

The Administration Of an Institutional Church

A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE OPERATION OF

St. George's Parish

In the City of New York

BY

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WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND COMMENTS BY
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AND DR. RAINSFORD



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INTRODUCTION

I.—BY PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

THE Church must be a living, breathing, vital force or it is no real Church; and therefore not only all good citizens but especially all earnest Christians are under a real debt of obligation to the Rev. William S. Rainsford for what he has done with St. George's Church in New York. Every serious student of our social and industrial conditions has learned to look with discomfort and alarm upon the diminishing part which churches play in the life of our great cities—for I need hardly say that no increase in the number of fashionable churches and of wealthy congregations in any shape or way atones for the diminution in the number of the churches in the very localities where there is most need for them. If ever the Christian Church ceases to be the Church of the plain people, it will cease to be the Christian Church.

Dr. Rainsford has stood pre-eminent among the clergymen to whom it has been given to prevent this condition of things from obtaining. His remarkable physical and mental equipment, and the appeal that ethical considerations make to him, put him in the forefront of those both able and eager to do the task. He was keenly alive to everything that appeals to men as men, and his broad and deep sympathies made him acutely sensitive to the needs of others no less than to the way in which these needs could be effectively met.

INTRODUCTION

With such an equipment, he took an empty church and filled it. He filled it with the men and women of the neighborhood. He made these men and women feel that whether they were rich or poor mattered nothing, so long as they were Christians who tried to live their Christianity in a spirit of brotherly love and of sane, cheerful helpfulness towards themselves and towards one another. He brought the church close to the busy, working life of a great city. With his strong human hand he felt the throbbing pulse of the people among whom he worked, and he fired their hearts with the spirit that was in his own. As a preacher, as an executive, as a citizen among his fellow-citizens, Dr. Rainsford made St. George's Church the most notable institution of its kind in the world. He did lasting work for social and civic righteousness. Not only New York City but the nation as a whole owes him a debt of gratitude for his moulding of American citizenship in the form in which it should be cast. The kind of citizenship for the upbuilding of which he labored is that which rests its sense of duty to city and country on the deep and broad foundation of the eternal laws of spiritual well-being.

I keenly regret Dr. Rainsford's retirement from active duty, and I welcome this book as giving a record of a life-work full of inspiration for his fellow-men. To Dr. Rainsford can be applied the words of the German poet:

" Wer nicht gelitten, hat nur halb gelebt;
Wer nicht gefehlt, hat wohl auch nicht gestrebt;
Wer nicht geweint, hat halt auch nur gelacht;
Wer nie gezweifelt, hat wohl kaum gedacht!"

Theodore Roosevelt

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, D. C., April 7, 1906.