

THE CONDITIONS OF LABOUR AND MODERN CIVILIZATION.

"Two things have I required of Thee ; deny them not before I die :
"Remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me :
"Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, 30th chapter, 7th, 8th, and 9th verses.

These are the two points of Agur's prayer. He looks upon riches and poverty as two extremes in civil life that are not only not desirable, but are to be deprecated, as being positively hurtful, and giving birth to vice and crime in society. Everyone can see for himself, what each day passes under his notice, that both poverty and riches are unnatural in every sense, and are the fruitful source of most of the vice, crime and ignorance which demoralizes society, and mars the progress and happiness of the human race.

In conjunction with these ethics in Proverbs, there is another pronouncement that I wish to place prominently before your notice, because it is a fundamental law of human life. In it we may be said to live, and move, and have our being. It is this :

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," ("till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.")

GENESIS, 3rd chapter, 19th verse.

This is very specific language ; it is also very democratic. It is addressed to all ; it equally applies to all, and is equally imperative upon all. There are to be no exemptions, no evasions of this law.

Man's work was to reclaim the wilderness, and make the earth to yield abundance for all the wants of mankind. By labour, "the wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." In executing this work every man was to find his greatest peace, contentment and happiness. No honest man ever sought to evade this law. At the same time, every honest man contends that there should be no idlers, or exemptionists, or evaders.