

Temperance Column.

THE INDIRECT ADVANTAGES OF THE C.E.T.S.—Continued.

(From "Temperance," New York.)

Designing men have endeavoured to alienate the labouring classes in England from the Clergy and the Church, trying, with this object in view, to persuade such classes that the Clergy are indifferent in their temporal welfare. But, by the hearty manner in which so many of the Clergy have thrown themselves into the temperance work, their poorer parishioners have learned how sincerely anxious they are, not only for their spiritual good, but for their bodily health and comfort. No Society has so many meetings, nor can be assured of such good attendance on the part of working men and women. In some parishes, such meetings are the chief—if not the only—means of drawing all the public together in a neighbourly way. They thus afford the Clergyman opportunities of becoming so well acquainted with his people, and of mingling with them in a social and intimate manner, that they imperceptibly lose their dread of, or prejudice against, him, and learn that he is, what in most instances, according to my experience he proves himself to be, their best friend.

Thus it is that the C.E.T.S. has done much to establish friendlier relations between the Clergy and their poorer parishioners especially.

Then, again, the very frequency of the meetings to which I have referred requires some effort to keep them from proving dull. Variety is given to them by a succession of new speakers, and these, in many instances, are the Clergy and laity of the neighbouring parishes. It is quite remarkable how many effective speakers have been, one might say, manufactured through this agency. Nothing, perhaps, has so led to that improvement in extemporaneous addresses, particularly among the Clergy, which is now very evident throughout England. Sometimes, too, the proceedings are varied by musical or other entertainments. To furnish these, the choir and other members of the neighbouring parishes are impressed into the service. Not infrequently several contiguous parishes combine in an open air-meeting, or fete, or at their anniversaries. By all these means an intercourse between fellow-churchmen has sprung up which never existed before. They have become better acquainted with each other individually and with each other's parishes. They have been made to take an interest in their various undertakings, and thus to have a wider view of the Church than would be possible if their knowledge of her had been confined to their own parochial boundaries.

So the C.E.T.S. serves indirectly to give its members a more comprehensive idea of and sympathy with the Church's life and work.

The necessity for more lay help, so as to maintain with spirit the frequent meetings already mentioned, has developed many workers who had hitherto not been known or recognized as such; men and women in all ranks of society, who had in many cases been ready enough to labour, but who had nothing given them to do. Some of the best helpers—both among the rich and poor—whom I met in England, were those who had first been brought to the front mainly, if not solely, through their interest in the temperance cause. And when they had once identified themselves with this department of parochial work, they frequently become most useful in others.

Thus this Society has developed and trained efficient workers for other fields.

And this personal contact with the victims of drunkenness has with many added fervour to their general religious convictions and principles. It has taken them out of themselves, made them feel and show a neighbourly mercy to those who have literally fallen among thieves, and by proving the power of this besetting sin in others, helped them to realize the might and malignity of their own ghastly foes. Selfishness lies at the bottom of nearly every sin. Thus anything that can aid us in ridding ourselves of it is a great blessing. I know of no work that gives so frequently—alas, that it should be so frequently!—an opportunity of leading an unselfish life as the temperance work. No one can engage in it heartily without having his sympathy so aroused as to the whole spiritual condition of those for whom he is labouring especially in this direction, that he will feel the impulse to consecrate himself more unreservedly to the service of God and man.

Indirectly, therefore, the work of the C.E.T.S. contributes to the deepening of the spiritual life of its members.

Even from this limited consideration of the indirect advantages resulting from the work of the C.E.T.S.—and much of what I have written is equally applicable to the American Church Temperance Society—it is easy to see how much indebted to it are both the Church and State. This is true, whether we look at the question from a religious or political standpoint.

And as each individual member of the community gains from the benefit thus inuring to the whole, it would seem to be but the dictate of honesty and self-preservation for each individual member to aid, according to her or his ability, in bringing the Society's work to a still more prosperous condition.

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