

in the world. It should be inferior to none in mechanical excellence, in artistic illustration and in literary merit. Their magazine need not be exclusively Methodist. It might appeal to the great multitude of all the Churches who would appreciate higher literature of a pronounced religious character. They could draw also upon the literary ability of all the Churches. Such a periodical could discuss all great social, political and economic subjects from a religious point of view, and would be a power on the side of truth and righteousness, a true "soldier of God" fighting against evil everywhere. Its fiction should be on a far higher moral tone than that of even such literary geniuses as Dickens or Thackeray. It is not, we think, to the credit of the English-speaking world that its most popular author is a man who sneered at the unfashionable religion of Ebenezer and Little Salem; who made mission work the butt of his satire, and who glorified the custom of "guzzling" and drinking.

Such a periodical as we are thinking of should call forth literary merit of the highest class in the divine service of moral and religious truth. Imaginative writing has its legitimate purpose, and can accomplish incalculable good in its portrayal of moral excellence and of Christian heroism. Religious writers, endowed with this noble gift, have now almost no vehicle for the employment of their pens. The secular magazines will scarcely tolerate a religious novel, or one with even a moral purpose. These are relegated to the lower literary status and comparative obscurity of the Sunday-school library book. The few exceptions to this rule in the cases of such writers of high-toned moral fiction as Saxe-Holm, Mrs. Amelia E. Barr and Dr. Eggleston, only make more conspicuous the overwhelming preponderance and success of writers like Amelie Rives, Rudyard Kipling, Frank Stockton, Mark Twain, Bret Harte and "Bill Nye," who seem to be incapable of almost any religious feeling or spiritual insight. One of these

successful magazines of the day makes a specialty of a monthly novel, often highly sensational, which fills about two-thirds or three-fourths of its space. Another, recently established, which, by dint of lavish advertising and business push, has reached a commanding circulation, is devoted largely to theatrical and sporting themes. This mental food on which our young are so largely nourished will account in a large degree for the mental alienation of many of them from the Church of their fathers, and the facility with which they drift away upon the sea of fashionable folly, if not, indeed, of religious doubt and unbelief. Often it is read on the leisure of Sunday, and utterly unfits the reader for religious thought or work.

We hope that the Methodist Episcopal Church, at its next General Conference, will grapple with this subject. The United States has an English-speaking population twice that of the mother country from which it sprung, and a far greater proportion of readers than that country. The Methodist Church is the most numerous, most active and aggressive Church in that nation. Before it are opening the golden gates of the twentieth century. Is that Church willing that throughout the illimitable future the higher spiritual and literary needs of its people shall find no better aliment and its literary aspirations no better vehicle than the secular magazines which now occupy the field.

We believe that the Church of the future, in the golden age which shall stretch on through the millenium, will mould the highest thought and broadest culture of the world. Why allow this most important field to be pre-empted by the enterprise of secular houses, and why must Methodist writers and Methodist bishops go to these houses if they wish their books to appear in the best artistic style, and to reach the largest market.

But we may be told the Methodist Episcopal Church *has* tried a monthly magazine and failed. We were about to say it deserved to fail. It seems to have put neither heart