtained certificates and prizes in the Diocesan examination, to which we have submitted this year, as well as to Her Majesty's Inspector. Both the NIGHT SCHOOL and the SUNDAY SCHOOL flourish.

You will find a convenient little Bridge* now, over the Brook, when you want to take the short cut to Burley across the fields.

I take the opportunity of printing the *bequest of Elizabeth Wilcox*,† copied *verbatim* from the plate in the north transept of our Church, knowing it will be interesting to all.

It is pleasant to superintend the distribution of

* Put up by the Rector.

† See Appendix.

this charity, which supplies the great mass of my parishioners with a grant of coals at this season, and to hear the expressions of gratitude from so many lips. The benevolent founder occupied, I am told, the very honourable but too often despised position of domestic servant. It is a pleasant sight to see worthy people helped in this way, and I may add, it is a still more pleasant sight to see people by their own forethought, self-denial, and energy, helping themselves.

The Rector and Churchwardens of the Parish for the time being are Trustees, to defend the rights of the poor from being encroached on; and the rule adopted and approved hitherto by the Charity Commissioners appears a fair one, viz.: to distribute the amount of the dole principally in coals, and the overplus, if any, in clothes or money amongst the poor,—all receiving a share in proportion to their means and families, and this is done without any distinction: but farmers, tradesmen, those keeping five or more cows, and those earning one pound, or more weekly—are excluded. It is perhaps impossible to please everybody, but I may state here, that great pains are taken to be fair and considerate; and though the line of separation between the best off of those who *do* receive, and the worst off of those who do *not* receive, must necessarily be sometimes very narrow, my experience of such matters among large and intelligent populations leads me to feel assured that even self-respect—will lead all to accept the decision, whatever it is, with courtesy and good humour.

The amount collected for our Church Missions

(S.P.G.)* again reaches a higher amount than heretofore; and in addition we have sent and shall I hope again send our Good Friday contribution to the Society which does all it can for God's ancient people the Jews. Let us each use our one talent for God; and among other things let us endeavour in our several spheres, to secure a larger attendance at the Holy Communion, and at those services which are to prepare us for it as *e.g.*, those Advent week-day services we have lately had. No Cathedral, I know, could be dearer to some of you than your own beautiful Church.

In the review of a whole year I find there is much more that I should have wished to say, but space forbids. Some of you I find have warm, honest hearts, and encourage me much. At this blessed Christmas time I dismiss all considerations but those of thankfulness for God's unmerited goodness in the past, and hopefulness about all for the future. I sit in judgment on no one, I only desire that some few will ask themselves this home question, "How far can my conscience acquit me, if I neglect my religious opportunities?"

Looking once more at our picture, let me conclude with an earnest prayer that the Lord may sow the seed of eternal life in our hearts. And so desiring for you all things needful for this life and the life to come, I greet ALL AND EVERY ONE, not the less heartily because repeated a fifth time in a fifth Almanack, in its best and truest sense "a merrie Christmas and a happy new year."

* See Appendix.



VI.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

THROUGH God's mercy we are ALL brought in safety to the close of another year, and I am permitted once more to offer you a few words of friendly greeting on the dawn of a new one.

Our Almanack has for its illustration, a picture,* which furnishes us with an appropriate subject for meditation, and as it hangs in its place in every Home, will bear its silent testimony day by day throughout the year—of God—a Reconciled Father to us in Christ Jesus.

It seems to say, Before another chapter in the history of your earthly life opens, be not ashamed to kneel down by the Prodigal's side, and in humility and self-abasement, seek forgiveness for the past, and grace for the future. Before you turn the handle of the door of 1881, and enter on all its uncertainties, seek *Reconciliation with God*.

The engraving itself may not be first rate, but at least we can never look at it without being reminded that God is our Father, and our Father is God; and this, is the very key which opens to us the meaning of

* A picture of the Prodigal's return.

this “ Pearl of Parables ”—This in fact lies at the root of all our Religion—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

Now there are those upon whose ears this beautiful story falls faintly as a tale of other times, in which they are but little interested. “ It’s an extreme case,” they say, “ and I do not recognize my own history in it: Moreover, I thought our highest recommendation to God was a good life, sobriety, honesty, industry, perseverance in righteous ways; can wickedness with repentance be more acceptable to God than abhorring evil and cleaving to that which is good? Does God really love those most who sin tremendously, and then say they repent?” and they are offended at it: Hence *e.g.* many an honest man secretly despises and dislikes a reformed thief though truly penitent, and distrusts him; and many a virtuous woman shrinks with unutterable loathing from contact with a really penitent Magdalen, and many, even blame “ the servants ” of the Church, (*and of the parable,*) the Ministers of Reconciliation—who in the Master’s name spread the Sacred Feast, and bring forth, for such, the outward and visible signs of God’s love, and forgiveness, the Robe, the Ring, the Shoes.

But my friends, who thus think—suffer me to say that this Gospel Story does *not* teach that God loves those most who wander from His House and His Board, throw off the easy yoke and light burden of His Laws, and waste their time, their talents, their health, their priceless opportunities, in the land of sin.

Oh, No! Blessed above all are they who *keep innocency and take heed to the thing which is right for*

that shall bring a man peace at the last. No! This Parable, which sets forth the greatest of all miracles,—the raising of a dead soul to life,—the rescue of a sinner from damnation,—does not tell of greater love, but only of the exceeding *joy* which beats in the heart of God at the salvation of a wandering child,—because He alone fully knows what terrible consequences are involved in eternal separation from Him—which *is* Hell!

And do we all quite know what the word SIN *means*?—I do not mean *sins*,—some sin more grossly; but is not the guilty thought, the secret withdrawal of the heart from God—sin? And if so, should we not ALL be penitents? Have we not each in some sense “*turned every one his own way*” of special, self-chosen, sin, which serves to mark us out from all the rest of the world?

And if so,—does not this parable apply also to *clean* sinners? touch us *all*? Give *each* of us *some* resemblance to the Prodigal? Yes! and ought we not to keep our hearts tender, and lowly and loving, to the fallen? for have we not to be companions of the angels, who unsinning themselves, yet rejoice as one poor sinner after another struggles back to the Heavenly Home—the Father’s House?

It is of course impossible within these brief limits, to do more than ask you to note some few points, and a chief one is, that what really saved this Prodigal, was—*the recollection that he was a son.*

“*A certain man had two sons, &c.*” God always has two sorts of sons, a Jew son, and a Gentile son, a Pharisee, and a Publican, an elder Brother, and a

Prodigal, both children, both “rebellious” but in different ways, both must be convicted of sin and converted and become “followers of God as *dear* children.”

The Prodigal longed just to taste the pleasures of sin; his heart strayed first, and then he wantonly broke through the silken meshes of that happy network of ordinances, by which the fostering care of his father had encompassed him, and forsaking the guide of his youth went as far off as he could from God, that he might sin unlet and unhindered: “he loved the world and the love of the Father was not in him:” he goes out to that far off land to hide from God, but he only succeeded in hiding God from his conscience: and then he had the universal experience; he is an immortal being, and he finds *that within him*, which the mere world cannot satisfy, he finds he is *so made*, that he cannot find rest in *any* earthly thing; and then comes on him a terrible hunger of the heart—he has used up his all, and the world, of course, shuts its door against him; and his delightful friends who had helped him to spend his earthly portion, turn their backs on him, and no man said, “call on me now in thy day of trouble,” and if they had they could not have satisfied his wants:—then there arose a bitter struggle between his convictions and his corruptions; and if he had gone, then and there, HOME, it would have been well: for if a blot is wiped up at once but little stain remains; but no! anything rather than that; he cannot bear the burning shame of it: so he is driven to sell himself, soul and body, to the *Citizen* of that country, *i.e.* the

Devil,—for though a wanderer, the Prodigal is not a *citizen* of that land of sin,—and he bids him to satisfy his cravings, by wallowing among the swinish lusts of the flesh.

Brief, bitter, and unsatisfactory is this dreadful experiment, he soon eats indeed—of the fruit of his own ways—he finds he cannot commit these sins with impunity; at length wretchedness of body, desolation of mind, anguish of soul tell on him—his past seems accursed, his present withered, his future terrible—the stings of his self-reproach become dreadful, in his terror he exclaims “I shall go down alive into the pit of torture with all my sins on my head!” What saved him from utter despair, from the unpardonable sin of impenitence—for *that is the sin against the Holy Ghost*—(who is the Lord of Repentance), *which can never be forgiven*—was the recollection *that he was still a child*. Then came the sorrow of Love—the memory of his ingratitude to his father stung him to the quick. He looks on him whom his sins have pierced and mourns; yes, he *must* return, he has caused sorrow to that sacred heart enough; he would make amends, he does not harden his heart; he does not resist the pleadings of God’s Spirit; his forsaking was voluntary, and now beggared and disgraced he *must of his own will* go back, and he *wills* to sin no more.

