

and when the first fit of earnestness has spent itself, if the priest be not watchful to strengthen the good impression which was made, there may be a speedy declension from the promise of early piety, or a disposition to seek assistance elsewhere. For this reason Bible classes or Communicants' classes are needed after Confirmation; and the clergy must not suppose that their work is ended when there are no more to be confirmed at that special time. The young require clear and definite teaching, lessons of reverence in regard to the service of Holy Communion, which, if they do not get from us, they will learn nowhere else. We must not take it for granted that they have all they ought to know on such matters. It is highly probable that no definite instruction has ever been given them by their parents on the fundamental doctrines of their religion.

Next, I would speak on the Marriage Service. I know of no more solemn rite in the whole Prayer Book than this. The symbolism of the rite taught us by St. Paul; the solemn appeal to "the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed;" the certainty that "those who are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow are not joined together by God," and even if their matrimony be legal, it is not in God's sight lawful; the solemn espousal "till death do us part;" the three-fold blessing; the prayer that they may "live together in holy love unto their lives' end"—these repeated cautions and warnings and blessings invest this rite with a significance and seriousness unsurpassed. And yet, where is there a rite more irreverently handled? I do not speak of the baser sin that is sometimes committed before marriage, but of the frivolousness with which matrimony is undertaken. The absence of religious feeling, especially of religious unity; legality made the sole measure of lawfulness; the money-making business which often forms the chief desire for union; the hasty performing of the rite in a house, where the prayers seem unsuitable, the blessings unfit, where the whole wish is to make the service as short as possible; or if it be fashionable to go to Church, the crowd of irreverent gazers, bent on nothing but criticism on the dress of those who are appealing to God for His sanction and His blessing—when all these signs of frivolity are manifest, who can wonder that the rules and prohibitions of the Church are trampled under foot? that bonds so lightly made are as lightly regarded, and that in a neighboring country (as stated on high authority) one in ten of every