

CHILTHORNE DOMER.

RE-OPENING OF THE PARISH CHURCH.

The Parish Church, which has been undergoing extensive repairs since August last, was re-opened on Tuesday, when the weather was beautifully fine. The building had been in a dilapidated state for some considerable time, and it was absolutely necessary to restore it. The church is a very ancient building, dating from the 13th and following centuries. The oldest portion is the chancel, which is believed to belong to the 13th century, while the north side is considered to be of the 14th and the south side of the 15th centuries. There is a very quaint old bell-turret still in use situated at the west end, and the chancel possesses a carved effigy which is supposed to be that of Sir John de Dummer, an ancestor of the de Dummer whose effigy occupies a conspicuous place in the church of the parish of Pendomer. The cost of the restoration, which has had to do more with the interior than the exterior of the building, was estimated at nearly £900; and through the efforts of the Vicar (the Rev. W. T. Dixon), and the kind assistance of many friends, upwards of £600 has been subscribed, leaving about £200 to be raised. The alterations include the re-roofing of the nave and chancel; and, so far as possible, this has been effected in the case of the nave by the utilisation of the previous roofing, which was of beautiful old oak. The chancel has been roofed with deal. The seating accommodation has undergone a wonderful change, and for the old-fashioned closing pews open seats have been substituted, the useless doors having been preserved and inserted in the woodwork at the head of the seat. New flooring has been laid down throughout, the nave paved with Minton tiles, whilst the chancel and communion are paved with tiles of the same description with encaustic border. The reading-desk and choir-stalls in the chancel are almost entirely of new material, but here and there pieces of antique oak have had a place judiciously found for them. As to the lighting, a new window of Ham Hill stone has been built in the chancel, the one previously existing there being relegated to the vestry. On the south side the windows are glazed with cathedral glass; on the north they are clear. The artificial lighting apparatus, of a suitable and convenient character, was supplied by Messrs.

Petter & Son, of Yeovil. The execution of the work has been effected by local contractors, the timber work being in the hands of Mr. Fane, of Stoke-sub-Hamdon, and the masonry supplied by Messrs. Staple & Hann, of the same neighbourhood. Mr. Mitchell, of Chilthorne, executed the slating and plastering, which is stucco of a bright colour. The boundary walls and paths in the churchyard were also done by Mr. Mitchell, together with the levelling of the churchyard, where a great change is observable through tombs which were formerly almost buried having been raised to their proper position. The whole of the work has been performed in a thoroughly satisfactory and workman-like manner. Among the various gifts in kind presented in connection with the restoration were a pair of very handsome carved oak arm-chairs for the Communion by the Chilthorne District Provident Society, bearing the following inscription, engraved on brass:—"A.D. 1882. A token of love to the Rev. W. T. Dixon, M.A., from the members of the C.D. Provident Society, founded A.D. 1873;" oak lectern, "Presented by the Chilthorne District Branch of the C.E.T.S.;" Bible and Prayer Books by Miss Woolmington; and alms bags, by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Woolmington. Miss Dixon collected subscriptions also wherewith the very elegant altar cloth was purchased, while the service books were obtained by means of a fund raised by Miss Dampney.

Morning service was held at eleven o'clock, when the church was filled to overflowing, and many were unable to gain admission. There was a good attendance of the neighbouring clergy, who robed at the house of Mrs. Trent. Those present, in addition to the Lord Bishop, included Revs. W. T. Dixon (vicar), F. A. Dixon (curate), Preb. Salmon (Martock), C. C. Goodden (Montacute), E. Wynham, A. Phillips, and C. J. H. Locke (Yeovil), J. B. Hyson (Tintinhull), L. H. P. Maurice (Northover), R. S. Bond (Thorne Coffin), G. Dawes (Ash), F. Newell (Chiselborough), R. B. Leach (Sutton Montils), M. Johnson (Montacute), L. F. Burrows, A. Thompson

Vicar, and the lessons by the Rev. C. C. Goodden and Rev. G. Dawes respectively. The hymns were 200, "Great Shepherd of Thy people hear," and 33, "Holy, Holy, Holy," &c., from the *Hymnal Companion*. The Communion Service was undertaken by the Bishop, who also preached the sermon.

