

principles of Christianity. This monstrous evil, this terrible crime against God and man, against the individual's own soul and body, is the canker at the root of modern manhood. It does not always lead to insanity; it would take a good many lunatic asylums to contain its victims, but while in most cases it falls short of producing actual lunacy, it is to its ravages that very much of the untold misery of human life is to be attributed. Here are the words of Mr. Langmuir:

"It will be observed that the physical causes tending to the development of insanity preponderate in a very marked degree over the moral and mental, and again that debasing and vicious habits predominate largely in the assigned causes of insanity. It is to this lamentable feature of the subject that the attention of physicians and social science reformers must be earnestly directed in order to stem the flood of profligacy and vice that is overturning the reason of so many, and filling our asylums with mental and physical wrecks. It may be, and no doubt is quite true that, in many instances when physical causes are charged with being the exciting factors of insanity, predisposing cause and hereditary taint may have existed, but it is equally true that these conditions might have remained latent and undeveloped, had they not been excited into existence by vicious habits. It is to this great field of preventable insanity that attention may be turned, for while asylums and asylum treatment may do a great deal in restoring dethroned reason or in mitigating its terrible effects, whether the assigned causes be of mental or moral character, it is to be feared that little or nothing can be done with these wretched victims of vicious or depraved passions."

Dr. Carr, the medical superintendent of the Toronto asylum, speaks in still plainer language. So much importance does he attach to this matter that he has had the part of his last year's report which refers to it published in tract form and distributed among the ministers throughout the country. In this year's report he repeats his warring with an emphasis added to it by another year's experience in dealing with the deplorable effects of the evil in question. He condemns a portion of the press for its fastidious silence on the matter, and seems to think that any harm which could possibly arise from publicity is not for a moment to be weighed against the good that might now be effected by unsparring exposure and outspoken rebuke.

#### A FINE EXAMPLE.

OUR churches, of nearly all denominations, have a week in prayer for the Divine blessing on the labours of the present year. Some of them continued the service for several weeks. How much of *real prayer* has there been?—the prayer that desires and therefore asks?—the prayer that lays hold of the promises of God, and believes that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him?" Only He who searches the heart can answer. Let us hope there has been much, and that the earnestness will not exhaust itself with seeking for a week or a month, but that the Lord's remembrancer will "give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The good Nehemiah affords us a fine example of the spirit of a true lover of Zion, and one in down-right earnest in prayer and effort for her prosperity. Most tender and touching are the petitions he presents to the God of Heaven, as he fills his mouth with arguments, and pleads for the opportunity to do something for her restoration (Neh. i.). It was not so much the thought he possessed, as the thought that "possessed him." It shows itself in his countenance. He is sick at heart—with hope long deferred—so that

the king whose cupbearer he is is concerned for him, and demands to know the cause. "This is nothing else but sorrow of heart," he says.

That was God's way of answering his prayer. Many of us have attended weeks of special services without our reaching that *white heat* of intense, restless desire that gained the ear of the Almighty, and secured the coveted reward! And Nehemiah doubtless might have "said his prayers," as many do, long enough before he would have received any answer! "Ye shall seek me, and find me," is the promise, "when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Sleepy formalities, such as we often call prayer, rise no higher than the ceiling of God's house!

#### REVIVAL

THE term "revival" is one that is frequently used now-a-days in some sections of the Christian Church. It is frequently said that the present is specially an age of "revivals of religion," that "revival"—as they are called—are a characteristic feature of it. It is a question, however, whether the word so employed is correctly employed. What is usually intended when a revival is spoken of is chiefly this, that there is a great deal of movement and excitement in a religious community, that large numbers are turned to God, that multitudes renounce their wickedness, and implore divine forgiveness and grace. That is the customary idea. Now, is that the true view of a revival? We think not.

Look at the etymology of the word. A "revival" is a making alive again. It is the restoration of life when it has been lost, or the quickening of it when it has become dormant. It is not the imparting of life for the first time. It is the bringing back of what has been once enjoyed. And so it is not quite proper to say that a revival of religion consists in the conversion of the unconverted. A revival is something that pertains to Christians, and not to non-Christians—to those within the church and not to those without. Still, it is true, that whenever a genuine revival of religion takes place, its effects almost invariably reach beyond Christians, beyond the Church. A revived Christian Church is the one divinely-ordained agency for the saving of men, and the saving of men almost infallibly follows the revival of Christians. But we must distinguish between the tree and its fruit. We must not confound a revival with its consequences. A revival is for Christians, and not for non-Christians.

Now, a revival in this sense is very often needed. There is no law, no ordinance of God, that makes it inevitable that Christians should deteriorate in their spiritual life. There is no good reason why they should lose their fervor, their energy, their activity. It is possible for them to be always advancing and never retrograding. But, as matter of fact, it never occurs that either individuals or communities are always what they should be. Every Christian believer knows of seasons of comparative unfruitfulness and deadness. There are hours when he seems to have gone back altogether, to have lost all that was most

precious and desirable. And what is true of believers personally, is also true of societies of believers. The churches often become formal, and frigid, and worldly. And so there is need of a revival.

Is there not a general need of revival in some directions now? Look at the churches and Christians of our lands. Who will say that they do not need a stronger faith in God than they manifest? Who will say that they do not need a more vivid perception than they now enjoy of Him as a real, living God, a presence ever dwelling with them, a power working in and for them? Who will say that they do not need a deeper sense of their obligations, obligations to their God, obligations to their fellows? Who will say that they do not need more courage, more daring, more enthusiasm, more chivalry in the service of their Lord? Any observant mind—any mind that can see what exists, and compares it with what might and should exist—will readily confess that the standard of spiritual life to-day is very low. It is no lower, perhaps, than it has almost always been. It is higher than it has generally been. There has been a constant improvement. But we must confess that the Christianity of Christ and the New Testament has never been fully incarnated yet. Our actual religion has always fallen far short of the ideal. We need to be revived, to be quickened, stirred up anew.

But the query comes. How shall a revival be obtained? How shall a Christian believer or a Christian Church be filled with renewed life. It must be by the flowing of the Divine life into the human. It must be by the shining of the Divine light upon our darkness. We fear that in our day there is too much attention directed to secondary matters in the Church. The efficiency of the Church can be maintained only in one way, and that is by maintaining close connection with the source of all good, the great, rich God Himself.

There is a great deal of nonsense written now-a-days, about what is termed "The Higher Christian Life." But there is such a thing. There is a fullness of faith, a largeness of love, a highness of hope beyond ordinary experience. But these are reached by use of ordinary means, and in ordinary ways. And these should be reached by every Christian in every church. And they can be reached if every Christian will look up to God in the faithful fulfilment of his duties, great and small, public and private. "Wilt Thou not revive us again?"

#### THE PULPIT AND MODERN THOUGHT.

TO define the exact province of the pulpit is no difficult task if we are content to accept the Bible as the law-book on this matter. There can be no misunderstanding as to Paul's repeated injunctions to the youthful Timothy. He is to take heed unto himself and unto the doctrine. There are certain truths he is to command and teach. He is to keep that which is committed to his trust. He is to "avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." The range of pulpit teaching is wide enough in all reason, but it is manifest there are some things to be avoided. What the ex-