

Evangelical Truth and Apostolic Order.

# The Western Churchman

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

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## HOW CAN THE CHURCH BEST RETAIN AN INFLUENCE OVER HER YOUNG PEOPLE?

To a careful observer of the Church and her work, nothing is more apparent than the fact that the Church has to a great extent failed in her efforts to retain under her influence those boys and girls who are over the ordinary school age, but who still cannot be said to be sufficiently instructed in the necessary truths of the Catholic Faith. In bygone days, young men and women, of from 17 to 22 years of age or over, were not above attending

Bible class; but, nowadays, both in regard to secular and religious instruction, our young people consider themselves grown up and beyond the necessity of being taught, almost as soon as they go out into the world and are doing something for their daily bread. Now, what is the result of this? Is it not found that many who come forward as candidates for confirmation are ignorant of all save the most elementary Christian truths? Aye, and is it not found that there is this lamentable ignorance even among the young folks who may be said to belong to the educated classes?

To this sad state of things may be attributed a great deal of the indifference and lukewarmness so noticeable in many congregations. It is true, special classes are held for our confirmation candidates; but these, as a rule, only extend over a period of two months or so, and every experienced clergyman knows that in such a short time, it is not possible to give anything like the requisite training. Besides, the confirmation class ought to be given up to subjects in more direct connection with that holy ordinance; and, before our young people are admitted to such a class, the clergyman ought to be able to take it for granted that they are already acquainted with the first principles of the Faith, and are able to give satisfactory answers to such questions as—Why are you a Christian?—Why are you a Churchman? Now, most people, who are in a position to know, will readily admit that such a standard of instruction is the exception and not the rule.

We want to keep our elder boys and girls under religious instruction; we find it difficult to do so, and we naturally seek for the cause. In doing so, two facts press themselves upon us:—1. The growing tendency to secularize Sunday. Now, without taking up the extreme Sabbatarian line, we cannot help being of opinion that attendance

at one service in the Church has come to be looked upon as the general measure of Sunday religious duties. Perhaps this is a re-action from the rigid strictness of Puritan ancestry, well, if so, such a re-action has to be guarded against, otherwise it may lead to very undesirable extremes. We certainly want the Lord's Day to be a day of joy and gladness, as it is meant to be; but, we must impress upon our young people the fact that this cannot be, if we disregard the Christian sacrament and Christian instruction. 2. Again, the progress that has been made in secular teaching during the last twenty years does seem to make our young people despise the vague, indefinite teaching and dull routine of an ordinary Sunday School. If the Church would hold her own in the world, and extend her influence over the world, she must not hesitate to make use of some of the world's methods. She must be prepared, in dealing with her senior scholars, to copy to some extent, the excellent methods now in use in day schools. Classes must be made more attractive,—the subjects of instruction must be more extended and varied,—and the systems adopted must be far more thorough and orderly.

The first step to be taken is to see that a greater interest is shown in the welfare of individual scholars, particularly about the time when they are beginning to earn their own living—when they are first feeling independent, and free from parental control. Nowadays, when so many agencies are at work to undermine the faith of the young, we must impress upon them the great value of sound Christian instruction. We must see to it that they realize the great responsibility that they have, as members of Christ's Church,—a responsibility which they cannot fulfil without a knowledge of Church Doctrine, Church Polity, and Church History. In this connection, we can hardly speak too strongly of