

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL WORK.

The old controversy as to the attitude of the Church to social work has broken out anew. The recent trend of things made that inevitable. For the Church, in her corporate capacity, has done a great deal of social work in Scotland within the past few years. The Church of Scotland is definitely committed in the matter. That side of her work grows steadily, yet without crippling or hindering any other activity. And there is a widespread conviction within her bounds that this is a right sphere in which to exercise her energies or service. If there are those who dissent from this view they keep silent. But it is otherwise in the United Free Church. That Church has been much too busy with the repairing of her losses and the rebuilding of her walls to do a great deal in the way of definite social work. The crisis, however, is past, and urgent voices are crying to her to begin. Some of the most ardent social workers in Scotland are in the membership and ministry of the United Free Church. And they wish their Church in her collective capacity to choose this path of service. The example of the Church of Scotland counts for something. It is thought by many that the action of her neighbour commits the United Free Church. She cannot allow it to be supposed that one Church cares more for the dependents and defectives and delinquents of our social organism than the other. The success of the Labour and Rescue Homes and Farm Colonies of the Church of Scotland is a fact beyond question. And members of the United Free Church naturally ask, "Why do we who are equally solicitous for the social needs of our country not get an opportunity similar to that afforded to our brethren of the sister Church? It is surely a Christianlike work."

These arguments might seem to settle the practical question, were it not that a deeper question emerges and claims to be settled first. Is this the work for which Christ sent His Church out into the world? Mr. Clow, the well-known Glasgow United Free Church minister, thinks not, and he argues the matter at length in the columns of the "Scottish Review." His title, "Church or Parochial Board," indicates something of his position. He thinks the work is good work, but not for the Church to do. "The premises of all its message," writes Mr. Clow, "is that the one urgent need of men is to be brought into the faith and fear of God, and when that has been done all else in life will become pure and strong, and the relationships of man to man shall be brotherly, helpful, true." There follows from this, in Mr. Clow's view, a principle that he claims to be the watershed of the discussion. "The Church's first concern is not the relationship of man to man, but the relationship of man to God." And, therefore, says Mr. Clow, "it has no mandate from Christ to study the problems of poverty, or of unemployment, or of single-roomed houses, or of the relations of capital and labour." Three reasons are adduced in support of this position. The first is that these questions

lie beyond the Church's function, and the example of our Lord's earthly life and the example of the early Church are cited in order to show what that function is. The second reason is that social betterment will be sooner and more wisely realized through other agencies. And the third is that the distinctive work of the Church is the most imperative need of the time. "What," asks Mr. Clow, "is the most imperative need of our time from a Christian point of view? Is it higher wages, larger houses, a greater share of the profits, wider and cleaner streets—the dealing with that 'environment of vice and squalid misery,' to use the overdrawn phrase? God forbid that I should say one word against any attempt to right such wrongs, but there is a more appalling evil. It is the lost sense of God, the lost sense of sin, the craving for material good, the lust for pleasure, the lowered ideal of holiness, the forgotten secret of prayer. I know nothing which would more swiftly and wondrously heal the sores of society than a renewed sense of God's nearness and power and care for men. That would send a flood of energy through State and city; that would open men's eyes, the eyes both of the rich and the poor; that would cleanse the squalid misery of every back court, and purge out the vice of every den of iniquity. And that is the business of the Church at home and abroad. To men who call on the Church to deal with social betterment the answer should be, 'I am doing a great work; I cannot come down.'"

LITERARY NOTES.

Current literature for September at first glance looks more like a sporting journal than a literary magazine. Its opening pages are devoted to vividly illustrated accounts of the Olympic Games in London, the New York to Paris automobile race, the speed contests between British and American motor-boats, and the rivalry between the inventors of four nations in the conquest of the air. Magazine readers need to be reminded that Current Literature despite its name, covers every field of human activity, including sport, politics, religion, music and drama. The "Literature and Art" department opens with a fascinating article on Andreiev, the youngest and most original of the Russian writers of to-day. He is sometimes called "the Edgar Allan Poe of Russian literature." "Albert Ryder's Mystic Art" is the subject of another rarely interesting article; and the account of "Bernard Shaw's Discovery of a Supertramp" reads like a romance. Under the heading "Religion and Ethics" appear articles entitled "The Two Sides of Bishop Potter's Character," "The Crucial Stage in a Boy's Ethical Development," "Mr. Balfour's Latest Ruminations on Religion," and "The Greatest Modern Discovery"—this last an exhaustive and penetrating study of the influences underlying the rapid spread of "New Thought" and Christian Science. The Salon of Poetry which the magazine holds each month has an unusual number of splendid exhibits; and the issue concludes with two stories entitled "The Soul of the Mirror—A Legend of Japan" and "The Man Who Never Talked Politics."

A unique occurrence is reported to have taken place in mid-ocean on board the White Star liner Cedric—namely, an operation which was performed for acute appendicitis on a Mrs. Trebelli, a New York lady. Urgency meant saving her life, and the vessel was brought to for three hours so that the vibration would not affect the operation, which is said to have been perfectly successful.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Morning Star: At times, our strongest efforts to do a good work seem to us to be utter failures. We grieve over them. We feel ashamed of our work. It is far below the standard which we had set for ourselves. And yet we afterwards have perhaps learned that the very work which we had despised and lamented over was so used by God as to be far more effectual in the welfare of some person than other work of ours which we had thought was much better adapted to do good. God has surprised us by the use that he has made of our self-condemned labors. He has glorified himself by the use of our pronounced failures.

Herald and Presbyterian: Christianity is not a mere collection of moral teachings or adages; not a mere stimulus to good nature and kindness of heart and charity; not a mere form of emotion or hopefulness. It centers around and proceeds from that Divine Person who is historically presented to us in the Gospels. To deny his divinity, his incarnation, his virgin birth, his miraculous power, his resurrection and ascension is to discard, uncrown and dethrone him. We may not do this and have God's blessing. We may not do this and attain to spiritual life and hope for the future.

United Presbyterian: A "fair local option law" is the kind that the liquor people want. That is the kind that would kill off the water-snakes and tadpoles and leave the big blacksnakes, the rattlers with their poisonous fangs, and the deadly moccasins at large under the protection of the state. Clear out all the snakes! Give the venomous brood no quarter. We want a local option that will destroy and not one that will preserve the liquor interests.

Lutheran Observer: The talk about the devil never taking a vacation, and that, therefore, the preacher never should, is entitled to no consideration. It does not follow that because the pastor takes a brief vacation from work the congregation must take a vacation from the Christian life in which he has been seeking to lead and instruct them. It is a poor commentary on the spiritual vitality of any congregation to imply that the devil will ruin it unless the preacher is on the ground, and that no Christian forces will be marshaled to oppose the wiles of the vacationless devil. That is reducing the world's moral and spiritual struggle together too much to a series of single combats between the pastors of our churches and the devil.

N. Y. Christian Intelligencer: A real revival penetrates to the heart of things and deals with causes. Strictly speaking, it is no revival at all, when only some of the dismal surface effects of sin are removed from sight. The true revival begins within, and works to the circumference. What is first needed is a spiritual conception of the causes of evil, and of the Divinely provided remedy. Now this must be based on knowledge. And here comes in the duty and importance of education. In the eternal verities concerning sin and salvation which are at the heart of the only Gospel capable of saving men, the children and youth and all the people must be taught with dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide all into the truth as it is in Jesus.

The Guelph Mercury speaks in high terms of the pulpit efforts of Rev. Mr. Arnold, B.D., of Petrolia, who was the preacher in Knox Church in that city recently.