

share the same hopes. This is what makes the gatherings of believers attractive. In these days there are many schemes and devices that are calculated to "draw" the indifferent and the careless to our sermons. Many of them are wise and commendable. But every method must prove weak or worthless without the presence of that Christian sympathy which has been and always will be Christianity's chief attraction.

The fruits of the Spirit can only grow vigorously in the warm atmosphere of love. Modern scientific research has shown the modifying influence of environment upon every form of life. Change of environment means a corresponding change in the form of living things. The plant that leaps and laughs into life under tropic suns becomes impoverished and dwarfed under northern skies. The pine in the rich alluvial valley grows tall and straight and stately, but the pine on the "timber line" on the high mountain side is gnarled and twisted and misshapen in its struggle with the tempest and the storm. In animal life the influence of environment is still more manifest. The higher the form of life, the more numerous are the points at which it may be touched by circumstances.

And this is true in regard to the life of the soul. It requires the warm, genial atmosphere of love for its highest development. A chilly, icy air is not friendly to godliness. The difference between a society that is cold and impoverished and run-down, and one that is vigorous and strong and efficient, is largely a matter of atmosphere. To create this Christian atmosphere is the duty of every society.

A Rebuke to Croakers.

AT a recent meeting of the Reformed Church Synod in Chicago a paper was read by Rev. Dr. Keiffer in which he made the following statement, approved by the synod:

"The danger to be apprehended from certain agencies which are slowly but surely revolutionizing the entire social fabric; the absorption of the wealth of the country in the hands of the few, the steady enlargement of the poorer classes of the people, and the gradual diminution of a prospering and happy middle class, the hope of every thriving state; the rapid increase and intensification of all those social and industrial agencies which tend to make human life a burden of despair to the many and a material paradise to the few—all these things can not but exert a baleful influence upon, and prove a constant hindrance to, the progress of the kingdom of Christ upon earth."

The editor of the Chicago *Interior* in a late issue vigorously criticises this statement, and we think his criticism worthy of being read and pondered by every reader of the *HERALD*.

To say that the middle classes are diminishing in numbers and in prosperity is to say what every body who has eyes and intelligence knows to be untrue. Human life is not becoming "a burden of despair to the many and a paradise to the few"—not in this country. That is the raving of the anarchist.

Younger people may not know that the middle classes, mechanics, and other well-doing workmen, now live in greater convenience and luxury than those who were classed with the rich lived so late as fifty years ago. They occupy better rooms, have greater conveniences, eat better food and wear better clothing than the land-owning farmers then did. The hours of labor are one-third shorter, the wages two to four times as large, and a dollar now buys more of luxuries than two dollars then did.

The shoemaker, working in a factory, carries home to his family twice the earnings and four times the comforts that his predecessor working for himself in his own shop could earn. So also of the cabinet maker, wagon maker, millwright, machinist.

But by becoming wage-earners or salaried men, "independence is lost." Every competent and reliable salaried man will laugh in the face of this synod of dreaming theorists. The writer of this knows from experience the condition both of an employer and of an employe. The happier life was that of an employe. It was for the employer to walk the floor at night, while the employe slept. As to independence, no man is so completely his own master as a first-class workman either with hand or with brain—so to speak—hand and brain are counterparts and inseparable. As an employer this writer knows how difficult it is to hold a thoroughly competent man. He is in demand and wanted by from two to a dozen other employers.

"Material paradise to the few!" Built of brick and mortar! Call a big house stuffed full of wood and upholstery and bric-a-brac and painted pictures "paradise!" a cranberry-pie lawn "paradise!" Well, we spend a part of each summer in a paradise that God made, and He is the best landscape gardener in the universe. We do not have to wear any starched clothes—a flannel suit, a belt, a pair of soft moccasins—cost seventy-five cents—a wool hat and four hundred square miles of room. That is paradise. God is not particular about a man's clothes. He is not afraid of tramps. He does not have to put up "Keep off the grass" boards. He says, "My child, make yourself comfortable, wander where you please, do as you please. There is nobody here but Me," and then He goes on with His work in landscape and sky gardening.

We will tell the synod what is the matter with the people to whom "life is a burden of despair." It is that thousand millions spent every year in this country for whisky. It is dime-novelty, and such pernicious apostles of discontent with good things as the Rev. Dr. Keiffer.

Here is the country booming with prosperity, everybody who is willing to work getting good wages. The schools and colleges are overflowing with the children of the "middle classes"—and up yonder on the top of that dead pine sits a raven in his suit of black. He croaks when the sun rises, croaks when it rains, croaks when he has a bellyful, and croaks when he is hungry.