

## Church's Care from Font to Funeral.

### Waste Lands Of Civilisation

Mr Tom Driberg, M.P., speaking at Caxton Hall, Westminster, referred to the prevalence of a great hunger for something, which perhaps those who felt it would not always define as religion, side by side with an appalling mass of apathy, sheer ignorance and almost brutish hostility to religion. Paganism in its old, classic sense had a certain charm and attraction which the modern paganism lacked. There was no grace or charm about contemporary arterial-road civilisation, with its endless vistas of concrete, along which machine-bound man was speeding purposelessly through a chaotic series of hoardings advertising liver pills. But that was the waste land in which many millions were living.

In past centuries the Church had been the only preacher and teacher. To-day there was a bewildering variety of teachers, a confused babel of voices. The fact that it was now at any rate possible to derive sound learning and instruction from other sources than the Church served to emphasise the truth that the central position in the Church was occupied, not by the pulpit, but by the altar. The liturgical life of the parishes must be the centre of their social life. It was in that direction that the Church's forward movement run; but it was no good having an altar without a priest to serve it.

Laymen did not fully realise the comprehensive nature of the work of a priest. "Throughout our lives the priest is in attendance on us. The priest may be regarded as a Beveridge of the soul. Just as on the material plane such a plan as that of social security is intended to look after us from the cradle to the grave, so the priest looks after us from the front to the funeral. He baptises us in infancy. It is his hand at our elbow which leads us before the bishop to be confirmed. He pronounces the Church's blessing on our marriage. He dispenses to us the Food of wayfarers, and it is his whisper which relieves us of the burden of our sins. What a work for humanity the average parish clergyman does throughout his life, without any real recognition of it! How grateful we laymen ought to be to him! How hard we ought to work to try to provide more men like him, and more help for him!"

It was inevitable that priests should get rather stale from overwork and monotony, and the absorption of their energies in the non-spiritual routine of a parish, which took up far too much of their time. But all this could be remedied if more young curates were available.—"Church Times."

## Singing With Understanding.

At all services the work of the Choir is a valued contribution and in connection with the giving of instruction to Choir boys in to the religious side of their work the following letter appeared in a recent issue of the "Church Times."

Sir,—Recently I have been conducting two courses for choirboys at St. Michaels College, Tenbury, and Whalley Abbey. At these two courses, each lasting a week, there were upwards of one hundred boys drawn from fifty-three different choirs in all parts of the country, many of them from important parish churches.

A regular feature of these courses is a discussion on "our job," in which the boys as well as the masters are encouraged to express their opinions freely. This year the subject of religious teaching came up at both courses, and the question was raised: In how many of the churches represented does one of the clergy give the choir any regular instruction in the meaning of the services or the religious side of their work—apart, of course, from preparation for Confirmation? The answer was: In two churches only! Yet these were a picked lot of boys, keen not only on their singing but potentially keen young Churchmen.

I believe that nothing would do more for the improvement of the choral part of our worship than that it should become a recognised plan that at the full practice each week ten minutes should be set aside for religious instruction, during which one of the clergy should go through the following Sunday's services, explaining obsolete words or phrases in the psalms or lessons or prayers, or obscure biblical references in the hymns; or the structure of services; or the meaning of ceremonies; making sure, in fact, that those whose duty it is to interpret the service should at least understand the meaning of the words that are put into their mouths. Needless to say, such lessons would have to be most carefully prepared, for time at a choir-practice is precious. But I am certain that if they were well given they would be greatly valued by all concerned.

However, difficult it may be to tackle the problem of religious education for all the rising generation, surely even the busiest parish priest ought to find time to make sure that these boys, to whose devoted service the Church owes so much and who are so ready to respond if only the chance is provided for them, should not be brought up, as is too often the case, in almost complete ignorance of the meaning of the services in which they are called to take such an important part.

Sydney H. Nicholson.

## C.E.M.S.

"We all should think of the C.E.M.S. as signifying Christ Expects My Service."—Bishop of Tasmania.

### Well Done Puketapu

The appeal for the Devastated Missions was responded to most creditably by the parishioners of the Puketapu Church District resulting in the splendid total of £247 being collected. In addition the usual quota of £106 for Missions was also raised. Other parishes could well take a lesson for the Mission mindedness shown by the parishioners of the Puketapu Parish.

## The Reward of Devotion.

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (St. Mark, Chap. 16, v. 9). First to Mary—first to a woman. That says much for the privileges of womanhood. There is no need to raise woman, she is already exalted. It is only in heathen countries where they "know not the Scriptures" that she is subdued, kept under, or treated as a slave. Let women rest much upon what Christ thinks of them. Mary, to whom Christ appeared, was the one from whom He had cast out seven devils. In that spiritualised condition, she was fit and able to recognise readily the Risen Lord. What was the intention of the Saviour? Well, first we may say, to show what He thought of women. True, there was a very favoured disciple, St. John, very much loved by Jesus, because he loved much, but there was one special home to which Jesus frequently resorted—the Bethany home, because "Jesus loved Mary and Martha."

This appearance of Jesus to Mary was in response to love and faithfulness. Last at the Cross and first at the grave; first to honour the Lord when dead, and first to welcome Him when risen—such was woman's experience and blessed privilege. So men may well imitate women in their devotion to religion. The manifestation of Jesus is strictly in response to devoted love. "He that loveth Me, I will manifest Myself to him" (St. John xiv.) He manifests Himself still—as of old—as the Healer of our bodies, as well as of our souls, if we will only recognise Him as such, and love Him. He cannot but give you healing if you really love Him. Do you? He may delay—probably through your own fault; but His delays are not His denials. Trust on and love Him.

—The Healer.