

TWELVE HINTS TO CHURCH WORKERS.

(Tract by the Rev. G. R. Wynne, M.A. Rector of Killarney; Author of "Twelve Hints to Churchgoers," "Twelve Hints to Church Choirs," &c.,—(Continued.)

VII. CULTIVATE THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

If the habit of near communion with God is to be the Divine secret of doing your work well, love to those whom you would serve is, humanly speaking, the condition of doing good. Pastors, teachers, visitors, rulers and guides of the young, if you would help, and bless, and save, you must be filled with genuine human sympathy. Love or sympathy must be real. The best imitation, the most artfully contrived style, will not do. It is labour lost, (and worse) to try to appear as if you cared for those for whom you care nothing. We are convinced that next to want of prayer the secret of failure is, oftenest, want of love.

And the love of which we speak is not only that which is called "the love of souls." In the Bible, it is the love of man that is urged. That is Charity, the Queen of Graces. To love your neighbour, body and soul, to care for him as you would for yourself, is the quality needed in a Christ-like worker. He loved mankind. 'He loved me,' wrote one Apostle (Gal. ii. 20). 'He loved us,' wrote another (Rev. i. 5), and a third says 'Love one another with a pure heart, fervently,' (1 Peter i. 22). This is a matter deserving of great consideration, and deep, personal self-examination. True sympathy goes forth to man as man, and sees in every one a fellow-being to be helped in every way. That was the glory of Christ's ministry. He had compassion on the multitude who were weary and hungry, and far away from their village homes at dusk, and He was not satisfied with preaching to them, He also fed them and sent them away. He had compassion on the ignorant and those out of the way. He had pity on the blind and lame, He loved the poor, wandering, and lost sheep. Body, soul, and spirit—all were objects of that glowing love of Christ.

Do you feel your heart cold or devoid of love? You can best warm it by considering your fellow-creatures' wants and sorrows, and sins; thinking much, visiting and observing and speaking with them, listening to their tales of trouble most patiently, and then hastening to relieve so far as you can. Daily intercourse and frequent reflection, with earnest prayer for a loving spirit, will by degrees quicken your sympathies, and when you love your brother, you will stop at nothing in order to help him body and soul. But without love, you labour in vain. Make friends with the poor and ignorant, if you wish to do them good, and depend upon it, friendship is the base on which most Evangelistic work must take its stand.*

VIII. WORK BY EXAMPLE.

Among your equals you may have few opportunities of giving spiritual advice without its being resented. Therefore you must preach by example. The whole tenor of your life must witness for God. How injurious to a child, or a brother, or sister, must it be for one who has, perhaps, come home from an early Communion, or the visit to a hospital, to show hasty temper, or selfishness, or a too free indulgence in eating and drinking, or a habit of satire or gossiping. The home is the first and chief sphere of Christian work, and the principal element of success there is a consistent bright example.

* To visitors I give this caution: Carefully avoid meddling interference with other people's private affairs. Do not force their confidence. Do not dictate to them about the management of children or house. Treat them with respect. Do not lecture them. Do not force your way into their houses if they seem unwilling to receive you. You have no authority to enter their homes save as they please.

To win a careless brother to Christ, should surely be the most intense desire of a sister who knows Him. How can she do it, but by a holy example, by the tenderest love, and by watching long for the best opportunity, sweetly, and briefly, and wisely, to speak a word for her Lord?

We do not think much good can be done by district visitors and Sunday-school teachers, whose spare time is much given to amusement, novel reading, and worldly society. The Lord asks his disciples to 'follow Him, bearing His cross,' and we must take our choice, to please self, or to please Him and do good.

IX. MUCH CHRISTIAN WORK MAY BE DONE BY INVALIDS AND THOSE WHO CANNOT LEAVE HOME.

If they love God and man, they can work for God and man, while laid entirely aside from active life. Hear St. Paul: 'Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers,' (Col. iv. 12). This is a verse deserving profound attention. Were Christian labour only the skilful bringing to bear of holy word and example on those who need reformation, so as to win them by natural means, there would be no need for intercessory prayer. But intercessory prayer takes its stand on the fact that Christian grace is supernatural. It is not by wise and good influences and words alone, but by the power of God acting through these or other means, or directly, without means, that good is done; and the Church's spiritual influence extended. This is what gives its reality to intercession, the most spiritual of all Christian agencies. It demands more faith, and patience, and, perhaps, more love, than any other form of Christian activity.

But this is a work which can be done, and done even best, by those who can do no other. On the couch of an invalid, or in the seclusion of home, intercession may be daily used, and all the help of God sought, and not in vain, for those who need spiritual conversion, or building up in their faith.

