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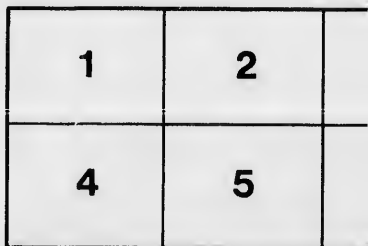
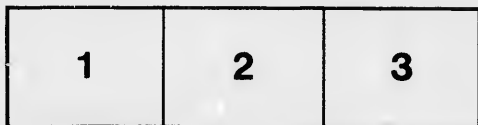
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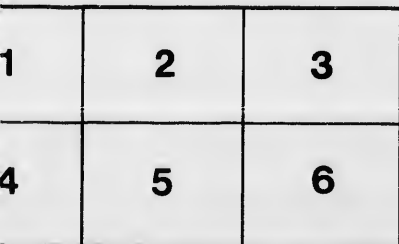
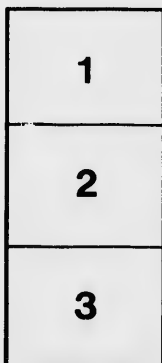
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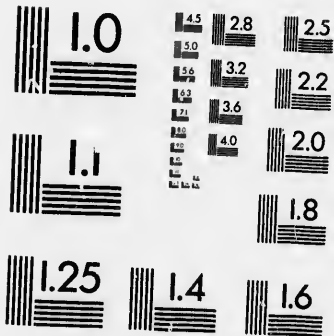
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6  
TRACTS BY CANADIAN LAYMEN. 6

No. 10.

## LAY HELPERS.

The writer of this tract once organized a subscription in a Canadian city for a Church object; and in the course of his ~~ass~~ <sup>visit</sup> he encountered a wealthy citizen, who, after the subject had been explained, asked "Are you a clergyman?" This incident is an example of a general fact: a long course of Protestantism has reduced our Church to a condition of torpor, in which the notion of lay interest in ecclesiastical matters is thought by "our best people" a startling and dangerous novelty; while the clergy themselves too often view with distrust those who are ready to give them cordial support in the maintenance of the Catholic religion.

We are not ignorant that there is a ready reply to this observation. Our opponents will urge the statement, that lay helpers are usually more or less tainted with Ritualism, and must be restrained. On this issue we are willing to meet them.

It is undoubtedly true that, while the clergy are as a rule less Protestant than the laity, those among the laity who are willing to assist in parochial work are generally more Catholic than the average of the clergy. But this circumstance constitutes a palpable argument in favor of our views; it being at once evident that the Catholic instinct inspires in the minds of laymen a desire for the welfare of the Church, which years of Evangelicalism and Mere Anglicanism have failed to produce.

There exists among many estimable people a propensity to ignore differences of belief. This habit, however amiable, is based on the development of charity at the expense of truth. Thus the members of discordant sects, holding irreconcilable tenets, consummate a fictitious unity, and style themselves an Evangelical Alliance. Among us, the pulpit is made to deal with continual platitudes, for the sake of a hollow peace. Both our adversaries and we are well aware that it is high time to wake from such a slumber as this. The differences between us are radical and patent. There is less conflict between light and darkness, than between Catholicity and Protestantism. The war between the opposing forces pervades the whole sphere of the English Church, and we can discuss neither theory nor practice without observing a vital disruption everywhere.

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The Protestant Churchman looks with no concern on the growth of sects, because he considers his own communion a sect, and would claim for it, at most, a titular primacy among them. He accords the name of "Church" to every congregation that four walls contain. He misuses the term "Catholic" by making it comprehend every heresy, and exclude everything except heresy. He accepts for himself the designation of an "Episcopalian," as though he and his fellows possessed a monopoly of bishops.

The Catholic Churchman views the spread of sects with disfavor, because he considers the claim of the English Church to be naturally co-extensive with the use of the English language. He recognizes jurisdiction in no community, except those which hold a Divine commission from Apostolic hands. He therefore looks for the subjugation of every sect, and is content to be thought a fanatic because he believes in the Re-union of Christendom.

Thus the Protestant layman has little inducement to exert himself for the advancement of his Church; while the Catholic is ready to give personal assistance, contrasts the fewness of the labourers with the greatness of the work, and

"Deems naught done, while aught remains to do."

Unfortunately the influence of Erastianism in high places, the wish of the clergy to be "safe," and of the laity to be thought "genteel," and the leaven of unbelief everywhere have been fatal to energy in the Anglican camp; and, while there are laymen in almost every congregation of our community, whose services would cheerfully be given in the cause of the Church, our bishops and priests have no knowledge of the manner of using the material which lies ready to their hands.