Oh let none of us suppose that this story seems to treat sin lightly! Think what he must have gone through both before, and *after* “He arose.” Sin is a living thing, it meets us again though we heap years

on it; and as he went softly in the bitterness of his soul, murmuring “against Thee, O my Father, have I sinned,” his *sin was ever before him*; and behind him—a monster crawled, a retributive avenger, with woollen feet and iron hands, sent after him by “the citizen” to dog his steps—the Phantom of his Evil Past! for in the daily crucifixion of his long and weary journey, he found to his terror, that though he has lost the love of sin,—the power of Sinful Habits still clung to him, and his feet being unshod with “the preparation of the Gospel of Peace” came ever in contact with vile earth, and lamed him, and hindered his return; when he falls, he hears the laugh of the mocking fiend behind him, and as he smites upon his breast he cries “After all I shall perish and die as I have lived!” yet he prayed on, and persevered; for the Father *drew him*.

Such was the Penitent’s journey.

“And girt with griefs and fears
Our onward course must be,
But only let that path of tears,
Lead up at last to Thee!”

Would he ever have really got Home—if his Father, who from the habitation of his dwelling beholds all his wandering children, had not with the keen eye of love—seen him long before the Prodigal saw him—while still a very long way off, saw how sharply he suffered, saw how he strove to mortify sin, and sought for courage to cast himself just as he was—at his feet; saw his struggles after sincerity, purity, truth; heard his heart’s cry, “*The night is dark, and I am far from*

Home, Lead Thou me on!” Yes, the Father saw him—and though no one else would have recognized the son in that woe-begone, ragged, black-stained and bare-foot creature, He who received him in his arms in his rosy infancy and blessed him, knew him, and oh! who can describe the Love of God?—“*He ran,*”—and the Prodigal Son found a resting place on his Father’s bosom.

And there—where the bright, sunny, innocent child had knelt and lifted up his dimpled hands and lisped “*Our Father, which art in heaven,*” there, fell down—Oh! how changed! the unhappy, careworn, sorrow-stricken man, and with groans of sorrow from his sin-stained lips, cried,—“*Abba Father!*”

Yes, the Prodigal’s doings had not changed the Father, his shrinking from his Father’s presence, his driving the Holy Dove from his Breast, had not altered the heart of God: the Father is Love, the Son is Love, and the Holy Ghost is Love!

And the very sense of Pardon increased the Prodigal’s sense of his own unworthiness, he knew that but for the changeless love of his Father, his loving him *even while yet in his sin*, he would have been eternally lost, and the kiss of peace, the ring of sonship, the robe reinvesting him with his lost inheritance, the delicacy, the generosity, the very freeness and fullness of the Pardon, increased his agony of self-accusation, and sharpened his sorrow of love while it loosed him from his sorrow of fear, and from the terrible Presence that, inseparable as his shadow, had followed after him. Yes—He gave him full, free, and perfect absolution at

once, and a sweet satisfaction, unknown for years, came over the poor sinner who now, reconciled to God, was reconciled to himself and then came inward peace and a great calm.

And there is no sin of flesh or spirit so black, nothing so hateful, so aggravated, no kind or sort of sin, no multitude be they countless as the sands, that is beyond the reach of Pardon.

And God alone absolves; NO ONE disputes this: when the power of absolution is exercised—the clergy are, of course, like the servants in the parable, only instruments. There are thousands of “servants,” but only one Absolver! They can only by God’s authority apply ministerially the benefits of the precious blood, and the Divine Commission shuts out no one soul if his repentance be like that of the Prodigal—he gets eternal pardon even though he does not live to give proof in a new life of his sincerity.

The elder brother, with his subtle spiritual sin, which left no stain on his outward life, and yet was *deadly* in its want of self-knowledge, and want of filial love—*absolved himself*, but this did not loose him from his bonds of hardness of heart, meanness, and ingratitude.

“O Great Absolver, grant my soul may wear
The lowliest garb of penitence and prayer;
That in the Father’s court my glorious dress
May be the garment of Thy righteousness.”

I have only space to add a few words as to Parish matters. A change has taken place in the staff of our Day School; a change that could not be avoided, as

it arose from the marriage of our excellent School mistress; I hope that the change will not prove injurious to its successful working, for hitherto we have made good progress.

As this is the third year of the experiment, (though the seasons have been exceptionally unfavourable,) I think I may congratulate both myself and my tenants on the success of our glebe allotment system. I was told I could not confer a greater boon on the Parish than by supplementing the already existing allotments with a few more, on really good land. This is no matter of charity, which too often takes the vigour and self-respect out of a man, but is strictly a matter of business. The allotment system needs no argument of mine to recommend it; it has for many years now proved in all parts of England its own value. Independently of the useful and profitable employment which it affords on summer evenings, and the occupation for a man when he is out of work, independently of the feeling it gives an Englishman of having "a stake in the land," it is certain that whatever quickens and calls into active exercise the faculties of the labourer in his own calling, must make him also a more valuable workman to his master.

Our Parochial Association for Church Missions (S.P.G.), the Village Lending Library, the Night School, the Sunday School, the Provident Club, Sewing and Knitting go on fairly well.

I pray that God's blessing may rest on every house in the Parish, during the year on whose threshold we now stand; on your families, on your labours, on your

health ; and that all who are dear to us may be spared to see the end of it, and with more than ordinary feelings of regard as we are by time drawn closer together, I wish you “ a merrie Christmas and a happy new year.”





VII.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS.

SOME things useful in 1881 cease to be useful in 1882. An Almanack is one of these things. So I offer a new one for your acceptance, accompanied with the earnest wish, that the New Year, on which we are now entering, may be one of more sunshine than the past, the anxiety and care of which has left its mark on many a home; yet, when I look at the picture at the foot of this Almanack—on the right side—I am reminded of the abundance of our own apples, potatoes, and root crops, and that, after all, we have blessings many and great, temporal and spiritual, fruits of the earth, and grapes of Eschol, to thank God for.

I have tried various Sheet Almanacks. In 1879 we adopted that published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; and the last two years we have localized Bemrose's. The "Gospeller Almanack" has been recommended to me for the New Year, which at least has a very beautiful name:—may it bear its silent testimony to God in every house in the Parish! it will show at least where it is used that God's word is honoured.

Few incidents of note occur in a Country Village which, as it exists in real life, is very different from what is drawn by the imagination of a poet; yet,

each year, we would preserve one or two events from the oblivion which blots out minor matters:—among these—the “good time” we had during our preparation for the Confirmation Day, when I had the deep gratification of presenting the large number of twenty-six candidates—will be engraven I trust on their memories as it is on my own. Nor can some of us easily forget that seven times last year, mourners rested at our Lych Gate, bearing some friend to his last earthly resting place. And this is the chief thing which makes the passing from one portion of time to another, so solemn,—that it obliges us to remember the certainty of the fast approaching end; for to us, the flight of time means the passing away of priceless opportunities; and every year’s delay with regard to our souls, makes more to be done, whilst it leaves us less time to do it in. Hence, one important reason, for this Almanack,—which is not like ordinary almanacks—a mere record of the world’s appointments, fairs, markets, &c., but—one that gives prominence to Holy Seasons, and *every* day has a line out of God’s Book for us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

Only consider some of your advantages—you have a valuable District Visitor, known to me for over twenty years,—a really good School for the young; Day Schools in which sewing, knitting, and *useful* things are specially attended to; a School deserving of support by all: a Night School, a Sunday School, and a thoroughly good Mistress; a Lending Library, a Provident Club, and a successful Association for Church Missions.

You have also a simple but attractive Village Church, and I take pains to make the Services as bright, and congregational as I can, whilst it is my endeavour to be very plain and practical in preaching the Gospel, and you my friends, if you neglect to attend regularly, lose opportunities of obtaining that heavenly wisdom which is the most precious gift of God to man.

I think you may rely on reaching your homes in good time for dinner, after the morning service, for there is no reason why you should not all have a hot dinner on a day—which is undoubtedly one for refreshment of body as well as of soul: a working man whose mid-day meal, on the six days is a hasty one, should certainly have a comfortable meal on Sunday: but the husband is surely not wanted at home in the morning, and in the afternoon, it would be right if he would sometimes take care, if necessary, of the children, and let the wife go to worship. Such an arrangement might cost an effort, but we should not “offer to the Lord our God that which costs us nothing.” (2 Samuel xxiv. 24.)

I earnestly entreat every one to “honour God’s Sabbaths and reverence His Sanctuary.” In Church let every one have his own hymn book, and not one voice be silent in the responses; and when notice is given of the Sacrament, let no one suppose that the invitation does not concern him. *It does concern every one*, and in my opinion, the requirements to be a worthy communicant, are only the requirements necessary to be a Christian at all; so that though the number of our Communicants is far above the average in villages,

I shall not be satisfied until not one soul shuts himself out from Holy Communion.

And now look at the other picture on the left—Moses in prayer to God, his hand upheld by the clergy on one side and the laity on the other: this is a picture of what Church and State—and indeed every well regulated parish *ought* to be—and let me add, it depends much on the people's prayers whether a ministry be successful. "As for me," said Samuel of old, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing "to pray for you." (1 Samuel xii. 23.)