His Lordship founded his discourse on I. Cor. xii., 27—
"Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."
Before addressing himself to the subject of his text, his lordship observed that the object of a special service, and of the gathering together of a special congregation on the occasion of re-opening a church after its restoration, was not only and not chiefly to make a collection for the funds. That, no doubt, was a very important object, and he trusted they would not be wanting in that respect. It was due to their zeal, to their love for God and His Church, and to their sympathy for their fellow-Christians, that they should come forward with liberality and with a willing mind to show themselves cheerful givers in a cause in which the glory of God and the welfare of His Church were concerned; and he believed they would not be looked to in vain for what was necessary. There were still between £200 and £300 to be made up in order to meet the expenses that had already been incurred in making that beautiful church what they now saw it to be; and they were now asked to give freely and for the Lord's sake, towards making up this deficiency. Passing on, the Bishop repeated that they had a higher and nobler purpose than this in view in coming together that day. They were not to take advantage of the opportunity for gratifying their perception of the duties that were incumbent upon every one of them, no matter what their age or position, as members of Christ's holy Church on earth, and for acquiring fuller and clearer views of what that Church was, and what was the work she had to accomplish. It was with this thought in his mind he had selected his text. He took it that they had come together to worship in the house of God with one heart, and with one mind, and they ought to enquire in what capacity they had come, and what was their collective and individual qualification. His text would supply the simple answer, "Ye are the body of Christ." The right rev. prelate then proceeded to point out the analogy between the composite flowers and the Church as the body of Christ. He also showed that, as the body had many members, and all the members were one body, so also, as Christians, they were all baptised into one body. But to follow the meaning of the text a little more closely. They knew that in the human body, with its mysterious connection of flesh and spirit—which had baffled the wisdom of philosophers to understand—the various members, such as the senses and limbs, were the instruments by which the human spirit operated to accomplish its purposes.

It was only through the bodily organs that the spirit could give effect to its purposes and accomplish its work and will. So also was Christ's Church the body of Christ. It was through the church that Christ carried out His own gracious purposes. The Church on earth was animated by God's Spirit, and was the executioner of His will. His lordship then proceeded to refer to the practical lessons which the text conveyed, and said that if the Church was to do the will of Christ, every member of the body should be brought in entire agreement with Christ, and every motive should be in accordance with the emotions of Christ's spirit. There must be no schism, no antagonism, no striving against one another; but all must be subdued to the will of Christ. After pointing out the importance of individual effort in carrying out that will, and the responsibility which rested on the Church, his lordship said they had united well together in the good work of the restoration of their church, where they were all in the habit of joining together in prayer and praise, and in receiving the Holy Communion. What had been done in that church had been done not for the good of one, but for the good of all; and he hoped that all had lent, or would lend, every help in their power. But this restoration should be to all of them an occasion of kindling into brighter flame all the latent Church life in their parish. Under the influence of the happy Christian thought that we were all members one of another a new spirit of love and unity should spring up and pervade their whole parish. All strife and jealousy, all discord and disagreement, should henceforth utterly cease from among them, and a loving care for the souls of men should grow up and increase, so that each one should be ready and eager to draw souls to Christ, to confirm the weak, to raise the fallen, and to build up others in their most holy faith. In conclusion, the Bishop expressed the earnest hope that there would be a large increase in the attendance of the adults of the parish at Holy Communion; and urged those who did not now attend to begin at this time of the completion of their church restoration a new life of faith and holiness by accepting Christ's gracious invitation to His holy table. He also commended to their kind Christian consideration the need in which the restoration fund stood of some further assistance.

The offertory amounted to over £21.

