

COMMUNION.

One of the serious obstacles to the progress of an intelligent faith in Christ and His truth, and especially of an intelligent apprehension of the practical duties of the Christian life is the persistent preaching of conversion as the all in all of religion. This is insisted on with perpetual iteration, as though it alone included the whole round of belief and practice. It is considered that a man must pass through a kind of sudden and supernatural experience in order to become in any sense a Christian, and unless he is "converted" in the approved manner there is no chance for him in this world or the next. Doubtless most men need a change in their thoughts, motives and manner of living before they can become true disciples of the Master, but this is not saying that this one thought of spasmodic conversion must be forever dinned in their ears as the beginning and end of religion. There are other things worthy of thought to make our faith the guide and ballast of life. Personal religion in the heart, and in the life, is a growth, an education, a discipline, a training, and we need to be gathering spiritual materials every day from the dawn of intelligence to the end of life; from the Bible, by prayer, by studious meditation, to make the most of life here, and to dress our souls for entrance into a better and purer world. By this means we have a basis of knowledge, a basis of truth, upon which inward experience and outward acts may rest. Then a man is furnished with the requirements that life brings, strength to resist temptation, to subdue the passions, to conquer self and selfishness; grace to warm the affections and quicken the sympathies; and wisdom to toll and live the truth, to say the right thing at the right time, to be strictly just in all his dealings, and to live out a white, honest character, that will be better evidence of his conversion than false talk about the "state of his soul."

The result of this continued insistence on this one idea is that it leads men to think that by some mysterious process they have been made over so as to be above the ordinary temptations and frailties of mankind; and having "got religion" they imagine they have got so much that it will carry them along without any efforts of their own, nor do they suppose that their religion has anything to do with right living, with honesty, truth and fairness as the world goes: like the woman who announced that she had arrived at "perfection," and proceeded deliberately to cheat her tradesman. And another more disastrous result is that this thing all their lives are waiting for an "experience" to come from above, under an impression that they have nothing to do, and can do nothing toward coming to a knowledge of the Saviour.

So they wait all their lives for a vague, indefinite thing that is made to take the place of a right faith and life, and either imagine they have been left out of the elect, and are not to be converted, or, like some hard headed man of the world, conclude that the whole business of religion is a sham. A Methodist minister reporting his work in the slums of London, says: "One who has had a widespread experience for twenty years may be allowed to say that the more striking a conversion is the less likely it is to be abiding. To rest from a prodigal life is a good investment, but to prevent such a life is a better investment still. By steadily influencing the young, by persuading them to take the right turn at life's transition time, we are avoiding the necessity for a startling awakening for the future."—*The Church News*.

Help me, dear Lord, from day to day,
"To live more nearly as I pray."
And lest e'en then I live for nought,
Teach me to pray just as I ought.—P.R.N.

HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

FROM THE MORE REVERENT SOLEMNIZATION OF HOLY MATRIMONY.

[*Drawn up by a Committee appointed by the Chapter of the Rural Deanery of Rugeley (Diocese of Lichfield).*]

I. The reverent celebration of the service must depend chiefly on the spirit in which marriage is generally regarded. It is, however, to be feared that there is a general tendency in the present day to look at holy matrimony as little better than a human contract. Every effort should therefore be made to get people to take a right view of that holy state. This will best be done by teaching the young, from their earliest years, to remember that marriage is a Divine institution, and by taking due care that the office of holy matrimony should always be solemnized with fitting reverence. Children in their school days should be taught that wedded life is a most pure and blessed state, instituted by God, and hallowed by Christ. All light speaking and jokes about the subject should not only be discouraged, but made to appear, as they really are, of the nature of sin. Every means should be taken to improve the tone of public opinion in this respect. The clergy should speak plainly on these matters, both in private teachings and in public ministrations. They might well do this on the occasions when the Church refers to marriage in the lessons, &c., e. g. second Sunday after Epiphany.

II. Nothing would be more likely to stop the growing practice of marriage before the Registrar than clear, definite teaching on the sacred character of holy matrimony. Where, however, a civil marriage has taken place, it should be explained that God's blessing ought to be sought through the ministration of the Church, and the Marriage Service should be used; though, of course, no entry could be made in the Parish Register. It might be found well to keep a separate register for such marriages.