One word in conclusion. Let us show we are Christians rather by our lives, than by our talk: and remember that the way to be happy is to try and make others happy. Let the old read the ninetieth Psalm, and let the young study the third chapter of Proverbs, and may the coming year at its close, find us more worthy of the name of Christians.

We are told that there is "a Peace which the world cannot give;" Go forth my new Almanack, and convey to every reader of it a Pastor's wish that each and all of us may attain unto it! and as Christmas, and the New Year, are ever linked together in our common thoughts and words, I will not separate them, but wish you all—now as always—"a merry Christmas and a happy new year."





VIII.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

THROUGH cloud and sunshine, through joy and sorrow, through "days of toil and hours of ease," we have journeyed; and as travellers we stand before the mysterious gates of 1883: only we miss some companions whom God has in love called away.

A new and unknown path, and a year whose issues none can tell, lies before us, yet all is foreknown by Him who has led us hitherto on our **HOMEWARD** way! To some the very turning point in their lives may come this year, and they may seize it or let it slip! Lord keep our feet in the right path!

You will remember (S. Luke x.) that when Jesus sent forth the early teachers of the Church, He sent them two and two on their way, I have now the advantage of a fellow-labourer, and you will find I hope the old saying true that two are stronger than one. I have also placed the salutation that our Lord bids *them* use at the head of our Almanack, so that on the opening year, its silent message may catch every eye, and its solemn blessing greet every soul, "**PEACE BE TO THIS HOUSE!**"

Of the beautiful engravings which adorn our Almanack that on the left is linked in our minds with the

holy and happy associations of this blessed Christmas-tide; whilst that on the right teaches a lesson to be kept in mind *always*. It seems to say O Fathers and Mothers bring up your children in the fear and love of the Lord, and the best way to do it, is to imitate those parents in the picture, *i.e.*—Do not say Go to Jesus but COME; *you yourselves lead them*.

And this reminds me that I am happily still able to report that our Day and Sunday Schools are in an efficient state, principally owing to the painstaking exertions of the esteemed Mistress; only let the HOME teach the same useful and Christian lessons as the SCHOOL, and your children will grow up blessings to you, the Parish, the County, and the whole Country.

I beg and entreat all persons, here, and everywhere, to stand up with all their might for RELIGIOUS Education, infidel writings are sown broadcast even in country villages, and it is of the utmost importance to instil right principles into the young, for only so, will they be able in after years, to withstand the temptations to unbelief and unholy living by which they will be surrounded. Be brave and bold oh my friends against Christ-haters and Church-despisers.

There are some encouraging tokens among us now, and our sure hope is that if we sow God will give the increase.

This is also true of our temporal concerns.

The cloud that overshadowed our agricultural prosperity is we may hope partially lifted, and—please God—seven years of plenty may follow seven most trying and lean years; yet there has been much to

dishearten and discourage in the weather of the past twelve months. Unexpected atmospheric phenomena have followed each other with such extraordinary velocity as to defy the calculations of that Meteorological Office which is now set up to tell us what weather to expect.

A wet mowing time went far to spoil a splendid crop of grass, and the hopes of a magnificent harvest were checked by a cold July and a stormy August. God troubles us perhaps that we may rely less on ourselves and more on Him.

For my own part I am thankful to believe that the cycle of wet seasons must be drawing to a close, and that Providence is mercifully filling our wells and reservoirs with water, against the summer droughts, and sultry autumns, which are to come.

And this leads me to commend to your protection the Well which I have endeavoured to improve and guard from impurities, and which will I trust not only make the entrance into our village from the Langham side more picturesque, but also prove of permanent benefit to the Parish.

As the weary traveller is invited there to rest, and the thirsty to drink its clear and limpid waters, so I hope it will be preserved by you from injury, and prove to us and those who come after us, a memento of the higher blessings of which it is the sacred symbol and scriptural type.

Among local incidents you will expect me to chronicle, that during one of the many heavy thunderstorms of the past summer, the well-proportioned tower



AUTOTYPE



of our village Church was struck by lightning, some of the masonry and even the woodwork on which the bells are hung, was injured. Happily the damage was not so great but what native skill was able to effect partial repairs.

I name this accident not only because in every truly Christian man's heart, the House of God and its worship has an important place, and the most hostile to religion still have memories which cluster round the old Grey Tower, and would miss the musical peal of bells, whether they make it resound with the summons to prayer or ring out the chimes of a wedding morn or toll the knell of a departing soul—but also because it has led to an important step by the churchwardens and myself, *viz.*, the insuring of both tower and nave. We may also improve the accident by calling to mind the precious text, “The Name of the Lord is a strong tower,” which gives us the promise of refuge and rest, if we run to Him amid the storms of the coming year. I do not know yet whether this accident will occasion any increase in our Voluntary Church Rate, if it does, I hope no one will give any sum he cannot afford, though there is another side to this, *viz.*, lest we should be tempted to like a cheap and easy religion and so find ourselves offering to the Lord our God that which costs us nothing.

It is from an impression that our worship hardly makes enough demands on us that I have always urged so strongly, missionary claims, as good for ourselves, as well as for the poor heathen, and I am thankful to be able to inform you that our little village now sends

a larger amount than any village or town in the whole County of Rutland to the S. P. G.; a Society which has been the means of bringing tens of thousands to the feet of Christ. Our last Harvest Thankofferings for this object were especially gratifying.

It has been said that country villages, shut out from the more active interests and greater excitement of towns, often acquire a bad reputation for evil speaking and slandering. I hope this will never be truly said of Ashwell. I am ambitious that we should be rather known for the exact opposite to all this—for turning out men who are brave, honest, and manly, and would think it a dishonour to scamp work; and women who would blush to defile their lips with what is untrue, unkind, or uncharitable, rather let us try each to *excel* in whatever we undertake; you may know the lines—

“ If I were a ploughman it should be my pride
 The best of all ploughmen to be;
 If I were a tinker no tinker beside,
 Should mend an old kettle like me;
 But whether a tinker, or whether a Lord,
 Whatever my portion may be,
 In school I will aim at the top of the class,
 In the fields at the top of the tree.”

Let us cultivate a spirit of broad-hearted charity, avoid tale-bearing and harsh judgments, God help us all if He were as hard on us as neighbours too often are on each other!

With all our WANTS, depend upon it our greatest WANT in Ashwell, is a greater number of earnest believers filled with a spirit of love to God and man.

May God supply this want! then should we indeed make real perceptible progress, in public worship and in our daily walk.

I commend myself and the whole Parish to your prayers—private and family—and indeed a family without prayer, is very like a house without a roof to it—it has no sure protection. Try to look on me as a friend ready at all times to share your burdens, and minister to your temporal and spiritual needs. I offer my warm thanks to all friends who take any helpful interest in Church, School, or Parish, but when I ask God to give them his best and truest blessings in the coming year, some of you know by experience that these may come either through joy or through sorrow; only let us ask for that which HE knows to be for our best good in this world and the next.

And so once more in the name of the Great Master of us all, I wish you “a merrie Christmas and a happy new year.”





IX.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

A SEVEN years' experience has proved that you welcome my Almanack as a silent messenger of good will to every household; it not only forms a channel of communication, but its sacred texts help to unite us as members of that one body of which Christ is the Head—for we all feed on the same daily food, the Word of God!

We gladly welcome a new arrival, a new birth, a new year of grace; and we christen it 1884; for now Christians everywhere date their years from the year when the Lord of Glory and of Grace entered this cold world and gave it the glad sunshine of his presence; since then a new time, a new life, a new creation has begun; and every year is a year of grace, *i.e.*, of undeserved mercy, to us redeemed sinners.

With His strong yet tender help we step forth into the new year with trustful gladness, and though we "*have not passed this way heretofore*" we will praise His Holy name who has allowed us to see the beginning of it.

True, the past has brought many changes and the future may bring more, yet in life's bundle there is

more of mercy than of misery; we will not therefore fear, or be dismayed, but with humble confession of our many faults, enter on the untried path with a sense of our Heavenly Father's pardon, continue with a grateful trust in His providential care—and so shall we most surely end it amidst peace, and mercies multiplied upon us!

Look at the chapter from which the warning words at the head of our Almanack are taken; if the journey of Israel in the wilderness is indeed a foreshadowing of the life of every well instructed Christian on his way to the Heavenly land, why you too have the ark of God before you, within which are not only The Tables of the Law which are your Rule of life, but also the Mercy Seat, the Law of Grace—the type of the Great Propitiation—and He goes before us WHO KNOWS “*the way we have not passed heretofore,*” its Red seas of trouble, its steep and stony places, its mountains of difficulty, and its treacherous valleys, and “*Thou knowest Lord*” is our strength and our encouragement.

“*Thou knowest Lord* the weariness and sorrow
Of the full heart that comes to Thee for rest,
Cares of to-day and burdens for to-morrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confessed,
We come before Thee at Thy gracious word
And lay them at Thy feet,—*Thou knowest Lord.*”

“*Thou knowest* all the future; gleams of gladness
By stormy clouds too quickly overcast,
Hours of sweet fellowship and parting sadness
And the dark River to be crossed at last,
Oh what would confidence and hope afford
To tread that path, but this—*Thou knowest Lord.*”

And when our Leader puts forth His hand to point the way, that very act wins our hearts, for we see that that hand is pierced and bears the marks of His love to us, so that we are ready to cry out "*Lord, we will follow Thee withersoever Thou goest,*" for Thou leadest us by the right way to the haven where we would be.