At three p.m., another service was held in the church, there being a good congregation. The prayers were read by the Rev. G. Dawes, of Ash, and the lesson by the Rev. F. A. Dixon. The preacher was the Rev. Prob. Salmon, of Martock, who chose as the foundation of his discourse I. Peter ii., 10, "The people of God." Before dwelling upon the words of his text, the preacher referred to the restoration of the church. Would to God that the restoration of their church might be the beginning of a new life to some in that parish who had hitherto been living far away from God! Might it also be the means of deepening the spiritual life in the hearts of many who were now trying to live very near to God. Such occasions as the present ought to be the time for self-examination and fervent prayer to the Almighty; when men should draw near the mercy seat of God and invoke the Divine and spiritual blessing, not only upon themselves and for their own respective parishes, but for the whole Church. The lesson which had been read that afternoon seemed to bring them very near the cross of Christ. And they should kneel before Him in thought and prayer and self-examination, and ask themselves: "Are we living for Christ? Are we living for Him who gave Himself for us—the great Head of the Church—that chief corner-stone of which the Apostle speaks? Are we, indeed, believing people in Christ? Are we offering to Christ the sacrifices of obedient, faithful, loving hearts? And can we be really numbered among Christ's people?" "The people of God" was a very high and a holy title, and one which ought to remind them, not only of the Christian's privileges, but also of the Christian's responsibilities. "The people of God." Did they meet with many of them in their daily walk through life? Let them test the people with the teachings of St. Peter, and see whether they themselves fulfilled the conditions laid down by the Apostle, as proof of their fellowship with God. "The people of God" laid aside all malice, and had about them none of that bitterness which they sometimes heard of even among so-called religious people. "They let not the sun go down upon their wrath," but were ready to forgive even as they hoped to be forgiven. Their religion was real, and they avoided hypocrisy in their life, aiming to be more and more meet for the inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. After dilating upon the other characteristics of the people of God, the rev. gentleman asked if the words they had listened to that afternoon were not heart-searching words for all of them? Were they not brought especially

before them that afternoon as they were rejoicing at the opening of their church after its restoration? Was all that care which was now being taken of the houses of God throughout the land only the outcome of aesthetic taste—only the development of civilization? They hoped and believed that it was something far higher and holier. They hoped that this care for the houses of God was prompted by increasing recognition of that teaching of the Apostle to which they had listened that afternoon. Did not the restored church seem to lift their eyes and thoughts nearer to heaven, to the perfectness of heaven's worship, and help men to present their living sacrifices unto God? The time was, and he could remember it, when their churches were suffered to fall into decay; when there were but few services, the most terribly neglected of all being the Holy Communion. Now, thank God, almost all their churches were restored—restored with loving self-denial—with the best that art and workmanship could afford. There were, too, many more services, and he might say much more hearty services. Men and women were taking a greater part in the work connected with the church in their parishes, and were ever ready to rally around their clergyman and work with him for the welfare of the parish and for the good of souls. After urging upon his listeners the importance of meeting together at the Lord's table and the desirability of praying for the blessing of God to rest upon their labours, the rev. gentleman, in plain but forcible language, asked them to look at their national life, their life in their parish homes, their individual and secret lives, and see if they did not want more singleness of purpose. They wanted more Christian zeal, energy, and devotion. Ought not they, as a nation, called to be a people of God, to exercise more self-denial in caring for the souls of their brethren? The higher

and lower classes must be drawn closer together in the bonds of Christian love. Churchmanship must not be so cold and half-hearted. They must meet the tide of infidelity and atheism when it came upon them, and turn it back, and they must all work for the welfare of the Church of God. There must also be more systematic almsgiving. They must look a little farther than their own immediate parish and home, and think of what was going on in the whole Church of Christ. What were they doing as a Church for the souls of their brethren at home, in the Colonies, and in the heathen world? Thank God greater earnestness was being manifested in the work than ever before, but that was not sufficient. They must all strive to do something more. With regard to the debt of £200 still remaining on the restoration fund, he hoped they would all contribute liberally towards clearing off the deficiency. In concluding, Prebendary Salmon urged his hearers to do more for Christ, and let their light so shine before men that they might see their good works and glorify their Father which was in heaven.

The offertory was then taken, and amounted to £3 18s.

Through the kindness of the Vicar, the parishioners (adults) were supplied with a capital meat tea in the school-room. Nor were the children forgotten, but were supplied with tickets wherewith they could purchase gin, beer, buns, &c., from the C.E.T.S. coffee barrow.

Another service was held in the evening, when the preacher was the Rev. Prebendary Stephenson, rector of Lympsham.