

HINTS WORTH ATTENDING TO.

After some strictures, not applicable to our congregations on this of the "Pond," a "Roving Commission," writing to the "North British Daily Mail," regarding the "Lapsed Masses" goes on to State:

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There are, alas: too good grounds for the charges laid at the doors of churches, and individual members of churches with regard to their indifference and incivility to the "lapsed members." Those who by the grace of God have been kept from falling should exercise toward their fallen brethren and sisters, the spirit of their Master who had compassion on, and helped the 'fallen' to rise. 'Tis but too common for christians to turn up their noses in disgust at the *swine smell* of those who may have lapsed and strayed from the right path, and gathering up their garments for fear of contact, have been past them, forgetting that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." While frowns, haughty looks, or indifference may hurry the "fallen" to inevitable ruin of body and soul, a hand outstretched to help, a kind word gently spoken, and christian sympathy frankly and cheerfully given would rekindle hope and be a mighty lever to raise them again to the paths of the just, and reconcile them to "Him that is able to keep them from falling."

Let the reader ask himself what is the treatment of visitors who come for a day to his own Church. Should the stranger ask for a seat of the doorkeeper, this functionary will likely in the first place take stock of his attire, and having estimated him on this basis, will pop him into a corresponding pew, from which he will come out at the conclusion of the service at least as much a stranger as when he went in. An office-bearer told me that the other Sunday when he was at the plate, four separate individuals, evidently of the lapsed class, came hesitatingly up the front steps, requested a seat, and were handed over to the doorkeepers. When they had been accommodated with seats for the service the Church's duty towards them had ceased. Speaking generally of the three great Presbyterian bodies, there is no organisation for keep-

ing hold of people who thus place themselves within the range of the Church's influence. It may have cost these people such a struggle as few Church members ever went through to venture once more into a respectable assembly; their act may be the result of a resolution formed tremblingly and kept in spite of powerful drawings in another direction; but what of that? They find that though they have taken the first step towards reformation nobody cares a straw about it, and that they are quite welcome to slip quietly back again if they feel so inclined. I have purposely said "the three great Presbyterian Churches," for I am aware that in the E. U. and Wesleyan Methodist communions a different system obtains. In Morrisonian Churches the office-bearers provide seats for strangers, and would not think of letting a visitor go without telling him that he would be welcome back again. And what is the result? Their membership consists mostly of working people, and the average attendance is the highest in Glasgow. Again, in the Methodist Churches, the hand shaking and kindly inquiries that go on previous to and after service are a sight to see. The experience of these two communions is strongly in support of the inference that if their example had been earlier followed by the Presbyterians the number of the lapsed would not be so great to-day; and if it were adopted now their numbers might soon be diminished. What is the idea of the character of the Church held by most members and adherents? Is it not that it is an institution into which they pay so much for the privilege of attending worship and hearing sermons on Sunday? Every year it has been becoming more of a purely ecclesiastical institution for the benefit of ecclesiastics primarily. So far as the action of the ministers and office-bearers can be taken as a guide, it would seem that the natural order of things has been reversed. The new creed seems to be that the people exist for the sake of the Churches, and not the Churches for the sake of the people. The predominant feeling in the mind ecclesiastic was well expressed by a clergyman in an adjacent burgh lately. A congregational meeting was called for a special purpose, and only some half dozen turned up. To