To many, the past year has been an eventful one, ten young persons have been confirmed; four have entered upon the marriage state; seven have begun their earthly race; four have reached its goal; of one of these last I must say that comparatively young as she was the scriptural teachings of the church had been so brought home to her heart by the Spirit of God, her life had been so guided by her rules, that she made a happy and even a triumphant ending!

I would affectionately entreat all—do not put off the *one thing needful* from morn till noon and from noon to the evening of life:—do not make the Lord's Day a day of slothful indulgence, but employ it for your soul's good:—make a practical use of the high means of grace which are at your very doors; give God the honour due to His name, *i.e.*, give Him your love, your faith, your obedience;—try to extend the influence of true religion in your own household, and on every side of you; do not live unsatisfactory useless lives. The way to serve God as well as to be happy is to make others really happy; let nothing but sickness keep you, or yours, from God's House; and when there take your part in the service; let no one be silent in responding; let every one have his own hymn book, and SING ALOUD, that with one mind and one mouth we may glorify God.

As to the engravings with which Messrs. Mowbray* have this year adorned the foot of our Almanack, that on the left seems to represent the *only* incident recorded in the life of the God-boy, and we value it all the more on that account.

It was the Jewish custom to take children when they reached the age of twelve into one of the rooms of the outer court of the Temple to be publicly catechised—just as *your* children are catechised in Sunday School, or in Church on Saints' days; Jesus, our Perfect Pattern *at all ages*, submitted to this: only it is important to remember that though the wise Rabbis were astonished at His understanding and beautiful answers, the Holy Child was not beginning His ministry, or acting as their teacher. It is expressly stated elsewhere that He did not begin His ministry until He was thirty years old.

He is set before us here only as a humble pupil sitting at the feet of His teachers and *echoing back* (which is the meaning of the word catechise) their questions: to fancy otherwise would be to undo the whole lesson taught us by the silent and hidden nature of the early life of Jesus.

Indeed, at one period of the Church's history, all sorts of foolish fables were invented, and at last a false book was written called the *Gospel of the Infancy*, full of stories about the miracles of the God-boy—all these were lies—the Word of God tells us that turning water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana was the

* Christ at twelve years old in the Temple.

“*beginning*” of *His miracles*; and so the lessons from this picture are two, (1.), to parents it says—bring your children at an early age to Sunday School and to God’s House, do not believe in any education wherein religion is not the foundation, teach them to ask questions of the learned; and tell them they must love God even more than they love you. (2.) To children it says—learn to imitate the perfect obedience of the Holy Child. Do not fancy because your parents give you a better education than they had themselves, that therefore you are not to obey them; or that because you have more knowledge you have more wisdom. *Wisdom is the right application of knowledge*: do not despise your parents; but remember that old proverb I have sometimes quoted to you, that God has given you not only eyes to see—but eyelids *not* to see some things—as, *e.g.*, a parent’s faults: Jesus teaches you not to be conceited little prigs, as so many, alas, are in these days, but modest and manly, gentle and obedient—humble and brave.

I am glad, that you show an increasing interest in our annual School Festival, which went off so well during the past year, and assure you that I am by no means anxious to absorb all the arrangements for it, in my own single hands; but am glad and thankful for aid and help from every quarter.

I need not dwell at any length on the lesson taught in the picture on our right-hand: it is quite in harmony with all I have already said about the Christian pilgrimage. It represents S. Peter in his hour of spiritual failure and defeat, ready to sink amid the

waves of this troublesome world ; yea, it is a picture of thyself, O brother, or sister, if—in the ups and downs of your religious experience, if in some trouble of body, or terrible anxiety of mind, you, out of the deep, for a moment losing hope, cry out to HIM, that you are lost ! it is *you* that will feel an everlasting arm upholding you in the waters ; it is *you* that will feel the supporting touch of a loving hand ; it is *you* that will hear that gentle voice of mingled encouragement and rebuke “ *O thou of little faith wherefore didst THOU doubt ?* ”

And here I might close this Address, but that you will again expect me to give some account of such matters of interest, as our Schools, and our Religious Societies ; so this year I will give you in full, not my own Report, but that of Her Majesty's School Inspector, indited March 13th, 1883.

“ As usual, the children are in excellent order and have made good progress during the year. The Standard work has again improved in accuracy. The Needlework was good. Parsing in Grammar very fair. The infants are carefully taught.”

And next the Report of the Bishop's Inspector after the Examination in Religion, July 16th, 1883.

“ The elder children in the upper division did well and showed that they had been carefully taught. The infant division did fairly.”

And in the same prosaic and practical manner I will tell you by sweet arithmetic of financial progress in our efforts for Church Missions :—in 1876 we collected and sent to the S.P.G. £5 5s. 6d., in 1877 £11 2s. 4d., in 1878 £13 11s. 0d., in 1879 £15 11s. 0d., in 1880 £18 1s. 10d., in 1881 £19 4s. 10½., in 1882 £20 10s.

10½d., AND THIS LAST YEAR 1883 £22 10s. 6d., all this needs no comment.

The names of children who were successful as sewers and knitters in the "*Rutland Society of Industry*," will be found elsewhere.

And now I will only add that with many of you, I have been disappointed with the weather, at least with our share of it, along this "fertile vale of Catmose:" certainly the Scriptures set before us the husbandman as the very pattern of patience; and there has been much need of it with us. It seems almost as if a higher law than any of man's invention, were dealing with the land question. May we strive by acting on the golden rule "Do to others as you would be done by," by our integrity, generosity, and kindness to earn God's blessing on our labours! In spirit I grasp each of you heartily by the hand and pray that the coming year may be a prosperous one to you and your families! May He increase among us a spirit of forbearance, of liberality, and of that excellent gift of charity; may He save us from trusting in ourselves that we are righteous and despising others. Add your prayers to mine that I may be thoroughly faithful; and may He who maketh men to be of one mind in a house, draw all classes closer together in the bonds of mutual respect and good will! Depend upon it that the wealthy classes are not our natural enemies, any more than the working classes of England are hopelessly ungrateful; and while each class ponders on its own shortcomings, let none despair of a good time within him, and around him.

For we are not struggling against evil alone ; the teaching of this little address is true : He who led Israel of old safe to Canaan is our guide and *knows the way we have not passed heretofore*, and will, if you follow with a sincere heart, lead you safely through this life, safe through the dark river, and safe to the Heavenly Land. That each one who reads these lines may strive to attain to this, is my earnest desire, labour and prayer—and so I once more wish you with all my heart “a merrie Christmas and a happy new year.”





X.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

DAYS have slipped silently and swiftly by, and, once again, the pen is dipped in ink, to convey our heartfelt wishes for your happiness in the year now dawning upon us.

It is refreshing to find our Almanack welcomed so warmly.

The New Year is a time for sowing good wishes, and we make it a great annual sowing of three hundred and sixty-five good words from God, believing that a text understood by the head, and hidden in the heart, is a power in the life of a man, all the year round.

Last year's Almanack was fairly good : but the texts were printed in too small a type. This is so arranged that the space for local matter is much limited ; thus, we get less " Address," and more " Almanack" which is an advantage. Besides this, it has a beautiful New Year's Motto "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God.*"

There is a consciousness in all of us, at a time like this, that we are about to cross into New Year's Land, as into a strange country, " not knowing whither we

go," but if like the Patriarch our faces are set towards Canaan, the end to us will be as sure as it was to Abram and Sarah "They went forth to go into the Land of Canaan, *and into the Land of Canaan they came.*"

It would indeed be presumption for us to say "*I will go*" except we finish the sacred sentence "IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD GOD," and what *is* "*the strength of the Lord God*" to a man, but Christ? All real strength is deposited in Him, you know not the road before you, but you know Him who is your strength on the road, you know not the future but you know the God of the future.

But some may say—I have so often set out on the year's journey with fair promises and have failed—Yes, most true! but all life is made up of fresh starts; we should miss one of the great intentions of these divisions of time, by the Church, into Seasons, if we did not seize these Christmas Days, these Advent and Lenten times for making a new start. This is the real meaning of FINAL PERSEVERANCE, you travel on again *in spite of your falls*; you take advantage of this New Year of Grace to pick yourself out of the ditch; and this is the Secret of Final Success.

There is no greater sin on earth than to say, God does not love me, because I have wickedly wandered: God hates sin; but He loves the sinner. To despair is to commit the greatest of all sins.

GOD IS LOVE—whatever within you, or whoever outside of you whispers aught else than this—echoes the slander that ruined the world.

The Summer and Autumn of the past year have been glorious. Nature, long unkind, shone forth in her most gracious aspect, the wheat ripened splendidly and is of superior nutritive power; but the best crops are unsatisfactory if the profit does not cover the cost of production.