III. When notice is given of an intended marriage, the parties might profitably be advised to read over the service carefully; and such a book might be put into their hands as "The Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony, with Explanatory Observations, by the Rev. G. Venables (Wells Gardner, price 1d.), or "Thoughts for those about to be Married" (S.P.C.K., No. 1,972, price 1s. 4d. per 100), or "The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony, with introduction and Notes," by the Rev. E. L. Cutts (S.P.C.K., price 2s. 6d.).

IV. The following suggestions may be found helpful towards making the service itself more reverent and impressive:—

1. The church should be in decent order; coverings removed, &c. Where varied altar cloths are used, the Holy Table should be vested in white, and fresh flowers placed there on.

2. Those who come merely to gaze, should be invited to enter the church. Where it can be so arranged, some of the church helpers might be asked to interest themselves in this, as well as in the seating of the congregation and providing them with Prayer-Books, or forms of service (S.P.C.K., 16s. per 100), or cards.

3. The clerk, or other church helper deputed for the purpose, might meet the bridal party at the church door, and give them instruction—

(a) As to their position—the man on the right hand of the woman.

(b) As to taking off their gloves.

(c) As to having the "ring" and "duty" ready.

(d) As to the joining and loosing of right hands.

(e) As to the giving away the bride.

(N.B.—It might be well for the clerk to be

provided with change, and an offertory envelope, in which to enclose "the duty to the priest and clerk," so that it may be placed with the ring, on the book at the right time, as the rubric directs.)

4. The officiating minister should be in readiness to receive the bride and bridegroom as they come up the church.

5. As the Rubric provides that the persons are to be married "in the body of the church," it is evident that this part of the service should take place in the nave.

6. Before the service is begun, the minister and people should kneel in silent prayer.

7. In repeating the vow after the minister, when the bride and bridegroom are not using their Prayer Books it might be helpful if the minister were to show his book—the better to teach them the words that have to be repeated.

8. Both the "ring" and the "duty" should be laid by the bridegroom upon the book. (The money, if enclosed in an envelope as suggested, might afterwards be placed between the leaves of the book, or received in an offertory bag and then laid on the book.)

9. The "man" and the "woman" should be instructed to remain on their knees from the prayer, "Eternal God . . ." to the conclusion of the blessing.

10. In the latter part of the service, only the "man" and the "woman" should follow the minister when he goes to the "Lord's Table," and kneel by themselves at the altar steps.

11. The psalm ended, the minister might first say, "Let us pray," before the Lesser Litany.

12. At the close of the service, a practical address might be given on the duties of man and wife, as suggested by the Rubric, with an earnest exhortation to the newly married persons to receive the Holy Communion at the earliest opportunity, if there is no celebration immediately following. If there is a celebration at the time, the address should take the place of the sermon in that office.

(Suitable addresses will be found at the end of the Rev. G. Venables' book (see above III.) or in Bishop How's "Pastor in Parochia.")

13. When there is no Communion, it would much conduce to the reverent conclusion of the service if all present were invited to kneel down, and the office finished, as is often the custom after an ordinary sermon, with a Collect and the Blessing.

14. When practicable, it would be well to arrange for the help of an organist, to play a voluntary both before and after the service; and hymns might be introduced, even should there be no choir. Suitable places for such singing would be, at the beginning of the office, as well as before and after the address.

15. The objectionable practice of throwing rice in the church or churchyard should be discouraged; nor should any demonstration be made which would disturb the solemnity of the occasion.

The ancient custom of strewing flowers might advantageously be encouraged.

16. The following might be found useful to be given in the vestry:—"Heirs together of Life," by the Rev. Capel Care S.P.C.K., No. 2,154, price 1s. per 100; or a "Memorial Card," which may also be had from S.P.C.K.—*The Family Churchman*.

GYPSY CHRISTIANS.

A little occurrence which indicates the hold the Church and her ways pressed upon those who have received Her nurture, befell the Assistant a few Sundays since. A few weeks ago two families of gypsies wandered into Omaha and pitched their tents in the bottoms, near the river. One of the children, a little girl baby, sickened and died after a short illness. The people, strange to say, were communicants of