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ART. II.—FAILURES.

IT has been said that the better men triumph over the better cause. Humanly speaking, that school of thought in the Church which possesses the best men will make most progress. And although our cause is the better one, we shall not prosper unless in some particulars we can improve.

We are sure the School of the English Reformation is the true one. Yet, speaking generally, it is not the school which attracts the young. In this paper we wish to point out what seem to us some of the principal reasons why this is so.

It is not an easy task for one who believes firmly and strongly in a cause to find fault with, or to bring charges against, those who agree with him. The plea that has most weight with the writer in attempting to expose what appear to him to be defects is, that if Reformation Churchmen can only be brought to see their failings, they will quickly take steps to remedy them.

The first failing which has a good deal of weight with young clergymen is want of loyalty to the Prayer-Book. Many an one, we hope, comes from his ordination feeling strongly about the oath which he has taken to use the services of the Prayer-Book, and none other, in public worship. To such an one omission is almost as bad as addition. Yet in very many (may we not say the majority of?) non-sacerdotal parishes there is a great deal of omission. Take, for instance, the observing of saints' days. A special collect, epistle, and gospel, and special lessons are appointed by the Church for saints' days. There may be strong reasons why there should not be a celebration of the Holy Communion. But is there any reason, especially in town parishes, why services on saints' days should be omitted altogether? To anyone longing to be loyal to the Prayer-Book such an act of omission creates a feeling antagonistic to the school of thought whose principles he believes to be true, but whose practice in this respect is distinctly contrary to their principles. The adherents of the Reformation claim to be, and rightly, so far as principles go, the loyal sons of the Church of England. They must not expect, for they do not deserve, the esteem of the younger clergy if they have glaring defects in their allegiance to the rubrics of our Liturgy.

Again, there is a failure in practice in not keeping fast days. This is an age of luxury, as well as of squalid poverty. The middle classes need some check on their appetites. What better than that of fasting as appointed by our Church? If the adherents of the Reformation would teach their flocks to

use this rule of the Church, or, rather, the rule of fasting laid down by our Lord,¹ much good would result.

But there are graver failures of loyalty even than these. In our ruri-decanal chapters adherents of the Reformation frequently accuse their brethren of adding to the services of the Church. But what must be said of their own illegal omissions in the occasional services? There are a few churches where the marriage service and the baptismal services are seriously mutilated. Why should the marriage service be considered complete if the pause at the end of the first blessing be final? Yet we know several churches where this is habitually done. The case of the baptismal service is even worse. The rule laid down for the attendance of sponsors is continually ignored. We know the difficulty of obtaining good sponsors. Yet most parents ought to be able to find one, and the congregation might supply the others. Where sponsors are not brought, that part of the service beginning with the address to the god-parents, "Dearly beloved, ye have brought this child here to be baptized," and ending with their last answer, "I will," is altogether omitted, as well as the exhortation at the end. This is not simply the practice at one church, but at several. No wonder the candidates for confirmation in such parishes are few in number. This want of loyalty to the Prayer-Book is, we are sure, one reason why many young clergymen who begin as adherents of the Reformation gradually find their way into the ranks of the moderate High Churchmen. If we wish to retain in the Reformation section the loyal sons of the Church of England, let us reform ourselves in these matters and be true to our Prayer-Book, neither omitting nor adding thereto.

A charge of want of reverence is frequently brought against adherents of Reformation principles. It has to be admitted that, speaking generally, there is more outward reverence shown by a mediævalist congregation than by one that is non-sacerdotal. We ought not to allow reverence to be the monopoly of any section of the Church. It is an essential virtue in true worship, and it is our duty to teach our people that in God's house and throughout divine service they should be at all times reverent and devout in demeanour. In prayer they should kneel; in praise they should be earnest. When responses are repeated they should not be silent. We teach that these things ought to be done; let us also teach the reverent way of doing them.

The great want of reverence among adherents of the

¹ St. Matt. vi. 17.

