

VALUABLE PARISHIONERS.

PARISHIONERS may be divided into two classes. This division is neither fanciful nor arbitrary, but one which is made by the facts. In every parish the world over these two classes are present.

One class is composed of the faithful people who are a help and an ornament in the church, and whose praise is in the hearts and on the lips of all who know them. They are a precious comfort to the rector and the mainstay of the parish. They are always in their places during divine service unless hindered by some necessity, ready ever with aid, and sympathy, and appreciativeness, and invariably to be depended upon to support every noble undertaking. In them we have the valuable parishioners.

The other class consists of those who, though their names are on the roll of communicants and the list of pew-holders, are of no real account to their parish. Indeed, the parish is scarcely theirs except in a remote sense. Nothing pertaining to the Church arouses their interest. At the best, they are spectators, and not very inspiring ones either. They do not know what is going on, and they do not care. No one expects them to do anything. When parochial schemes and possibilities are canvassed, they—their purses, co-operation, and even their good wishes—are left out of the calculations, just as though the individuals themselves were not in the land of the living. They are never counted upon for any good word or work. If they were only zeroes, the case would not be so distressing, but they are a dead weight upon the parish, and by their example they hamper and hinder the glorious work of saving souls and blessing the world. Let us not characterize them, except to say that they are not valuable parishioners.

Everybody can be a valuable parishioner if he will. It does not require that he be rich, or educated, or a person of elegant leisure. All that is necessary is for him to do what is *easy* within his power.

Valuable parishioners are the faithful and devoted Christians of the congregation. Their godly lives are a blessing to the parish. People who are true to Christ commend the church. They are the best and strongest sort of argument for the existence of God, the Gospel of Christ, and for the American church. Adversaries may attack our arguments, but they cannot convert a noble life. Every earnest Christian is a valuable parishioner.

Churchgoing is one instance of the helpfulness of valuable parishioners. Although they attend divine service in order to worship Almighty God, and hear His Word and receive His grace, their devotion is blessed as a ministry to others in cheering the pastor's heart, in giving a wholesome example to others, and in aiding the church to appear worthy of herself before the community. They love the courts of the Lord's house, and the negligence and indifference of others is not countenanced by them. To attend the services is one of the first Christian duties; it is also a powerful means of helping the parish. They who can do nothing more than this are of large worth.

A valuable parishioner will not stand aloof from the parochial activities. Guilds, the Sunday-school, and perhaps other spheres, offer opportunities for serving God and the church, and the people who assist in at least one of these are of great account. They will not be among the whining or disgruntled number who "never see the rector" and "never receive any notice." Church work renders such complaints impossible, and it makes a cheerful and united congregation. Every one might undertake at least one little task for the church, though it be nothing more than to attend a guild meeting.

Parishioners who are worth having will speak for the church. It is bad manners and a lack of charity to obtrude one's convictions in the social circle, and especially should we beware of introducing matters of religious controversy. But occasions will often arise when the most sensitive propriety will allow and even command us to stand up for the church. If we are to do this, we must be able to explain her heavenly ways and give reasons for her principles. Of course we must understand her ourselves, if we would point out her strength and beauty to others; we should know why we are churchmen.

They who do such things as these are valuable parishioners. Alas, that there are so few in every congregation. If there were more, if all who are nominally Christians were to do their duty, it would not be long till the world would be won for Christ.—*Selected.*

"THE easy path in the lowland
Hath little of grand or new;
But a toilsome ascent leads on
To a wide and glorious view.
Peopled and warm is the valley,
Lonely and chill the height,
But the peak that is nearer the storm-cloud
Is nearer the stars of light!"

CHRIST'S CHRISTIANITY.

JESUS CHRIST was always practical, though oftentimes He said things which seemed to be of a visionary nature. He was practical when He told His church to take care of the poor, and to visit the sick, and bless the unblest, and give joy to him who was sad of heart. Christianity has its own *secularism* as well as its own theology. To hear some persons talk one would imagine that Christianity was only the latest phase of the theological imagination. Christianity has its *humanities* as well as its divinities. There are two commandments in its infinite law, the love of God, the love of man.

There is no religion under heaven so hard-working as Christianity; it never rests. Hindooism has its At Home, Mahometanism makes no proselytes, Confucianism lets the world alone, but Christianity *lets nobody alone*. It is the working religion, the missionary religion, the energetic faith, the revolutionary force. Do give Christianity the credit of being the *hardest-working* religion known amongst men.

I do not mean merely hard-working in any ceremonial sense, but in the largest sense of beneficence, love, evangelization, caring for everybody, never resting until the last man is brought in; not judging by majorities, but judging by individualities; counting every man one, and reckoning that its work is unfinished till the last man is homed in the very heart of Christ.

Our Christianity is nothing if it be not thus practical. He only is the visionary theologian who is so lost in theological speculation as to neglect the ignorance, the disease, the poverty, which are lying round about his very house and path.

GOD'S PROMISES.

A PROMISE is like a cheque. I have a cheque; what do I do with it? Suppose I carried it about in my pocket, and said, "I do not see the use of this bit of paper, I cannot buy anything with it;" a person would say, "Have you been to the bank with it?" "No; I did not think of that." "But it is payable to your order. Have you your name on the back of it?" "No; I have not done that." "And yet you are blaming the person who gave you the cheque! The whole blame lies with yourself. Put your name on the back of the cheque, go with it to the bank, and you will get what is promised to you."