

**SHORT NOTICES OF
SEVEN YEARS' WORK
IN A COUNTRY PARISH**

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BY

R. F. WILSON, M.A.

VICAR OF BOWNHAMS, PREBENDARY OF SARUM,
AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF SALISBURY.

"Who hath despised the day of small things?"

Zech. iv. 10.



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JAMES PARKER AND CO.

1872.

141. k. 458.

PREFACE.

A FEW words of explanation are needed to justify the publication of such fugitive, desultory Papers as make up the contents of this little volume. It was found unexpectedly, from time to time as they appeared, that readers outside the Parish were interested in them, and desired to have copies of them; and that their local, homely, practical character rather added to, than took from their interest, and suggested sometimes useful hints for application elsewhere. Some, too, to whom the Papers in a collected form have been submitted, were of opinion that they would be useful, when brought together, among other reasons, as furnishing facts and data on common matters of Parochial organization and work, often sought after, but seldom stated in their simple detail. So far as the contents may be of any value, it is because of their Parochial homeliness, and because they touch on matters which are more or less of interest in most Parishes to all concerned in Church-work. And perhaps there may be some additional usefulness in them, owing to the fact that they were

written as the several matters came to be dealt with, upon no fixed plan, and spread over a considerable time. And so they express thoughts and feelings which arose when the things were fresh, and when there was occasion for something to be done as well as said. The feelings, too, and impressions of others were before one, some cordially approving changes made, others accepting them with hesitation and doubt, others thinking them undesirable, and some few disturbed by, and disapproving them.

There will always be found in every Parish two opposite forces, in more or less of antagonistic action; the one zealous for improvement and advance, prompting the introduction of what is new; the other suspicious and impatient of change, desiring to keep things, as nearly as may be, as they are. Both have good in them, and should be treated with respect. There is in our national mind a strong conservative element, particularly in matters of religious worship and teaching. Changes in them disturb the mind at a time when one wishes not to be criticising. Hence the first impulse is against changes; and this impulse is often strongest with those who have made best use of what they have been brought up to. Such are very apt to be disquieted by alterations, and to enter upon the use of them

with some unwillingness. In many cases, a few words of timely explanation, with a simple and clear statement of what is intended by the change, will go far with the candid and well-disposed, to remove mistaken impressions, or at any rate, to cause a suspending of judgment until fair trial has been made; particularly where it is felt that such changes have not been determined on without careful consideration, nor begun without due and respectful notice.

These short Papers, appearing as they did from time to time, when changes were about to be made, have, it is thought, in some measure helped to prepare for them, and place the subjects before Parishioners in the light in which it was wished they should be considered. They have sometimes taken the sting out of remarks by being beforehand with them, by simply telling the reasons for things being done, and submitting these reasons to the consideration and judgment of the Parish. The object in the Papers, was to explain, to invite attention and approval, and at any rate, to prevent a feeling of being taken by surprise in any thing that was introduced. Appearing, too, in course, in the Magazine, where it was expected that Parish notices should be given, there was no undue importance given to the matters; whereas a separate printed notice

would have seemed to invite an immediate expression of opinion. Things in themselves of small importance acquire importance, and assume dimensions which do not belong to them, by being canvassed and discussed. Too much discussion and consultation ought, as it seems to me, to be almost as carefully avoided as too little, for the one is often productive of as much evil as the other.

In this point of view, the changes of the last thirty-five years in the conduct of the public service, and in a return to the teaching and practice of the ancient Church, suggest very curious and interesting considerations. Over-haste and over-caution, over-independence and over-consultation, have alike set Parishes into unnecessary heats and divisions. Things which in the course of a few years have become so far recognised, that whatever his private opinion, no one any longer dreams of interfering with their free use, have given occasion to serious and sometimes violent disturbance in Parishes. To give full force to this statement, one should go back a good many years. At the expense of being tedious, because there is really a very wholesome moral to be gathered in the matter, I will here give a list of changes introduced within my own personal experience, every one of which has been made

subject for grave objection. Some of the illustrations I know are very trivial; but the more trifling the occasion for opposition, and the more the things have passed into recognised use, the more they serve to point my moral. We look back and treat as quite removed from all reasonable opposition things, which in their day stirred as much discussion, and as warm, as some of those things, which people choose to call ritualistic practices of this day. Thus, I have known strong disapproval expressed of daily Service, of increased Communion, of preaching in a surplice, of using Hymns instead of the metrical version of the Psalms, of singing the *Gloria Patri*, or the responses after the Commandments, of chanting the Psalms, of surpliced Choirs, of reciting the service on an even note, of singing the Litany, of using a Litany-desk, of going to the holy Table for the first part of the Communion Service instead of saying it from the Reading-desk, of changing the position of the Reading-desk so that the clergyman should no longer seem to address the Prayers to the people, of the use of the Prayer for the Church Militant, of the weekly Offertory, of collecting the Alms in bags instead of in a plate, or dish, or basin, of offering the Elements at the appointed time instead of placing them on the

altar before the beginning of the Service, of saying the Apostles' Creed with a musical accompaniment, of singing the Nicene Creed, of a Credence-table, of early Communion, of fasting Communion, of receiving the consecrated Bread into the hand instead of in the fingers, of the position of the celebrant in front of the Altar, of omission of Prayer before the sermon, of singing Hymns in procession whether inside or outside the Church, of carrying Banners.

I know that many of these things will seem almost too trifling to be mentioned. I can only say, that as I write them I could name the persons and places where the introduction of them gave occasion to objection, or even to earnest opposition. It would almost move a smile to recall the vehemence with which usages, at present generally or largely observed, were gravely discussed and opposed, as dangerous or unsuitable innovations. I need only recall the vehement and almost riotous proceedings which attended the revived use of the Offertory, preaching in a surplice, and the use of the Prayer for the Church Militant.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to say, that it is not without consultation with others that these simple records are made public. The fact that better work has been better done in many