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TRACTS BY CANADIAN LAYMEN. 6

No. 10.

LAY HELPERS.

The writer of this tract once organized a subscription in a Canadian city for a Church object; and in the course of his ~~ass~~ ^{visit} he encountered a wealthy citizen, who, after the subject had been explained, asked "Are you a clergyman?" This incident is an example of a general fact: a long course of Protestantism has reduced our Church to a condition of torpor, in which the notion of lay interest in ecclesiastical matters is thought by "our best people" a startling and dangerous novelty; while the clergy themselves too often view with distrust those who are ready to give them cordial support in the maintenance of the Catholic religion.

We are not ignorant that there is a ready reply to this observation. Our opponents will urge the statement, that lay helpers are usually more or less tainted with Ritualism, and must be restrained. On this issue we are willing to meet them.

It is undoubtedly true that, while the clergy are as a rule less Protestant than the laity, those among the laity who are willing to assist in parochial work are generally more Catholic than the average of the clergy. But this circumstance constitutes a palpable argument in favor of our views; it being at once evident that the Catholic instinct inspires in the minds of laymen a desire for the welfare of the Church, which years of Evangelicalism and Mere Anglicanism have failed to produce.

There exists among many estimable people a propensity to ignore differences of belief. This habit, however amiable, is based on the development of charity at the expense of truth. Thus the members of discordant sects, holding irreconcilable tenets, consummate a fictitious unity, and style themselves an Evangelical Alliance. Among us, the pulpit is made to deal with continual platitudes, for the sake of a hollow peace. Both our adversaries and we are well aware that it is high time to wake from such a slumber as this. The differences between us are radical and patent. There is less conflict between light and darkness, than between Catholicity and Protestantism. The war between the opposing forces pervades the whole sphere of the English Church, and we can discuss neither theory nor practice without observing a vital disruption everywhere.

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