

DANGERS OF LAY HELP.

THE extensive use now made of lay agency in Church work has brought into prominence certain evils which, although predicted and warned against, seem not to have been thought of sufficient moment to be provided for. Some years ago we drew attention to this matter in a series of articles on lay help, in which we narrated certain experiences of a disagreeable nature that clergymen had met with, who had given their laity freedom to carry on work such as they may be entrusted with. It would, indeed, have been strange had this new departure not developed some form of danger, for "the trail of the serpent" is over all things human and all divine when administered by man.

The particular one to which we would now draw attention, is that which arises from placing missions under the almost absolute charge of one lay reader. In most cases a layman who undertakes such a duty is so full of zeal as to be naturally anxious to make his work a success. He is placed in some remote part, usually of a large parish, where pastoral oversight and other duties cannot be fully given or discharged. In this narrow sphere a young layman by energy and devotion may soon compass results that the parochial clergyman could not achieve, as a small patch of garden may be worked easily to the highest pitch of cultivation by absorbing one gardener's time, who if given a large farm to tend could not anywhere be made to show such productiveness as the garden plot. While then this success may seem most satisfactory for a time, in the long run it may be injurious even to the small field that has been so well worked.

It is but natural that people become attached to the layman who has been faithful in such a mission. This personal regard for the missionary or lay reader leads them invariably to look upon the services he conducts, and all his peculiar and loose ways of working, as far better than those of an ordained pastor who, being under the bonds of his priestly office and vows, is thereby compelled not to court popularity but to be faithful as well as diligent. This tendency of lay missions to gather the flock around a layman who has no responsibilities, who in the very nature of things cannot have permanent oversight of them, has again and again brought into parishes most painful divisions, and such local jealousies and strife as have proved disastrous to the peace and growth of the Church. When under such circumstances a layman is removed to make way for a resident clergyman, the attachments formed to the lay reader become a highly disagreeable and unjust hindrance to the pastor. Odious comparisons are rife, preferences are expressed for the layman's person, manner of reading the service, preaching, and all his ways of working. However earnest, however well adapted to the sphere, however diligent, gentle, and wise may be such a clergyman, he feels that his people resent his coming, he finds that his flock does not respond to his appeals for sympathy and aid, because the lay reader who has gone has

alienated their affections from the Church to himself.

We have seen missions closed because laymen were so selfish and wicked as to be making their success in a mission a trouble to the parish. We strongly condemn then from what we have seen as well as from sound principles of Church order, the placing of any mission wholly in charge of any lay reader. Such missions as laymen may help in should be kept strictly under the watchful eye and governing hand of the parish clergy. There should no chance be given for the people to look upon a lay reader as their pastor. Any layman who is seen to be working to secure such recognition should be summarily withdrawn, especially so for his own good.

There are missions in Canada where ambitious and raw young laymen, full of ill-regulated zeal, are preaching their own discourses, managing parish affairs, presiding at parish meetings, visiting daily, and in every way possible teaching the people that all the functions of the ministry for which they care one jot, can just as well be discharged by a layman as an ordained clergyman. This is not only wrong to the Church by breeding practical dissent, but is injurious to the cause of lay agency, it is also a grave injustice to those laymen who are happy and content in filling the position of lay assistant with honorable regard to the interests of, and ready obedience to, the parish clergy. A mission once filled by a layman who assumes clerical habits, and ways, and powers, is certain to go all to pieces when placed in the care of another layman, who faithfully confines himself to his sphere. A parish never receives an ordained pastor with that loving reverence and cheerful obedience which those give whose minds have not been disturbed, and affections alienated, by such a lay missionary as we have pictured.

It would be incomparably the safer plan to arrange that lay readers shall never have sole charge, but if necessity compels such an unfortunate plan, then such missions should be served by lay itinerants. We very much fear that the lay reader's license is much too wide in scope, and is being made to include certain functions of the ministerial office much to the confusion, scandalizing, and grief of our loyal and right-minded people.

THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE.

THE archbishops, bishops metropolitan and other bishops of the Holy Catholic Church, in full communion with the Church of England, 145 in number, all having superintendence over dioceses or lawfully commissioned to exercise episcopal functions therein, assembled from divers parts of the earth, at Lambeth palace, in the year of our Lord 1888, have issued an Encyclical letter which deals with a large variety of topics. We cannot think that any one of these solemn utterances will produce much practical result. On the question of Temperance the Bishops while giving heartiest good wishes to the efforts against intemperance, censured the use of language which "condemns

the use of wine as wrong in itself," and disapproved of the substitution of other liquid than wine in the Holy Communion. The movement against impurity was warmly commended, and the increase of facilities for divorce condemned. A strong protest is made on behalf of a better observance of the Lord's Day. The Bishops say "the due observance of Sunday as a day of rest, of worship and of religious teaching, has a direct bearing on the moral well-being of the Christian community. We have observed of late a growing laxity which threatens to impair its sacred character. We strongly deprecate this tendency. We call upon the leisurely classes not selfishly to withdraw from others the opportunities of rest and of religion. We call upon master and employer jealously to guard the privileges of the servant and the workman. In "The Lord's Day" we have a priceless heritage. Whoever misuses it incurs a terrible responsibility."

In regard to Socialism the letter speaks wisely: "Intimately connected with these moral questions is the attitude of the Christian Church towards the social problems of the day. Excessive inequality in the distribution of this world's goods—vast accumulation and desperate poverty side by side; these suggest many anxious considerations to any thoughtful person, who is penetrated with the mind of Christ. No more important problems can well occupy the attention—whether of clergy or laity—than such as are connected with what is popularly called Socialism. To study schemes proposed for redressing the social balance, to welcome the good which may be found in the aims or operations of any, and to devise methods, whether by legislation or by social combinations, or in any other way, for a peaceful solution of the problems without violence or injustice, is one of the noblest pursuits which can engage the thoughts of those who strive to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Suggestions are offered in the report which may assist in solving this problem."

The watchful care of emigrants is urged so that they be kept in touch with the Church, and protected from the dangers that beset their path.

The letter has next a long deliverance on "Definite Teaching of the Faith," which we publish apart. The next topic is "Mutual Relations" which deals with the necessity of better regulations in regard to interchange of clergy.

On the difficult question of "Home Reunion," the Conference contented itself with laying down some broad principles which have excited much comment, far beyond what to us seems justified by the language of this historic Encyclical. We give the words of the Bishops in full up to the point where the address leaves general principles to deal with their application to other Churches.

"The attitude of the Anglican Communion towards the religious bodies now separated from it by unhappy divisions would appear to be this: We hold ourselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference with any of those who may desire intercommunion with