One thing at any rate the country is surely learning, *viz.*, that all other trades flourish or droop according as agriculture in its various branches prospers or decays. I am anxious to take a bright view but *we must recognise facts*, and having done this, we hope that a better return for labour and outlay may begin with the new year.

We are only too glad to employ our humble efforts in helping to introduce brightness, cheerfulness, and joyousness into our country life; it is one of our great objects to persuade Mr. Horner not to sit any longer in Grumble Corner;

“The Sour and sad we long to entreat,
To take a house in Thanksgiving Street.”

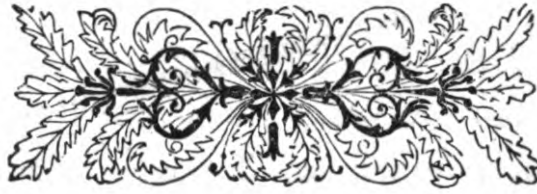
Hence—we wish all prosperity to our Cricket Club, and attempts to get up Concerts, depending on local talent,—we cannot be always on the strain. The very earth when allowed to lie fallow for awhile, makes up for it by producing richer crops, and it is allowed to Christians at certain seasons—Christmas, for instance—to be “merrie and wise.”

And let me say here, with what pleasure we see signs of “Love and good works” springing up among us; working parties for good and useful objects; more

loving care for the House of God,—a budding of that lovely principle—*not* how little devotion will God accept? but how much can I do for Him? showing itself in occasional acts of disinterestedness, and beneficence—as *e.g.*, the unusually profitable pickings enjoyed by gleaners last harvest—and the remarkable and praiseworthy increase of our Missionary Collections,—employers of labour feeling more for the comfort of their men's families, and men considering more the interests of their employers. We hope and think this *is* so.

The death rate of 1884 was not higher than the average in our Parish, but the extreme youth (14) in one case and the suddenness of the call in another, should impress young and old alike. Our desire is to perform all the duties of our sacred office with humility and faithfulness, and desiring that this Almanack may witness of our hearty good will, we give to all and every one our annual greeting. “A merry Christmas and a happy new year.”





XI.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

LIFE is a lesson book which can never be understood by reading only one of its chapters, little else is wanted to make the new chapter—the New Year—which we have just opened—what we wish it to be for each one of you—a happy and a restful one—than to adopt as your own the motto which is at the head of this new Almanack.*

The Confirmation Classes during the past year were to me a source of sincere pleasure and great encouragement: the proportion of adults in so small a parish is very large: the interest on the Confirmation Day, shown so plainly in so many earnest faces, was most inspiring; we solemnly entreat all who have influence with the newly confirmed to aid and encourage them in every way by word and example.

Our Ashwell branch of the S. P. G. maintains this year its high repute for zeal and liberality, indeed I could look back to our successful harvest thankofferings for this object, with unmixed pleasure, only that the earnest and evangelical minister, my old school-fellow, sometime my fellow labourer, always my most valued and loved friend, who officiated on that occasion,

* "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength."

has since passed away, most unexpectedly, but most peacefully, to his welcome and well-earned rest.*

As a congregation we owe grateful thanks to our voluntary Choir and Organist; strangers who have occasionally joined in our services, have expressed their appreciation of them, as at once zealous, hearty, and devotional. We owe much here to Ashwell Hall, but we want more trebles. But our chief parochial need at this time is a better supply of Sunday School Teachers; the kind Teacher of the large infant class will assure you that it is not all labour in vain.

I am requested by the efficient Mistress of our Day Schools to say that the parents of her scholars owe a debt of gratitude to Miss Williams, for her kind assistance in teaching knitting; we refer our readers to the excellent reports of the School by both Inspectors.

Many persons have been shocked to hear that a numerous, highly organized, and formidable association has been formed in this country which demands the confiscation of all Church property. We have thought it a duty to distribute largely our Bishop's eloquent address on this subject; we ourselves have been so occupied in teaching the simple truths of the Gospel that we have neglected to bring such matters before you: but it is forced on us now, and as it is no matter of party politics, we, though reluctantly with so limited a space just sketch a few leading facts.

It is true that the Church of God is the most ancient landowner in the world; as long ago as the

* Rev. J. T. Layard, M.A., Rector of Swafeld, Norfolk.

Patriarchal age, piety offered a tenth of all. You who read the Bible know that later on, Tithe became a Divine Institution; hence it was no new thing, when the Cross was erected in this and other lands, that under the constraining influence of the love of Christ, members of the Church, in their several localities, gave land, or sold property, and brought the price and laid it at the feet of the Apostles, or their successors.

These endowments, being great or small, according to the ability of the givers, account for the inequality of the benefices which is so often complained of in modern days.

What is then, in a broad and comprehensive sense, the Church of Christ among us, the Church called after no man's name, or after any special tenet—the Church which holds *the whole Catholic Faith*—and traces its historical descent straight up to the day of Pentecost and the Upper Chamber in Jerusalem—the Church of England which came originally direct from the sacred East, and Saint Paul, and *not* from the West, and Rome, very early struck her roots deeply in the hearts of the English people, and became the home of freedom and the great stronghold of justice and truth in our land.

Before the throne of Britain's Empire was ever set up,—before a single peerage was created, before such a word as Parliament was ever heard, the Church flourished *independent of the State*, and afterward, that if possible, no single soul should be neglected, she mapped out England into Parishes—which in these days the State makes use of for its own purposes.

There are persons who from a defective knowledge of Ecclesiastical History have objected that the Church of England began only at the Reformation, and is no older than the sixteenth century ; they might as well object that your Parish Church which was cleansed and restored by good Lord Downe, the Tithe owner, in 1851, *began from that time!* No! there is an organic identity between the pre-Reformation and the post-Reformation Church, and we are the legal and rightful inheritors of the ancient endowments,—just as you are the same man though you wash your face after the toils of the day,—just as you are the same man, my friend, though you were once a vicious or superstitious man and are now a *reformed* man ; so our Mother Church, cleansed herself from corruptions at the Reformation, and then went on her heavenly way, purer, *but the same.*

And now a great crime is meditated against the spiritual life of the nation—a crime that has never been attempted without a prolonged and embittered conflict, bringing us near to civil war, because the Act of Settlement obliges every English monarch to be a true member of the Church of England, and because history proves to us, that no property, however humble, is safe, when the most sacred of all property is struck at.

Because two millions of working men, some of them ill-educated, are added to the ruling power of this kingdom, some have insulted them by supposing that they will be so ignorant, as to be willing to abandon the national recognition of Christianity,—so degraded,

as to join hands with INFIDELS in striking a blow at Religion through the pierced side of the Church of England and share with them the plunder.

In fact the wave of Infidelity which has swept over Europe has reached our shores; but we believe the bulk of the English people fear God and that there is the same practical common sense and Christian feeling under fustian coats, as under broad cloth; when they read history, they will learn that the Church has always been the friend of the working classes, that the square cap of our Universities has often faced both crown and coronet in defence of the rights of the people. That from very early days, when Stephen Langton, our Archbishop of Canterbury, forced King John to sign the Magna Charta of our liberties, to the present hour, when the English Episcopate voted in favour of the extension of the franchise to the labouring classes,—the Church has ever stood as an angel of peace and love between hostile classes, between wealth and want, and checked the tremendous powers of social anarchy. No! when the working men of England come to know the real rights of things, they will be more likely to demand back the millions of property of which the Church has been robbed, than to lay one finger on her altars or take one stone from her towers.

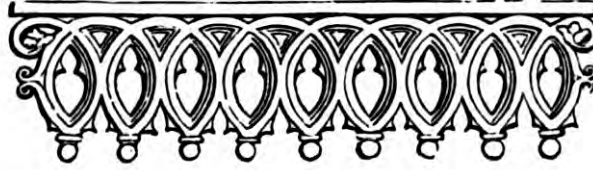
We can well understand ATHEISTS desiring this unrighteous plunder of the Church, because they do not believe that it is "*Righteousness*" which "*exalteth a nation,*" for they alone can gain by such sacrilege.

Yet we anticipate that some substantial good may yet arise to the ark of God from this strife of

tongues. We shall probably secure much needed Church reforms. Nor will well-taught working men allow religious instruction to be withdrawn from our Elementary Schools.

My friends, the very name of that ancient landowner who first endowed Ashwell Church, has been lost in the lapse of ages; but precious were your souls in his sight! May they be precious in your own eyes! May this Church, hallowed by the worship of many generations, never more suffer as it did once in the days of the Revolution, when great disaster befell old England. When this very Church, in the days of the martyred King Charles, was entered with ribald jest and profane blasphemy, when the then Rector (the Rev. Thomas Mann) was twice imprisoned and his house plundered, when the hands uplifted in prayer of that alabaster figure in your Church were broken, and the sanctuary of God invaded and defiled. But a trustworthy tradition assures us that the old Rector outlived his persecutors: and when the vast majority of religious people of all classes and all opinions, sick of the sanguinary hypocrisy of the Commonwealth, welcomed back the King and the Church as a national blessing, my venerated predecessor gave an entertainment to his Parishioners, and wished them, what I wish you, now and always—
“a merrie Christmas and a happy new year.”





