

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

A JUSTIFICATION OF LAY HELP.

A CLERICAL correspondent of this paper takes exception to the claims of laymen to be made active workers, because "the Church qua Church" has not defined the nature of such works as are usually carried on by lay helpers.

This objection is put frankly, and is therefore much to be respected, for frankness has been disagreeably wanting on the part of those who treat the claims of laymen with indifference; indifference which has masked an hostility very rarely openly avowed. On all matters affecting the Church, wherein both clergy and laity have a voice, it is essential that whatever settlement is arrived at should be reached after friendly discussion, neither side striving for victory, but both with single-mindedness, in a spirit of self-abnegation, earnestly contending for the best interests of the whole Church. In no conference is this spirit so needed as in one touching the question of lay help. Wherever and whenever such a discussion tends to bring clergy and laity into unfriendly conflict, leading to alienation and strife, the outcome will never be for the Church's advantage.

But the attitude taken by many of the clergy in deliberately refusing to consider the question of lay help, is in effect to put themselves into such unfriendly conflict with the laity as will lead to alienation and strife. He whose pleas for a hearing are received with disdainful silence is irritated in proportion to his earnestness. Men will submit patiently to a refusal after being heard; but a man who is silenced, because he is refused a hearing, has only the spirit of a well-trained dog. We, speaking now the mind of the laity, thank the clergyman who tells us plainly that the "Church as a Church" does not recognize the lay sphere of work. We decline however to take this as a reasonable or conclusive reply. For, if we, either clergy or laity, are not permitted to do anything in the interest of the Church, which has not been ordained as our duty "by the Church as a Church," there will be such a cessation of varied forms of invaluable activity as would paralyse the Church. It would take a column to state the things done all but universally in every parish, and in every Church of which "the Church as a Church" has never taken cognizance. Let one instance suffice: are we to abandon our Sunday schools because "the Church as a Church" has never required them to be maintained? Surely such a plea is to destroy the Church's power of free development under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, given for the very object of guiding the life of the Church according to the varying conditions under which she has to fulfil her divine mission.

Such a plea as we are combatting assumes that the Church, at some period in her history, was run into a mould, and must remain forever cast into rigidity of form like a bronze statue. God forbid that men should ever so dishonor the Body of Christ, the living Temple of the Holy Ghost, as to esteem it lifeless,

growthless, as a figure in marble! The Church to-day is no less divinely sustained and guided than in Apostolic days. Diversity of gifts and diversity of operations, are no less the needs and glories of the Church to-day than in the days of St. Paul.

If the Church were a sect, man made and man governed, as are all sects, no harm would come of treating it as bound within the limits of the cast iron mould of its human originator. But the Church of Christ was not man made at a stroke; *it is now being made, the Temple is not finished*. If, then, any labor can be done by laymen, be it hewing wood or drawing water for the artificers, or facilitating in any way the operations of the master builders, that work justifies itself. He who controls the Church has manifestly called out these helpers, and if before our day He has seen fit to leave His ministering servants without the aid of laymen, so much the more should the Church to-day welcome their assistance, as so much the more is the Church to-day glorified by this manifestation of spiritual vitality and earnestness.

Then, too, "the Church as a Church," is made up of clergy and laity, and the Church has never prohibited lay help, nor ever given the clergy power to prevent laymen serving the Church according to their talents, save only in respect to those high functions to which the clergy are ordained. It is overlooked by those who disdain lay help, that never before was the Church so rich in lay influence and power. This wealth the Church has the right to use for she delved the mine and smelted the ore which has filled her treasure house with gold. To tell us that lay help must not be used to-day, because in the past it was not used, is to tell us that the Church has no right to spend for her helping and advancement the very riches she herself has earned and won, because in the past she was poor!

A Church without the genius of adaptability cannot in the nature of things be the Catholic Church whose mission is to all sorts and conditions of men. The Church of England has already suffered blight and mutilation because this faculty became dulled by superstitious worship of the past. If the Church in Canada dowered in these times with the vast resources of lay help, were to lay up in the napkin of indifference the Talents entrusted to her for service, she will be guilty of a folly such as will bring down the Master's judgment.

Happily, though the Catholic Church as a church has no power of organic expression, the chief rulers of our Church, the Bishops, have unanimously and heartily given to the cause of lay help, their approval and sympathy.

A SORRY SIGHT.

WHEN the annals of Canada come to be written in the future, which will, we trust, bring her sons to patriotic love and honor of their mother country, one incident will be universally and bitterly condemned as the blackest stain ever placed upon the page of the history of a free nation. We so regard the resolution moved in the House of Parlia-

ment at Ottawa expressing regret at the execution of Louis Riel. To allow such a resolution a place on the record of Parliament was to make Canada grovel in the dirt with her neck under the heel of the Papacy. Had that prince of cut throats been a Protestant, not a whisper would have been heard on his behalf from the French Papists. But being of French blood and a Romanist, his deeds of wholesale bloodthirstiness are regarded with not mere complacency, but with sympathy. One who struck at the life and honor of Canada found apologists in Canadian legislators! One who set savages to slaughter offenceless settlers found defenders among civilized human beings! Even an ex-Minister of the Crown almost wept as he depicted the sufferings of this tiger-hearted butcher, Riel, when in the grip of the law, while for his victims, against whom Riel had no grievance, who had done him no wrong, for men slaughtered in presence of their wives, for women made widows, for children left fatherless, for parents stricken by the loss of their brave sons, this so-called "Honourable" had not one word of pity! As members of the Church of England, the most scandalous part of this revolting attack on law and humanity, is the fact that the most distinguished member of the Evangelical party in the Church, actually took sides with fanatical Papists in condemning the carrying out of the law on a French Papist murderer. Mr. Edward Blake cried out on a memorable occasion that a stone wall must remain between his friends and those brethren from whom he differed. He paid a hireling agitator, and still helps to maintain him, who breathed out maledictions upon clergy and laity of the opposite school to his own, because of the very remote possibility that some chance advantage might be given to Rome by the folly of some High Churchmen. But the same Mr. Blake who posed as the champion of ultra Protestantism, who still takes that attitude, *when votes are wanted from Protestants, now, when ultra Romanist votes are needed*, entered the foully dishonored ranks of the apologists of a scoundrel upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of many scores of our fellow-countrymen—his murdered victims.

If the Parliament of Canada had been inspired with any patriotism or self-respect, a resolution expressing regret at the righteous execution of a wholesale murderer, a hired murderer, would have been rejected the instant it was read as an infamous outrage on the honor of the Legislature, and a dastardly insult to the law-abiding, order and freedom-loving people of this Dominion.

The scaffold on which Louis Riel paid the just penalty of his crimes, giving only one life, however, for over two hundred victims he had murdered, was the death place of another conspirator against the very life of Canada as a free nation. *When Louis Riel died there expired the hope of the Papacy that a new Quebec would be established in the North-west.* But for this not a tear would have flowed for Louis Riel! In the grave of Riel lies buried this hope of Romish ascendancy in the Territories stained by the blood of Riel's victims. At the