

WOMAN'S WORK IN THE CHURCH.

Extract from a paper read before the Ladies' Guild of All Saints' Church, and St. Agnes' Altar Guild, by the Rev. B. W. R. Taylor, Rector of Riverside, California.

The self-denying labors of earnest Christian women for advancing the interests of the Church of God is no new thing. Women have always been foremost in the exercise not only of faith, but of good works. They have often borne the banners of the Church to victory, where men have thrown them down disgraced and defeated. And so it is not to be wondered at, that very largely to them does a parish priest look for aid and co-operation when the men of the Church are engaged in purely secular labors. To enlist the service of women in the work of the Church various schemes have been from time to time set on foot, and those which have proved the most successful are the ones handed down to us. Occasionally some novel method is set on foot, but I should be uttering a calumny against the gentler sex were I to intimate that they are induced to labor for the advancement of the Church chiefly by the attraction of novel methods. In the heart of every true woman, whose deeds are not formed by Rider Haggard, and the Duchess, and whose thoughts soar beyond lawn-tennis and five o'clock teas, there is implanted a stern and unerring sense of duty, and it is simply in discharge of that duty that women are always to be found who will give of their time, their means, and their abilities, to advance the glorious gospel of Christ. Women are more honest than men, as a rule, hence their conceptions of duty invariably bear the fruit of works.

The idea, and the discharge of duty should obtain among all true daughters of the Church, for the possibilities of her doing the work of the Blessed Master are terribly lessened by the apathy, neglect, carelessness, indolence and selfishness of those who are only too willing to get all the spiritual advantages they can out of her, without giving her—not an equivalent, for the grace of God cannot be measured by equivalents, but—some return for the benefits they receive. In a word these people say as the Pharisees of old, as they gladly snatch at the privileges of the Church: "It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me."

Truly interesting it is to note how often the weary Saviour found loyal, noble, and true women to comfort and sustain His humanity in the most trying moments of His life! The quiet home of Mary and Martha on the green hill-slope of Bethany was often his resting place; the penitent who washed His tired and travel-stained feet with the precious perfume, and wiped them with her lavish tresses, was His cleansed and forgiven friend; His mother and Salome and Joanna often ministered to Him. And to-day as he looks upon us from the right hand of His Father, He sees the Marys and Marthas, and Salomes and Joannas, who are ministering to the Church which He has purchased with His own precious Blood.

The work of women in the Church may be divided into three classes. 1st, Manual work. 2d, Social work. 3d, Spiritual work.

FIRST.—Manual Work. This can be done by sewing guilds, etc., the object of which is to give a certain portion of one's time to making articles for sale. Once upon a time this was an honored and legitimate method of making money, but lately it has sadly fallen into disrepute. A sale of fancy and useful articles now-a-days must be made attractive by raffles, grab-bags, guessing at names, and dozen

other tricks of decidedly questionable utility. * * In fact the novelty of "bazaars" has ceased, the work in connection with them is much greater than the returns obtained, mistakes are made, misunderstandings engendered, and tempers too often ruffled into angry agitation. I hope the day of bazaars and fancy sales has seen its sunset.

SECOND.—Social Work. In this also women are specially strong, and can be of incalculable strength to a parish. The Church of God is not an institution for aristocratic ladies to walk in and out, and to elevate their noses at those who are strangers within their gates. Many and many a time has my heart pained me as I have seen strangers looking for a welcome from some one in the congregation, and look for it in vain. Now I deprecate conversation in the church; one should never converse in the House of God except in a whisper; but yet after the service is ended there is no reason why the regular attendants of the church should not go to the strangers in the vestibule of the church, and bid them welcome in the name of the Lord; other bodies of Christians do so, and we might well take a leaf out their book. . . . In this connection comes in parochial visiting, in which duty ladies can be of much service in finding out strangers, calling on them, and notifying the Rector of their advent. Among the denominations, church connections are formed to a great extent among those who accord the stranger the heartiest social welcome. We regret of course that this should be so; but until the masses are educated up to look on the Church of God as a Divine Body, to which their loving obedience is due, they will "unite" with whichever sect best suits them. Such people as these we must meet on their own ground, welcome them in their own fashion, and having gained a hold on them, educate them up to the Church standard. . . . I know of many cases where whole families have been brought into the Church by a little kindness and attention, and they oftentimes prove most useful members.

