

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.*

THIS is a most hopeful and inspiring book. It strikes the keynote of the new era. It preaches the new social economy, the true Christian Socialism that is yet to reorganize society on a higher plane and on a juster basis. "The social question," says the author, "as one of public well-being, demands everywhere to be heard, everywhere to be dealt with, everywhere to be solved. It is the life-and-death question of this and the next generation, gazing at and transfixing us, like the old sphinx with its insoluble, weird face, or ready, like another Frankenstein, to pursue with horrible hate and nameless cruel wrongs the very civilization that has called it into existence. All the best thought of our own and other countries turns to this momentous subject. It is the duty of all men, and especially of large representative bodies of men, to turn their minds with what light and leading they have to an examination of social problems."

The only solution which the author finds for these social problems is the application of the ethics of Christianity. "Before the Church lies the social question in its terrible perplexity, asking to be examined and solved. Man is himself the sphinx, the grave problem, and Christ in the face of God is the solution of it. There is urgent need for bringing the resources of this Gospel to bear on the great problems agitating our time with reference to the regeneration of society, the restoration of the family to the Christian ideal, the termination of the conflicts between capital and labour, and the social improvement of the people."

"The new political economy," he adds, "is full of hope, and 'looks for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' In this hope of a worthy economic regime the Church is called to share,

and ought to regard its Gospel as the chief organ for fulfilling this exalted service. The sin of the Church has been to care more for distributing charity than for distributing wealth, in 'subordination to the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' Charity is good, but far better is the justice that quenches the need of it. The Church must awake to the grandeur of its task in seeking to adjust the industrial world to moral harmony, and in using its best energies to secure among men that reign of righteousness and that kingdom of heaven upon earth of which Plato caught a glimpse, and which the prophets of Israel and Jesus have announced to the world."

The author deals with the many varied aspects of this complex question, the land question, the labour question, rights and wages, the liquor question. On this subject he says: "If the money spent on intoxicating drinks were properly expended, it would give employment to 4,000,000 people; at present 500,000 are engaged in making and selling liquors—in destructive, not in productive labour, destroying as much grain as would make bread equal to about 1,200,000,000 of four-pound loaves. We go behind this drink bill of the nation to find it our national sin and national curse, which not only robs men of money, but robs them of intelligence, virtue, and religion, and brings upon them degradation, suffering, poverty, and all those social evils which so appal the hearts of philanthropic statesmen and well-wishers of their country."

Akin to this are the problems of poverty, sweating, housing the poor, child-life and rescue, woman's place and influence, the co-operative movements, and, high above all and grander than any dream of Plato, the new Christian commonwealth, the *Civitas Dei* which Augustine held over the

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