XII.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

THE beautiful motto inscribed at the head of this Sheet is our talisman of safety always, but specially at such a time as this—when the heart is awed by the hush of one of those great transitions of time—entering on a New Year.*

Our Almanack this year, may be described as of the Church “Churchy.” We have a picture of the good Archbishop of Canterbury and four views of his great Cathedral, so full to us of teachings and turning points in English Church History.

In stormy times at Sea it is well to have a wise Pilot on board; and thank God He has given us one with a capacious head, and a great hospitable heart, to steer our English ship, which is the Church of Christ in England, with judgment and courage.

Not that—as by this time you all know—we are of those who would cry “The Church! The Church!” in meaningless tautology to everything;

“A man may cry ‘Church; Church!’ at every word
With no more piety than other people;
A Daw’s not reckoned a religious bird,
Because it keeps caw cawing from the steeple.”

* “The Lord God will hold thy right hand.”

We exalt the living Saviour, and we have His own faithful promise, that He is in the Ship of the Church all the days, even to the end of the world!

You will remember that I urged upon your attention last year some arguments against the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church in this country.

May I ask you carefully to preserve that 1886 Almanack, for it was not penned without consideration, and will be at least a memento of our advice on that subject, when I have passed away from Ashwell, or when Ashwell has passed away from me; since then God has split the political party from which the programme of that sacrilegious confiscation sprung, into two hostile camps.

It has been well said that the legislative process of Disestablishment, whenever Parliament shall be called to take up this task, is a far less easy one than the unlearned suppose:—It involves repealing foundation laws of the realm, which require that the Sovereign shall be a communicant member of the Church of England. The Coronation Oath would have to be entirely altered, the Sovereign's title of Defender of the Faith would have to be struck out from our coinage, and from all public documents; a great number of solemn Acts of Parliament would have to be repealed; Church ministrations to our soldiers and sailors in sickness and in health, and a host of other solemnities too numerous to mention would have to be done away with.

We well know there are very dark clouds round us:—evil men and deceivers are to wax worse and

worse before the close of this Dispensation, and if the words God, Devil, Heaven, and Hell were blotted out as if there were no such things, it would make little difference to the lives of many.

The fact is, the last and worst development of anti-christ is upon us. This old earth is fast ripening for the last great judgments; and out of the midst of an evil world the sheep of Christ have to be gathered.

But leaving these matters of intense public interest, How is it with ourselves? Is there recorded in any page of God's Secret Book any deed among us showing increased zeal for, or love to Him? If there be, my friends you serve a Master who will give you a sure reward: still, where a Church can show no record of self-sacrifice, there is no mark of real discipleship. Let us look round our own little sphere and ask—what have we each one of us—contributed towards keeping the light of God's candlestick burning in this dark and murky air?

On the whole perhaps the most encouraging feature of the past year, is the purely unselfish and still increasing support of Church Missions in our Parish: but we must acknowledge that some of this, is from outsiders: it may be said—the aggregate number of communicants indicates a fairly satisfactory OUTWARD condition of things: and I can report nothing but what is good of Choir, and Day and Sunday Schools, though our limited space forbids a full account, and as to the last-named, *we still are in great need of the personal help of voluntary Teachers.*

For the rest, we can but add that “the kingdom of

God cometh not with observation." We would walk in the sober path laid down for us by the early Church "continuing steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayers."

May God the Holy Ghost, without whose aid all efforts to stir up devout affections are vain, be pleased to bring home to all, that the greatest and chief alteration that is needed is a change in our own hearts, it is not new Acts of Parliament, or new schemes of Church Reform, but that new life in the heart which is breathed by the Spirit of God.

May He who opened the eyes of the Blind with only common clay, help by our humble instrumentality, souls to see Him who, with great desire, desires to forgive us more than we desire to be forgiven, thirsts more to save us than we thirst to be saved ! and wishes you more than you wish for yourselves, what I in His Name wish you, all and every one most heartily,—“ a merry Christmas and a happy new year ! ”





XIII.

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

WHEN as Incumbent of a neighbouring Parish between twenty and thirty years ago, I started an Almanack with short New Year's Address, thinking its broad sheet in every house might form a sort of link between Pastor and People, it was considered a rather unusual undertaking; but now that such a venture for good, has proved itself a blessing to many a family, I feel that you would be disappointed if there was not again placed before young and old the usual daily text for every day of 1888.

But as to an address—this is the first attempt of my pen towards doing anything, since—sickness—the shadow of God's Hand, has rested so darkly over me—so that I am scarce able to do more than offer my customary congratulations on the opening of what I hope may prove to each and all of you—A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

I should otherwise have wished to dwell at some length on the events of the memorable year just closing around us. I do not mean now such local matters as the late confirmation, always a subject of deep interest

to many, but the remarkable and loyal way in which the Queen's Jubilee was celebrated all over the British Empire, and the fact that all responded to the call of Religion, and with one consent offered up their tribute of praise for the protection afforded to the Queen's Majesty during fifty years of her auspicious reign.

The Church led the way, and made us recognise that a conscientious submission to the "Powers that be," was a distinctive badge of her true children;—that it needs something more than mere Human Authority, to bind us together as a Nation in unity—that the Magistrate with his sword of State, must have his proper place, but equally the Levite must have *his* portion, and *his* place, standing by the Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the Nation. That Stern Justice with her long train of punishments, imprisonments, and implements of Death may be necessary, but that much more are needed the Ambassadors of heaven to give the people to drink of that River whose streams make glad the city of our God—that in fact the true secret of order with liberty, and loyalty to Rulers, must be laid in obedience to Him who is "King of kings and Lord of Lords"?

Ashwell came out well in two respects; all those who had means did their duty nobly in trying to make everyone happy; there was no doubt merry-making, and feasting, but as far as I know, there was no single case of excess, or unseemly revelry, but rather an undertone of that choral praise with which we began the day in Church. The other matter, worthy of note, is, that we stand as a Parish almost alone in that we

have a PERMANENT MEMORIAL of the Jubilee Year ; and I had the happiness to congratulate the worshippers, on the beautiful and useful addition to the comfort and convenience of God's House, by the erection of six beautiful Standards of Light, which were much needed, and which have for us a spiritual lesson.*

I am personally indifferent to *mere* outside adornment, but I am far from indifferent to externals, which are useful, and which represent Religious feeling. A neglected Church, whether outside or inside, is often a too true reflection of the low condition of the inner life of its congregation ; and we all feel that even a Village Church should be at least as comely and well cared for as one's own best room.

Among our Jubilee Games I was glad to see that Cricket still kept the foremost place ; what can be finer on a bright sunny day after men have been steadily and hard at work—and earned the right to a holiday—than this healthy English game ? The very phrases of the cricket field recall to our memories our own school days, and we have all the more kindly sympathy with those who have youth and spirits to enjoy it, well knowing that they return afterwards with increased vigour to the sterner realities of life. It has been well said that recreation in some form or other is not mere waste of time, but, in moderation, does its part towards refreshing man's threefold nature. If the ancient tradition about S. John the Divine being found playing with a tame partridge, if the stories related of the very

* Given to us by Captain and Mrs. Blair, of Ashwell Hall.

wisest of the ancients—as *e.g.* Socrates—be true, if the very holiest of Christian saints frequently joined in the sports both of men and children, we need not fear encouraging recreation, both of body, mind, and spirit.

Although the hard times are at last beginning to tell on the resources of our great Missionary Societies,—so that it is calculated for the year 1886 the British Isles contributed by thirty-three thousand pounds less to foreign work than it did in 1885; yet here in our own parish we have kept up our Church Missions in a wonderful way: Praise God!

I have said there was an outburst of National Loyalty at the Queen's Jubilee; I do not forget that there have been this year, also, outbreaks of popular tumult and commotions in London, Ireland, and elsewhere; and Scripture seems to tell us that the last age of the world will in an unusual manner, be so troubled. The loss of authority, and government, breeds a host of vipers; and there will be confusion and every evil work preceding the second coming of the Son of Man.

But in spite of Atheism—under whatever name—we are to stand firm and “Hold fast.” We know that the world is still ruled, on the old lines, by Almighty God, and if you were to do away with Magistrates, and Ministers of Religion, Churches and Schools, tomorrow, the only result would be a recommencement of that Reign of Terror which in France, while it lasted, destroyed three millions of people, and Rapine, Ruin, and Ruffianism, would ride rough shod over us all.

We may expect great political events in the coming year, the prophetic date for the expiration of the

Mahometan Antichrist is at hand. Europe is like a great Camp. France, Russia, Germany, Austria, and Italy are armed to the teeth. England's flag floats along the deep in an ironclad navy, gathering her strength and biding her time—and THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT, bending evil men, and even devils to His all wise purposes, sits above the Waterflood, a King for ever!

