

METHODS AND MACHINERY.

The last fifty years has witnessed, among other things, a great change in the methods and machinery for the support and extension of the Church, both general and parochial. This is visible, chiefly in various organizations for special departments of works. Then, the General Missionary Board constituted the only representative of special duty, in our working system. This has been added to and supplemented by a number of organizations devoted to the interest of other special claims. In parochial work, the duties of the parish clergy are both changed and increased. Then, two matters comprised, almost exclusively, a rector's duties. These were the Sunday services, in which preaching occupied the chief position, and the other, the house-to-house pastoral visits, which consisted not simply in the ringing of the door bell, and a five minutes' chat on social topics, but a careful round of counsel and advice to parishioners, old and young. This, too, has changed with changes in the methods of social life. Then, men carried on business as a means of living and supporting their households; now, they live to carry on business, and the inner life and training of the family is subservient to the claims of the office and the mart. The age is largely, almost absorbingly, a commercial one. This spirit has had a strongly reflective influence upon the methods of the Church. Utility is at the forefront. The pressing questions are: What is a thing worth? Will it pay? And how to accomplish the largest results? So it has come to pass that methods and machinery have multiplied. Church Congresses, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, guilds, and societies of many names, are giving their many-handed and enthusiastic labor for the welfare, growth, and extension of the Church in every direction. It is an age of specialists, and the general work is surely best carried on by a prudent and discreet division of labor. The result of all this is, that never since apostolic times has the Church been so alive to the claims of humanity upon the faith, or more vigilant and powerful in its efforts to discharge its commission for the saving of the world. But while these "handmaids" of religion are useful and valuable, even to an intense degree, they require to be used and directed by a wise discretion, and under the influence of a strongly conservative management. The elder Bishop Doane, one of the grandest characters in the American Church, once said that he was afraid of "too much organization," and it was a wise de-

claration. So long as these associations within the Church inherit the spirit, and are true to the principles that gave them birth, they are invaluable. But experience teaches that concentration often over-concentrates itself, and minimizes all efforts save its own, and authorities not accepting its direction. This is the point where danger threatens. A Church Congress may come to assert itself as the voice and exponent of Church principles; and a parish guild, or brotherhood, may come to fill, and assert itself, as the parish. A Sunday school may come to be "the children's church," and while filling its classes, empty the pews. One evil result of the workings of a so-called practical age upon the Church is very generally and seriously felt, and that is, that the clergy have come to be esteemed and regarded, generally, not so much for their spiritual character as pastors of the flock, as for their executive ability and financial influence. The man who best can "draw," and so increase the revenue, has come to the front, and the man who best can serve as the faithful pastor at all seasons, is passing to the rear. The political maxim that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," is worthy of an application to all measures and means, which organize as new forces for the promulgation of the faith, and the welfare of the Church of God.—*The Church Year.*

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