Reformation is, we think, most painfully shown at the administration of the Lord's Supper. And the clergy themselves are sometimes less careful than the congregation. Supposing we take the lowest view of all, viz., that the Lord's Supper is merely a commemorative act. It is at any rate a commemoration of the most solemn and tragic act in the world's history. The consecrated bread and wine are signs or symbols of the body and blood of Christ. They are the outward expression of very holy things; they ought to be used with the utmost reverence. This argument is strengthened considerably when we take the view of our Church, that what is signified by the outward and visible signs in this Sacrament "is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful." These outward and visible signs ought therefore to be used with all reverence. But is this so in many churches of the Reformation school? When the administration is over, crumbs not a few may often be seen on the floor. Is this using holy things with due reverence? Are our confirmees taught before their first communion to handle these holy things with becoming reverence? Outward reverence is not, and cannot be, all, yet it is a great thing to teach the young due reverence, without which there is a danger of too great familiarity in the use of holy things. And the best way of teaching is by setting an example.

We would say to Reformation Churchmen: Make your practice so outwardly as well as inwardly reverent that no one shall be able to accuse you of irreverence. Teach by all means that lowliness of spirit is necessary, but do not fail to teach also that outward reverence which is sometimes so lacking amongst us.

The third and last failing we shall deal with is the want of courtesy and kindly feeling which characterizes some Reformation incumbents. There are, we are thankful to say, many notable exceptions; yet these only tend to accentuate the difference between those who possess this courtesy and kindly feeling and those who do not. Why should it ever have become a current saying that amongst men of our school the three orders of the ministry are bishops, rectors, and curates? The theory of High Churchmen (and we advisedly use the word theory, for their practice is not perfect) is that all presbyters are equal, except in the fact that to some the cure of souls is given. In many cases the rights of assistant curates are altogether disregarded. Take an instance. Often when a neighbouring vicar wants the assistance of a curate, the whole transaction is made between the two vicars, and the curate is simply told to go to such and such a church. The curate has the right to refuse to go. If he is wise he will not refuse; but

how much better it would be if the incumbent who requires the help would consult him in the matter! These are trifles, but a little forethought and kindly feeling would prevent a great deal of soreness. If the adherents of the Reformation wish to keep their young curates and add to their number, they must respect their rights and treat them with more courtesy. In one large town that we know it is the custom for the Church Missionary Society committee to meet and arrange their annual sermons. In so doing they have arranged for curates to go to different churches, they have made public announcements in print and otherwise, yet the curates have not been asked whether they would preach or not, and in many cases their first knowledge of the arrangement has been the posters they have seen in the streets. This is simply quoted to show how widespread the evil is. The remedy is easy.

Most churches now have a Church Council. More often than not the members are elected by the congregation. The vicar calls them together to ask their advice and counsel. Through them he finds out what the people are saying. They are, or ought to be, the pulse of the congregation. Yet there are many vicars of our school who have a Church Council and ignore it altogether. Far better than this, let the vicar rule with a mild yet despotic hand. With Church Councils elected on a democratic basis, the clergy must be prepared to give as well as take. Nothing acts so much like a wet blanket as a vicar who constantly calls his Church Council together and simply ignores the advice which is tendered to him. This happens time after time. No wonder that the enthusiasm of many men is damped.

This surely is a want of courtesy. If we cannot carry out the wishes of our Council, let us say so at the time, and if possible give our reasons. Our men may not agree with us, but, at least, they will not accuse us of want of courtesy. If there had been less pride and more courtesy in times gone by, there would be much more cohesion now among supporters of the Reformation.

Our cause—which is, we are sure, the cause of truth—will prevail. On our part, we can aid it by more loyalty, more reverence, more courtesy and kindly feeling. We are in peril of losing our influence in the Church by our failings. When we have learnt what these are and have corrected them, then we may expect the tide of prosperity to flow. All of us have our part to do in leavening the whole; let us make haste and do it.

A. M. D.