THIRD.—Spiritual Work. I have put this last, because it is the highest and noblest work. It means visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. It is the most Christ-like of all, for He came "not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." For works of this kind, woman is pre-eminently fitted. The tender heart full of melting sympathy is hers. The gentle hands, whose very touch seem to alleviate pain, are hers. The noble devotion which prompts a true woman to sit at the bed-side of the sick, night after night, and never tire of her ceaseless watch is surely a devotion which manifests the grace of God in her heart. Oh! if woman-kind would only realize how much stronger is their influence at the bedside than as lecturers and preachers! When the political platform or the pulpit is mounted by women, it seems to me that they lose that retiring modesty which is essentially the precious jewel of womanhood.

Thank God! in one sense we recognize the ministry of women whether they make garments for the poor as Dorcas did, or whether they are "sisters" as was Phoebe. Who, having read the life of Sister Dora, can fail to form some conception of the ministry of women? On the field of battle amid the dead and the dying, in the hospitals and slums of plague-stricken cities, and in the dirt and filth of the vilest abodes of humanity, there women of the Church are found, banded together as Sisters of Mercy, cleansing, elevating, ennobling, purifying everything around them. When the plague-stricken city of Memphis, Tenn., appealed to the men and women of America in God's name, a band of these noble sisters of the Church taking their lives in their hands, and commending their souls to God, entered that doomed city, and left it not until the last case of the plague was recorded. Clad in the sombre garb of their order, they were often

mistaken for Sisters of the Roman Church, and our Church received no credit in the eyes of men. But He who seeth in secret will reward openly, and then the true daughters of the Church will shine forth with radiancy like the stars of heaven. To-day, there are hundreds of Sisters of Mercy in the Church, in England, America, and the British colonies, and only One Eye sees the whole result of their work. We catch but fragmentary glimpses of. . . . I have often wished that in this parish we had a band of women who could always be depended upon to watch at the bed-side of the sick stranger who is away from all friends and relatives. Too many who have come here for their health, die simply for want of better care. Who are there among those who I am addressing this afternoon who will band themselves together for this purpose. There need be no vows taken, no garb assumed. Simply a promise and mutual understanding that in extreme cases your rector may be enabled to call on one or two watchers to do God's work. Having such an organization, would not the work of the Church commend itself to others as being of a practical Christian character? May God put it into your hearts to minister to those sick strangers among us, who are as dear in His sight as we are, and to earn for yourselves the promise which is implied in the words: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

WANTED—"TEACHING BROTHERS."

Some few years before his death, we sat talking with, or rather listening to, the aged Bishop Smith when he quite started us by the statement that he thought the true way to carry the Church into one of our Western villages was to pack it up in the knapsack of a smart, active schoolmaster. He expounded his parable at length, to the effect that a band of "teaching brothers" would be an agency of tremendous efficiency in extending the Church, and we are made more certain of this fact every year that we live and labour for Christ and His Church. Because such a band of devoted men, devoted to Christ and to His Church, untrammelled by family ties, content to live in plainest simplest fashion, and eager to bring to their countrymen the elevating blessing of the ancient faith and the ancient methods, would overcome the two greatest difficulties now standing in the way of the Church's growth in Kentucky, and in almost every Western state. Confessedly our first difficulty is the lack of means to pay the minister who shall devote his whole time to clerical ministration. Already we have in our diocese a number of feeble parishes quite unequal to pay even a respectably starving stipend to a parson, and equally unable to be content with less than the full service of a man. And the towns in the state where hopeful work might be begun had we the means to support the workmen are not to be counted on the fingers of both hands.

Ah! if we could find some men, young men, unmarried men, and content to bear in their youth the yoke which unites to no mate but duty; educated men content to give for a term of years the benefit of their talents to the poor and the ignorant, and at the same time to the Church and her Lord! We feel confident that fifty towns in Kentucky could be named wherein a man of force, and of fitness, could find support in teaching a school.

And, secondly, the class-room would give him access to the minds and hearts of the boys and girls of the community, and his ability to unlook for them the gates of secular learning would so establish his influence that his pupils would even enter with him the doors of the ancient Church, which ignorance and prejudice