But the Hours of the old year are numbered—a few minutes and the hands of my study clock will point to midnight—our Church Bells are solemnly tolling a Funeral Knell; oh that with the old year we could bury out of sight, our old sorrows! But—in a moment our chosen Belfry band ring out the Joy Bells, to usher in the rosy glad New Year! as our Poet Laureate has it:—

“ Ring out the old, ring in the new!
 “ Ring happy bells across the snow!
 “ The Year is going, let him go!
 “ Ring out the old, ring in the new!
 “ Ring out the false, ring in the true.”

I lay down my pen————the hand that has so swiftly guided it over this unstained page must soon be dust, and this beating heart be still, even your eyes that read it, O my friend, must soon be closed in death. For twelve years I have now ministered among you, and you have known my quiet way of life, and my going out, and coming in. The tie that binds us together is not yet permanently broken.

Look at the text above “ *Hold fast the form of sound words,*” and if you hear cries of Lo! *Here is Christ;*

or *Lo there!* Believe it not—Stand in the old ways,
and ever *hold fast* the Church's old story true to the
year of Grace 1888.

“Come weary souls, with sin distressed,
Come and accept the promised Rest,
The Saviour's gracious call obey,
And cast your gloomy fears away!”

Let us all as far as God enables us, unite in an
endeavour to build up our Zion here, and elsewhere,
and win every soul to the Flock of the One Shepherd—
and so, once more, in plain prose,—I wish to each and
all of you “a merry Christmas and a happy new year.”





APPENDIX.



NOTE TO PAGE 12.

The Rutland General Friendly Institution Established at Cottesmore in the year 1832, affords special advantages to its Members both Male and Female.

I. The property of the Society amounts to £3,626 18s. 7d.

- (1.) No entrance fee.
- (2.) No expenses of management.
- (3.) No Club feast or expense.
- (4.) No payment for medical attendance.

II. Members may ensure for sick pay from 8s. to 14s. a week.

- (1.) Full sick pay is allowed for a *whole year*.
- (2.) Half sick pay for the next half-year.
- (3.) Quarter sick pay for the next half-year.

And after two years continuous sickness such an amount shall be given as the Directors think right.

N.B. Members in receipt of sick pay may on certain conditions do a little work.

III. Members may ensure for *any amount* of funeral pay from £2 and upwards. A Member who enters between the ages of 11 and 24 will receive £2 at death for every Penny monthly, or Shilling yearly that he contributes—thus 3s. yearly will provide £6 at death.

By Rule 46 special maintenance is made for wives or widows.

IV. Members may insure for weekly or yearly allowances for Life; also for sums of money to be received by children or their relatives for apprenticing these children or otherwise devised by these relatives, on attaining fixed ages from 14 to 42.

Those persons who are desirous of availing themselves of the benefits offered by this Society may obtain the necessary information from any of the Directors, or from MR. THOMAS E. CHATTELL, Cottesmore, Oakham.

Example.

A Member, either male or female, entering the Society between the ages of 11 and 24, will by the monthly payment of 1s. 7½d., or a yearly payment of 19s. 6d., be entitled to the following advantages :

For the first 52 weeks illness, 12s. a week.
 For the next 26 weeks „ 6s. a week.
 For the next 26 weeks „ 3s. a week.

Also £6 at death, and an annuity of 1s. per week after the age of 70, when all contributions to the Society ceases.

Again: To obtain 14s. a week sick pay,
 „ 6s. „ half pay.
 „ £10 at death,

and 2s. a week annuity at the age of 70, requires only 2s. 1½d. monthly, or 25s. 6d. yearly contribution.

N.B. *Medical Attendance* is provided free of expense to all members on the payment of *one* monthly contribution.

Members may enter the Society at any age between 11 and 50.

NOTE TO PAGES 13 AND 25.

The Collection on Good Friday for				£	s.	d.
“ Parochial Missions to the Jews ”	..	..	2	17	9½
Church Missions (S. P. G.) in 1876	..	..	5	5	6
“ “ “ in 1877	..	..	11	2	4
“ “ “ in 1878	..	..	13	11	0
“ “ “ in 1879	..	..	15	11	0
“ “ “ in 1880	..	..	18	1	9¼

NOTE TO PAGE 23.

Verbatim Copy of Elizabeth Wilcock's Bequest.

Elizabeth Wilcocks sometime SERVANT unto the Right Worshipfull Sr. John Stanhope of Elvaston in the County of Derby Knight did by her last Will and Testament give unto the poore of the severall parishes of Ashwell in the county of Rutland, of Elvaston in the said county of Derby, and of St Peter's in the towne of Derby one mesuage or

tenement with the appurtenances scitua and being nigh St Peter's bridg end in Derby aforesaid nowe or late in the tenure or occupacon of one Anthony Spicer the rents issues and proffits thereof yearly to be distributed amongst the poore of the said parishes upon the Feast Day of St Thomas the Apostle.

By her Executors during their lives and after their decease by the Parsons or Vicars and Churchwardens of the said parishes for the time being for ever in manner and forme following (Viz.) to the poore of the parish of Ashwell aforesaid the one half of the yearly proffits of the said mesuage or tenement and the other half of the proffits of the said mesuage or tenement to be equally divided into two parts and one part thereof to the poore of the said parts of Elvaston and the other parts thereof to the poore of the said parish of St Peter's.

Shee died the 22nd day of July Anno Dni 1648.

Suggestions for Cricket Club Rules.

- 1.—That this Club be called the ASHWELL CRICKET CLUB.
- 2.—That every Member of this Club shall pay *Sixpence* as his Entrance Fee; and that no person shall be considered a Member till such be paid.
- 3.—That there be Two Practice Nights a week, viz. :—Tuesday and Friday, when wickets will be pitched at *Half-past Seven precisely*.
- 4.—That any person wishing to become a Member of this Club must be proposed and seconded by two Members at a General Meeting.
- 5.—That any Member be allowed to introduce Friends to play on *Field Days* and *Practice Nights*; but not to the exclusion of Members of the Club, nor without the consent of the majority present.
- 6.—That the Secretary obtain a List of Members willing to play in any proposed Match, and that if they exceed eleven, a vote by ballot be taken on the night of Meeting previous to the Match, to decide who shall play.
- 7.—That any Member on play days, being chosen on a side, and leaving the ground before the Game is concluded, be fined *Sixpence*, unless he provide a substitute, of whom both parties shall approve.
- 8.—That any Member refusing to abide by the decision of the Umpire for the time being, shall be fined *Sixpence*.

9.—That any Member making use of bad language, or being the cause of any trouble, or quarrel, on the Cricket Ground, be fined *One Penny*, to be decided upon by the majority of the Members present at the time of the alleged offence.

10.—That the funds of the Club be applied exclusively for the purposes of the Game.

11.—That these Rules be not altered, unless by the consent of a majority of the Members, duly convened for that purpose; and any one refusing to comply with them shall no longer be considered a Member of the Club.

Suggestions for letting and Managing Glebe Allotments.

1.—That the land shall only be let for one year, and possession given on the 6th day of April.

2.—That Seven Shillings and Sixpence is to be the Rent per *half* rood, including all town dues, and so in proportion for a larger quantity.

3.—That the Rent be paid in *advance*, half-yearly, into the hands of Mr. ———, on or before the 6th day of April.

4.—That the land be occupied in the following manner, *viz.*:—one-third with potatoes; one-third cabbages, peas, beans, onions, carrots, or any green crop; one-third with wheat, barley, or any kind of grain.

5.—That no occupier will be allowed to *re-let* his land, or to plough it, but cultivate it solely by spade or fork husbandry.

6.—That if any occupier neglects the cultivation of his land, or is guilty of dishonesty, or disorderly conduct, such as—*habitual* intoxication; or PERSISTENT WILFUL TRESPASS; he shall, without any writ, notice, or form of proceedings, forfeit his land the following Lady-day.

7.—That each occupier shall keep his own allotment of fence in good repair, and shall manure his potatoe crop with the whole of the manure arising from the cropping, and as much more as it is convenient to provide.

8.—That the tenant in possession be obliged to set his wheat crop, if his entry was at Lady-day (though under a notice to quit), which is to be valued to the in-coming tenant on the 6th of April, who shall be allowed to enter upon two-thirds of the land on the 14th of February.

9.—No children to be admitted, except for the purpose of work : any damage done by them to the crops of others, to be made good by the parent.

NOTE.

Rule 4 does not apply to those who only occupy half-a-rood but the rotation of cropping fixed upon will divide the working operations, and be found *yearly to produce* valuable commodities for the service of a family, and will keep the LAND ALWAYS in a proper state for a new entry or a new tenant, and will most assuredly add to its productive powers.

And again, as to Rule 7, the potatoe crop, from being manured, has an advantage, and leaves the land forward in preparation for the wheat.

The Church of S. Mary the Virgin, Ashwell.

“Whosoever thou art, that enterest into this Church, leave it not,—without a Prayer for Thyself, for those who Minister, and for those who worship here.”

The Churchyard of S. Mary the Virgin, Ashwell.

FRIEND,

Tread with reverence this sacred enclosure. It is “God’s Acre.”
Respect the last solemn resting place of the departed.
Do not violate their memorials.

Thou, too, must be laid in thy narrow bed. Who can tell how soon?

