

Circular Letter.

THE CARE OF CONVERTS.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE N. S. ASSOCIATION
HELD AT NORTH SYDNEY, JULY 1ST, 3RD, AND 4TH,
1871. TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—The subject which we present this year for your consideration is *The care of Converts*. By this we mean the duty of instructing, training, and watching over those who are brought into our churches. We wish to show the importance of keeping what we gain—of caring well for the harvest which Divine grace at times gives us.

It is a recognized principle in worldly concerns that to *secure* is as important as to *acquire*; that to *gain* a position is not enough, it must also be *maintained*. Our churches gain many members whom they do not keep. Their names may be retained and their nominal adherence, but their influence and their assistance are not secured. It is a sad fact that many who profess conversion, and unite with our churches, soon after fall into indifference and neglect of duty, and instead of adding strength and influence to the church, become a reproach and hindrance. Our statistics do not represent our actual strength. A church containing fifty members, god-fearing men and women, holy and consistent in their lives, inspired with the spirit of the gospel, awake to the claims of Christ, and actively engaged in His service, is a *strong* church, and its mighty influence must be felt. But there are churches, with a nominal membership of hundreds, which are weak and unsuccessful. The reason is, that many of the members whom they gain, are not encouraged, and guided, and trained in Christian work. They are not carefully watched over, and their spiritual life nourished by the older members.

There would seem to be an idea in the minds of some, that *the one grand object* to be sought by the ministry and the churches is *simply the conversion* of souls, and their ingathering into the church. As soon as this is done, they are to a certain extent left out of sight. They are supposed to be safe, and therefore to need but little further attention. Judging from expressions which are frequently used we would conclude that this view is entertained by many. The addition of members is frequently spoken of as if it were the only sign of Church prosperity; and the truest evidence of a minister's usefulness seems to be, in the opinion of such, the rapid increase of his church. But internal life and health;