May we not ask every minister of the Church to urge on his people the great reality and use of this form of Christian effort?

It is a great help in the practical carrying out of this work to keep a list of names, or objects, for which we feel bound, or disposed to pray; earn to make frequent use of it, lest the infirmity of memory rob those for whom we have determined to pray, of the help we might give them.

X. WORK HEARTILY ON CHURCH LINES.

In some places it is thought to savour of ecclesiastical bigotry to be a zealous and hearty member of the Church. To be a 'Protestant,' or to be a 'Christian' is enough. To 'hold out the right hand of fellowship' to any and every one who tries to do good is considered an essential mark of possessing the Spirit of God. In this tract we have not one word to say against any particular form of dissent, or of what is called 'undenominational religion.' Our object is purely a practical one, and we believe that a Church worker will do most good by keeping to Church lines. If he be a member of the Church of England, or of Ireland, his influence should be not only to benefit individuals, but to benefit, to strengthen, to extend the Church to which he belongs.

The Church may have its faults and failings. If it possesses the boon of fixed forms of worship, formalism may, perhaps, find better shelter undetected in the use of those forms than in an extempore service. If it has Creeds, and Orders, and Holy rites, there may be less facility for 'sinking our differences,' than is felt by those who have none. But for all the cry of formalism and of bigotry, we may well thank God for the barriers against colourless religion and vagueness of faith, which the Church system supplies. Let us be hearty in our support of the Clergy of The Church, hearty in joining in her services, both on Sundays and on other

days when the Church is open. Office-bearers of all kinds, churchwardens, and choirs, and teachers, and visitors should be very careful to support the Clergy in this way.

Workers should form a united band, with their parish clergyman at their head. It is for the best interests of both, and of all, that they should keep well together. It may savour of bigotry to give the advice, but we give it all the same:—avoid the gatherings and prayer-meetings of those who hold aloof from our Church Service. If they have a reason to decline our worship, you probably have better reason still to refuse to identify yourself with theirs. Do not promiscuously circulate tracts and magazines, whose tendency is to promote 'unsectarian religion.' Your clergy in their Communicants' classes and schools try to base their instruction on the Catechism and Formularies of the Church. You are not only not helping, but are actually undermining their influence if you give away all manner of literature, which ignores this time-honoured textbook of Christian instruction.

XI. WORK IN A QUIET SPIRIT.

Closely connected with the previous 'hint' is this. No worship is so quiet and unexciting as that of a well-ordered English Parish Church. There is not the sensational appeal to the nerves of sight and hearing which are made by Ritualism on one hand, and by exciting preaching on the other. But if Ritualists and Methodists in various ways appeal to the nerves, the sober worship, and singing, and reading, and preaching of most of our parish Churches is likely to be more useful and more dear to the steady and quiet mind, which is nourished by the Divine Word and Holy Sacrament, and pours forth its desires rather than its emotional feelings, in well-known prayers.

You go to Church not to be made to feel intensely, but to approach Him who is indeed ever near, with your will, and desire, and thanks. The more quiet the influence, the more lasting the good. Do not refuse a ministry because it is calm,—calmness is strength, if the will be living! And as you worship calmly, so labour quietly. Persevere! use gentle influence, but use it all your life.

XII. BE WILLING TO CEASE WORKING IF GOD SHOULD LAY YOU ASIDE.

Sometimes, and to some natures, it is much harder to do nothing, than to toil. If your heart be much set on accomplishing an object, it may be best for you to be checked in your ardour, and the work given in other hands. Should illness, or accident, or any providential occurrence sever your connection with your Church work for a time or permanently, while you were willing or eager to go on, take this as a sign that God wills you to stand aside. You are only an instrument, and as a carpenter may take up his chisel, or his plane, or lay it down on the bench just as he pleases, so God may deal with you. Think, 'It is for the good of the work in the end, that He lays me aside. He wants another instrument, He wants other work. But He loves me all the same.' O for grace under these trying circumstances, still to pray for the old work, and to conquer all feeling, both of dissatisfaction and jealousy!

Church workers! you work for a good Master. He is infinitely more than worthy of your best labours. And so, too, He is more than worthy of your complete trust. To be laid aside, to grow older and physically weaker, to see the work out-grow us, and pass on into other's hands, will not overthrow the faith of one who believes in his God thoroughly.

He will say 'Take it Heavenly Father, and bless what I have tried to do, and give the same or greater blessing to those who follow me.'

And God will reply, and reply in love, knowing your infirmities, 'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest, when both he that soweth and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together.'