

CHRISTIAN CO-OPERATION.

BY J. C. SMITH, B.A.

It is a sign of the times that the sectarian bitterness, which was at no distant past esteemed a virtue, is dying out. We shall certainly waste no tears over its grave. While, however, a more peaceful and generous feeling is on the increase, it would be a great step in advance that such a spirit should take shape and form. It is well to agree: it is better to ally.

One word is premised to prevent a mistake. That the sects should join to gain a common end does not imply that they should throw overboard their distinctive beliefs. In a sea-fight many national flags may fly at topmasts of the same fleet. It is too obvious that each denomination should be loyal to its standards; yet, when they in common lament an awful disorder, and when they in common possess a truth whose power can blast even the rock, they may well seek that strength which results from union.

Although there be admission that no principle is at stake by an alliance of this nature, the next question arises as to whether it is feasible. In order to clear this matter, we allude briefly to an experiment which has been made in New Albion.

An earnest pastor and a thrifty banker are the joint authors of the scheme. The fact, which startled to thought, was the alarming number of the churchless. On a Sabbath morning, when the weather and the roads were so excellent and also so cruel as to forbid an excuse for absence, out of a population of 12,000 the scarcely decent number of 2,770 attended the services. These figures are not wholly fair. The aged, the infirm, the sick, the nurse, the night-watchman, those who because of private duties could only attend the services once a day, lessened the large fraction. After

every allowance which charity could make, it was concluded that 2,000 in a city of 12,000 were practically heathen.

It is not our pride to indulge in stale and cheap stigmas about the indolence of the Church; that odious task we gladly delegate to the bilious—to those whose tempers are sour and who, because they do not engage in the work with their own hands, are the ablest to downrun the present age, and to sing with gusto of the grand old times when zeal was the rule. There is ground rather to praise. The story of the Cross is conquering the world. The ministry is laborious. On the other hand it is well to realize the state of matters. It is in every city what it is in New Albion. There are who flourish within the pale of religion: their vaunt it is that they evade alike the eye and the arm of law; they outrage the quietness of our Sabbaths, they poison our innocence, they haunt our dens, they crowd our prisons, they lengthen the too long list of crime. While it is true that the Church is decreasing the vice which is around it, yet there appears to be a circumference of foulness beyond the range of its present influence. Custom alone can blunt the force of these facts.

Is it therefore a sound policy that the fastidious taste should stand at a clean and polite distance from those whose breaths and houses may be repulsive? Or is it sensible to curse and thunder against the plague without moving the finger to drive it from our borders? The answer need not be written. It is a law in the moral as in the material world, that the power which is to raise must be applied as low as the object which is to be raised. The leading Christians at New Albion endorsed this principle.