

**GODPARENTS AT CONFIRMATION ONE
OF THE CHURCH'S APPOINTED MEANS
FOR RETAINING HER YOUNGER
MEMBERS; TOGETHER WITH A NOTICE
OF THE METHODS ADOPTED FOR A LIKE
OBJECT BY OTHER RELIGIOUS BODIES**

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BY

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PREFACE

BY THE

LORD BISHOP OF MANCHESTER.



I HAVE BEEN ASKED to prefix a few words of commendation to this essay. The point which the author establishes, with a considerable amount of learning, may be new to some readers ; but the single reference to the 29th Canon (p. 28) is enough to indicate the mind of the Church of England upon the subject. The practice, however, has for so long a time fallen into desuetude, that it may be doubted if it can be revived. The last chapter of the treatise shows what benefits might be expected to follow from its revival ; and as the increasing seriousness with which young people engage in the rite of Confirmation is one of the most cheering religious signs of the age, there may be those among the Clergy who may be disposed, with the hope of strengthening this feeling, to restore in their Parishes this ancient and, if rightly used, profitable institution.

J. MANCHESTER.

Aug. 20, 1879.

INTRODUCTION.

THE REV. J. H. BLUNT, in his excellent book entitled 'Directorium Pastorale,' speaks as follows : 'Much has been said about the difficulty of keeping a hold upon young people after they have been Confirmed ; and Evening Schools and Bible Classes have been recommended for the purpose. These are very good in their way, and the latter are especially valuable ; but they have no direct reference to Confirmation, or what they have bears rather on the time preceding it than on that which follows. The most firm hold on the Confirmed is to be gained by a faithful adherence to the spirit of the Church of England, which makes Confirmation a preparation for the reception of the Holy Communion, and supposes the latter to be received as soon as the former has been administered.'

This throws us back on the question, 'How are we to keep a hold on our young Communicants ?' The answer to this question is again to be found in the words of Mr. Blunt,—'by a faithful adherence to the spirit of the Church of England.' How to retain

in after-life those who have been Confirmed by the Holy Ghost, and have approached our Blessed Saviour in Holy Communion, is a matter of the utmost importance, and one of most serious interest to all engaged in Parochial work. We know too well, by oft-repeated experience, that Bible Classes, Night Schools, and whatever else has been hitherto tried, have failed to accomplish the object above mentioned, in the way and to the extent we could wish. Every Confirmation that is held largely increases the number of the Confirmed, and for a season makes a visible increase in the number of Communicants ; but by the time that another Confirmation comes round, the former accession of Communicants which gladdened our hearts has been somehow dissipated and lost. And this melancholy process is being continually repeated in every Parish. At first we may be encouraged to hope for better results, but again and again we are only met by disappointment and failure. And one of the most painful features in this constantly recurring disaster is that no one can exactly state what ought to have been done which has not been done ; why or how it is that our just and reasonable expectations have not been fulfilled. We not only suffer these losses to the great peril of thousands of souls, but we seem also to be unable to discover where the lost ones are to be found, and by what means they are to be recovered.

And yet the Church of England possesses a special agency to meet this urgent need. Amidst all the

schemes which have been started of late years to keep a hold upon the children of the Church, her own plan seems to have been overlooked and forgotten. It will be found, on examination, that in the appointment of Godparents at Confirmation the Church has provided a most valuable safeguard and protection for our younger Communicants. It is only requisite to resuscitate and recover this part of the Church's system, and we shall have the means of bringing the whole body of the faithful under direct spiritual supervision. By choosing Godparents from amongst the elder Communicants, and by allotting to each of them five or six of the newly Confirmed, we shall at once have an agency by which the Clergy may be kept informed of any symptoms of lapse from former stedfastness, thus affording them an opportunity of giving suitable advice in each individual case at the very time it is required. An institution of such a nature has a manifest claim on our most earnest consideration. It possesses great advantage in having long-established Church authority for its foundation; and the writer believes that it may be made of very material aid in shielding the unwary from peril, and in encouraging all to greater watchfulness and perseverance in the Christian warfare.