

EDITORIAL SECTION.

LIVING ISSUES FOR PULPIT TREATMENT.

English Workingmen and the Church.

By JOHN BURNS, M.P.*

[John Burns is recognized to-day as the greatest labor leader in the world. From early manhood—very early manhood, for he is not yet forty years of age—he has been interested in advancing the interests of workingmen, especially in the neighborhood of Battersea, London, a labor district, where he lives. It was through his efforts that a beautiful park was created in this section. He is intensely active in urging municipal improvements, and is a great admirer of the works of John Ruskin and William Morris. Mr. Stead, of *The Review of Reviews*, has called him "a municipal statesman." He has some pronounced ideas on socialism, and is a fluent speaker. In personal appearance he is of medium height, strong, well built, with coal-black hair and eyes and a face indicative of strength and determination. In 1886, he was buffeted by the London police for the part he took in the labor riots. Three years later he had become the most popular labor leader of the day. He marched at the head of 100,000 dock laborers as they journeyed through the streets of London, the police clearing the way for them. He is a member of Parliament, a great reader, lives modestly on \$15 a week, keeps up a correspondence of five hundred letters a week, and has never tried to make money out of the cause he is endeavoring to advance. He came to America as a delegate to the trades-union conference recently held in Denver, Colo.]

As to the attitude of the English workingmen toward the Church, it may be said that in many parts of England there are sections of workingmen, like other sections of society, who are interested in and kindly disposed toward religious views. But, speaking generally of the mass of English laborers and artisans, it may be said that a census was taken on this subject some years ago which showed that a very small proportion of this class of people were interested in religious matters; in fact, the aggregate was so small that it induced a number of ministers of religion to divert their attention from a heaven above with the view of inducing men, by exercising their social, municipal, and political rights, to make their present existence a little less of a hell than it is.

I think that, generally speaking, re-

*An interview with George J. Manson.

ligion is losing its hold upon the people everywhere, both in the so-called high and low classes. But it is equally true that those to whom religion has its charms and attractions are perhaps as much interested and as enthusiastic in its behalf as ever they were.

I say there is less churchgoing and less interest in religion than formerly. Religious men, however, reply to this condition of affairs by saying that while religion loses, on the theological and ecclesiastical sides, in the diminution of the number of its adherents, ethical, moral, and altruistic views and sympathies take the place of religion. We won't haggle with them on that question, as to whether religion, altruism, ethics, or morals are the best, so long as whatever view they do hold induces them to work for the mental, moral, and material improvement of their less fortunate fellows in every country.

Workingmen, as a rule, do not go to church because the subdivision of labor, the monotony of many of their occupations, the restless energy which they have to put forth to earn their bread and butter, make an hour's attendance in a church or chapel anything but conducive to patience or temper, which are certainly two important essentials to religious devotion.

Their non-attendance is also due to the fact that the Church in all lands has become too much the appanage of the well-dressed and respectable classes of society. The Church is too frequently a chapel of ease for representatives of the stock exchange, the bank, and the commercial mart. The average workingman has too much of this element in his daily life during the week; he does not want to renew his acquaintance with the same kind of people on Sunday.

It must not be denied, however, that credit is due to many ministers of re-