Remember,

From this sleeping dust shall rise freed spirits to Life Eternal, thanking God who “giveth them the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Suggestions for Societies of Ringers.

I.—THE MEMBERS to have the power of electing a new member, in case of a vacancy, by a majority of votes; the Rector of the Parish to have a veto.

II.—THE MEMBERS to subscribe each One Penny a quarter, to be paid quarterly.

III.—THE MEMBERS to submit to the following Rules:—

1.—To be present at Morning or Evening Service every Lord’s

Day, and on great Festivals or Fasts such as Christmas Day, Ascension, Good Friday, except by leave.

2.—Only to ring by leave of the Rector.

3.—Not to be wilfully nor habitually guilty of swearing or drunkenness.

IV.—ANY MEMBER guilty of these to be excluded from the Society; and if known to be quarrelsome in Church, to be fined, for the first offence Sixpence, for the second One Shilling, and expelled for any such offence afterwards. Members to carry any deceased member to the grave.

Suggestions of Rules for Choirs.

I.—There is one Rehearsal weekly, on _____ evenings. Every member of the Choir will endeavour to take part in these Rehearsals, except when hindered by a reasonable and sufficient cause. Unless this be strictly attended to, the Choir cannot be efficient. If any member be absent on four successive Practices or from the Services on two successive Sundays, without giving such reasonable cause, he will be considered to have resigned. Every member must always take the place assigned him by the Choirmaster, and adhere also to his part in the music used.

II.—All members will endeavour to attend the Service on Wednesday evenings, and on Festival Days.

III.—Real devotion and reverence must be invariably promoted by every member of the Choir. There must not be any noise or loud talking in the Vestry, and the Choir will endeavour by their own conduct in Church to set a good example to all the Congregation. To this end, there must be no staring about, or lolling in the seats, or turning over of papers and books during any part of the Service. All books and papers must be arranged beforehand, so that whispering, or the reading of music during the time of Divine Service, may be entirely avoided.

IV.—Every member of the Choir must be in his right place in the Vestry, three minutes before the time of Service. After prayer in the Vestry, it is particularly desired that not a word be spoken.

V.—Every Choirman and Chorister is especially requested to take care of his surplice; not to let it needlessly become dirty, and to hang it in its proper place every time after Service.

VI.—It is very much desired that all who are old enough should be regular Communicants.

VII.—Any one wishing to resign connection with the Choir, is requested to send a written notice of resignation to the Choirmaster.

VIII.—Every member of the Choir will endeavour, in his conduct and character, both in Church and in all other places, to act worthily of his high and holy privilege as a leader in singing the praises of God in His Church.

Presentations to Ashwell Church.

During my Incumbency, my Sister, Mrs. Cumberbatch, has presented our Church with an elegant and valuable Baptismal Ewer; and Miss S. Jackson, of Hambledon, a magnificently worked Pulpit Hanging.

Five Minutes Explanation to Parents as to what the Law Requires in respect to the Education of their Children.

1878.

During the year 1878, every child who is above 5, and under 10, years of age must be taught Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic; and no one, not even his or her *father* or *mother*, may employ him or her in any shop or in any way whatever for the purposes of gain or wages.

Every child who is of the age of 10 years and upwards may be employed provided that—

(i).—He or she has attended school two hundred and fifty times during each year for *two* years in not more than two schools. That is to say, if the child has been at school two hundred and fifty times in 1876, and two hundred and fifty times in 1877, or in *any two* years, and holds a certificate of having made such attendances in not more than two schools, the child need not go to school any more, but will be allowed to go to work.

Or,

(ii).—He or she can pass an examination in the *Second Standard* of the Code of the Education Department for 1876, and holds a certificate stating such fact, this will allow him or her to be employed at work.

Standard II. is as follows:—

Reading.—To read with intelligence a short paragraph from an elementary reading book.

Writing.—A sentence from the same book slowly read once, and then dictated. Copy books (large or half-text) to be shown.

Arithmetic.—The four simple rules to short division (incl.).

Every child, however, who on the 1st January, 1878, has reached his or her 13th year of age may be employed without having obtained either the certificate that he or she has made the two hundred and fifty attendances, or the certificate that he or she has passed the Second Standard.

N.B.—A child is, however, *also* subject to the bye-laws (when there are any) of the *local authority*; and, if employed in a factory, &c., to the provisions of the Factory Acts, &c. But, on the other hand, if a child was lawfully employed on or before the 15th August, 1876, (the date of the passing of the Act of 1876,) he or she may continue to be employed, or may obtain fresh employment in another place.

Useful Hints on Health.

“ As soon as you are up, shake blankets and sheet,
 Better be without shoes, than sit with wet feet;
 Children, if healthy, are active, not still,
 Damp beds and damp clothes will both make you ill;
 Eat slowly, and always chew your food well,
 Freshen the air in the house where you dwell;
 Garments must never be made to be tight,
 Homes will be healthy if airy and light;
 If you wish to be well, as you do I've no doubt,
 Just open the windows before you go out;
 Keep your rooms always tidy and clean,
 Let dust on the furniture never be seen;
 Much illness is caused by the want of pure air,
 Now to open your windows be ever your care.
 Old rags and old rubbish should never be kept,
 People should see that their floors are well swept;
 Quick movements in children are healthy and right,
 Remember the young cannot thrive without light.
 See that the cistern is clean to the brim,
 Take care that your dress is all tidy and trim;
 Use your nose to find out if there be a bad drain,
 Very sad are the fevers that come in its train.
 Walk as much as you can without feeling fatigue,
 Xerxes could walk for full many a league.
 Your health is your wealth, which your wisdom must keep,
 Zeal will help a good cause, and the good you will reap.”

Suggestions as to Prices of Needlework in Schools.

					s.	d.
Gentlemen's Shirts, with Fronts	..	..	..	..	2	0
Ditto without Fronts		..	..	..	1	6
Ditto Night Shirts	..	..	..	..	1	0
Ladies Shifts	..	..	..	..	1	0
Ditto Night Gowns	..	..	..	..	1	6
Labourers' Shirts	..	..	..	..	0	10
Women's Shifts	..	..	..	..	0	6
Ditto Night Jackets	..	..	..	..	0	8
Aprons	..	..	..	..	0	1
Ladies' Drawers	..	..	..	..	0	8
Sheets (per pair) with seam	..	..	..	..	0	8
Ditto without seam	..	..	..	..	0	4
Chamber Towels (per dozen)		..	..	..	0	6
Dinner Napkins ditto	..	..	..	..	1	0
Pillow Cases (per pair)	..	..	..	..	0	3
Table Cloths (small)	..	..	..	..	0	2
Ditto (large)	..	..	..	..	0	4
Dusters (per dozen)	..	..	..	..	0	3
Running Stockings	..	..	..	..	0	3
Darning ditto	..	..	..	..	0	1
Packet of Baby Linen	..	..	..	..	1	6

Suggestions for Sunday School Teachers.

1.—Be *punctual* in your attendance—be in time. It is very important that you should be in the school a few minutes before the opening exercises, to secure the good conduct of your class.

2.—Maintain thorough order in your class during the time of teaching. Let no loud reading, talking, or inattention be permitted. This part of your duty will sometimes be difficult, but remember that nothing can be accomplished without it, and that one disorderly class will spread confusion through the whole school. Enforce instant silence at the sound of the bell, or any notice that requires immediate attention.

3.—Never confine your attention to one scholar, but have the whole class under your eye, and all engaged at the same time.

4.—Be *firm* and *gentle* with your scholars. Let them know that you are never to be disobeyed or trifled with. But carefully avoid all

harshness in word or action, for this will at once spoil your true influence over them.

5.—Let the lesson for the Sunday be carefully prepared and studied during the week preceding, that you may enter upon your work with the full knowledge of what you have to do. And avail yourself as far as you can of the cheap and excellent publications now so easily obtained, for getting information on the best methods of discharging your duty. *Teachers* must be always *learning*.

6.—Study to know the character and temper of each individual scholar, that you may adapt your instructions accordingly.

7.—Visit your absent children to the utmost of your ability. You will thus acquire the greatest power over them, and may be the means of doing much good to their parents and friends.

8.—Recommend your school to the attention of others, and bring to it as many new scholars as you can.

9.—Submit cheerfully to all the regulations of the school, and to any changes made in your appointment. If any arrangement is not quite to your taste, remember that the officers are doing their best for the general good, and that your wisdom is to strengthen their hands and cordially work together with them.

10.—*Magnify your office*. No teacher in the land has a nobler work than you have. You are called, in dependence on God's Holy Spirit, to give to the young that knowledge which will lead them to happiness in time and to glory in eternity.

The population of Ashwell is 245; during the past twelve years we have had six CONFIRMATIONS and presented Fifty-three males and Forty-seven females, MAKING EXACTLY ONE HUNDRED.

In the twelve years of my Incumbency I have collected and transmitted to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Two Hundred and Thirty-eight Pounds, and Fivepence Half-penny.

The children of our Day Schools have gained prizes from the Rutland Society of Industry between 1887 and 1888 to the amount of Twenty-seven Pounds Eighteen Shillings and Sixpence.