Spasmodic efforts have indeed been made, by the appointment of what are termed "Lay Readers" in a few parishes, to supply the want which is felt; but the number of these functionaries is small, and their usefulness restricted in an embarrassing way.

One at least of our Canadian Bishops has contemplated the foundation of an order of "Lay Deacons," who would engage in secular occupations for their own support, who would neither wear the clerical dress nor assume the clerical title, but who would conduct Mattins and Evensong, visit the poor, and preach.

To this scheme a grave difficulty presents itself, in only one particular, but that an essential matter. A Deacon has always been understood to be necessarily a cleric, and a Lay Deacon would be almost as great an anomaly as a Lay Priest. At the same time, the



institution of Lay Readers is found to be inadequate, mainly because their status is uncertain. We venture to propose a solution, derived from ancient usage, which we believe would meet the case. It consists in the revival of the Sub-Diaconate.

A reference to the Liturgy of S. Mark, will show that the Primitive Church possessed, as well as Readers, an order of men classed between Readers and Deacons. By the re-creation of this order, we should obtain a vast accession of strength, multiplying our stock of Lay Helpers, and giving them an ecclesiastical status without compromising their secular position. We are confident that the Bishop who inaugurates this reform will soon find himself heading a great movement, the effect of which on the stability of the Church cannot easily be reckoned.

Sub-deacons should fulfill all the functions which we have already named in connection with the *soi-disant* Lay Deacons; and most certainly they should be utilized as preachers. The Anglican mind requires to be disabused of its pet idea, that preaching is somehow a priestly duty. The Methodists, who make much of the pulpit, admit thereto what are called "local preachers," who have undergone no form of ordination; and the wide-spread influence of Methodism is in a great measure due to this fact. When the Protestant sees with his own eyes that a layman may conduct Morning and Evening Prayer, and even preach a sermon, but that he may not offer, or even distribute the Sacred Elements, he may come to think that the author of the "Imitatio" was right when he insisted that a priest is consecrated for the purpose of celebrating the Divine Office.

But we would not be mistaken. We are far from desiderating a greater number of sermons than that which we at present endure. An examination of the Prayerbook shows that "our martyred Reformers" contemplated the delivery of sermons or homilies only at the service "commonly called the Mass"; and we are sure that however those individuals erred in faith and morals, they were wise in restricting the beat of the "drum ecclesiastic" to once a day. The result has proved this beyond the reach of cavil. The laity hate sermons, as now administered, and only tolerate them on account of precedent and decorum. Long sermons they will not abide.

To speak plainly, the immediate reason of this is not far to seek. The average sermon is vamped up out of worn-out truisms. We have heard the question proposed "How is it that men will sit for hours at a lecture or a play, while twenty minutes of a sermon will weary them?" we conceive the answer to be this: that the lecturer

and the playwright have devoted all their talent to the composition of their works, while the preacher has aimed merely at the production of a flat essay, in which Catholic truth, where introduced at all, shall be so discreetly veiled that none but the initiate can discern it. If indeed we could hear discourses as ably handled as an ordinary lecture, fearlessly defending the Christian verity against the attacks of heretics and Associationists, we would gladly listen and learn. As it is, we claim that a distinct pause should be made after the benediction which concludes Mattins and Evensong, to enable those who desire it to come in or go out, before the sermon commences. We know that we are expressing a feeling latent in the minds of laymen from Halifax to New Westminster.

Our object in going to church should be the worshipping of God rather than the hearing of sermons; and the latter should be at all times subsidiary to the former. The priest's work is necessary to the sustenance of the body of Christ; the work of the preacher is merely a useful adjunct. Many a clergyman has every qualification for the priesthood, who cannot preach a good sermon; and many a layman is naturally qualified for the latter employment, whom circumstances hinder from taking holy orders. The Church's mission so far exceeds her present capacity of performing it, that we can afford to lose no manner of effective help. In the rural districts of Canada especially, there is need of teachers who shall instruct the common people in the rudiments of Catholic theology, and counteract the evil influence of Cecilites and Anabaptists. The clergy are, numerically at least, unequal to this task.

It should cover our spiritual rulers with shame, to think that in several Canadian cities there is not a single congregation of sectaries which has not been largely recruited from our ranks. When we say that the assistance of laymen has been at most frigidly tolerated, and that the clergy have often forsaken the poor in order to court the rich, we believe that we have indicated the weakest points of our machinery.

We appeal to those of our Bishops and Priests who have any regard for the Faith once delivered, to extend our borders by a greater care for the poor of God, and by the systematic employment of lay agency in Church work.

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