

## "WORLDLINESS."

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In the judgment of many excellent persons, the Church of Christ is now suffering from worldliness to such an extent as to raise grave apprehension, and call for special notice in prayer and effort. The complaint might mean one of two things, either that the worldly, as such, are pressing upon and dominating the Church, as for example, in carrying against the general Christian feeling such points as the opening of libraries and galleries on Sabbath ; or that Christian people, themselves within the Church, are adopting the style of life peculiar to "the world."

The latter is the subject of complaint, though it is obviously not without some connection with the former, for an undecided and divided Church is not a formidable opponent to her enemies. The prevalence of prosperity, the diffusion of wealth, the adoption of many continental usages, the reception into society of many persons educated to continental ways, may be specified as causes of the relaxation in question.

As a help to just thinking on this matter, the writer ventures to offer a few thoughts which may possibly disappoint some readers (because we are all accustomed to hear "worldliness" blamed rather than defined), but may yet awaken salutary thought in others.

We are all liable, as we learn from faithful friends and sarcastic neighbours, to judge severely those things which we have escaped, and to rate highly the virtues we possess. "The good young man," who neither uses tobacco or stimulants, and has been brought up so, may easily assign himself, or have given him by others, a high place over those who "smoke and take wine," while in the eye of God the smoker may be the better of the two. The good young man may be conceited, mean, vain even of his goodness, censorious, and selfish. A gentleman of hospitable nature and easy means, with a family of young people and a wide circle of friends, keeps a tolerably open house, entertains, and "sees a deal of company." He may be looked askance at, as exceedingly worldly, by his next-door neighbour, who early learnt to economize, and practised the lesson after its necessity had ceased, who never has company, and does not understand such "goings on." Yet the latter may be narrow-minded, cold-hearted, secretly congratulating himself on his prudence and prosperity, and so hard and honest that he is hardly honest. I have been brought up, let me suppose, on the soundest theology ; took it with my mother's milk ; lived in controversial times when the "points" were sharp indeed, and all the lines of doctrine as definite as the ten commandments. I am liable to rate too low my neighbour who grew up under a different *regime*, and who, cross-examined about some of the distinctions familiar to me, would probably say bluntly, "Upon my word, I don't know." Yet he may have a simple, devout, earnest, manly piety, in the sight of God of greater value than mine.

These examples I give, because no one will suppose me to be in favour of tobacco, drink, fast living, or loose religious thinking, and because they illustrate, I hope harmlessly, the position laid down at the beginning of the paragraph.

What is true of persons is true of classes. Among the inhabitants of tenement-houses, there is a good deal of roughness, coarse speaking, rude boxing of human ears, blows even, in bad times ; and some excess of wine, revellings, and such like, unrefined freedoms, and boisterous and unregulated jollity, in good times. These things are apt to be classed very far down in the scale of human worth by the educated and well-to-do, who forget that a bitter word may be as bad as a blow, and shocking vice may be indulged in with great refinement of manner. Mary Ann, whose duties as lady's maid require her to dress and undress her young ladies four nights in the week for external displays, thinks it dreadful dissipation ; while the young ladies think it shocking that Mary Ann will dawdle as she does