

## A Minister's Experience as a Day-Laborer.

BY REV. GEO. L. MCNUIT.

We have laid aside every vestige, of a minister's family. We have gone up or down or out, as one chooses to call it, from the ranks of culture and the church, to the ranks of those who battle for bread with their hands. I say we, for our sociological group consists of a wife, a fourteen-year-old boy, a three-year-old boy, and myself. I am midway in life, a college graduate and teacher, fond of books. For sixteen years I have preached, half the time in a country seat university town of 5,000, the other half in the large cities. I have always believed that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, the saving of the whole man and the whole of men. I could not blind myself to the fact that between the church and the laboring classes there is a rapidly-widening gulf. It is a gulf fixed. Why is this? Why should a religion founded by a carpenter, built up by graduates from the fishnets, finished and buttressed by a tent-maker, fail to reach working-men to-day?

## GOING TO SCHOOL.

I have started to school again. This time my teachers are the common people, the world's nobodies. Who knows what Hans, Fritz, or Pietro, the man behind the machine or the man with the hoe, thinks or feels? Deadened they may be with drudgery, but the smouldering fire flashes up at times with a strange and original brilliancy. Soddened they may be by dissipation, but they feel, and their feelings are too deep for tears. To these men I am listening. I hold that the year past has been worth more to me in original mental and sympathetic equipment than any year of college or seminary.

The curse of art and literature is a lack of life, an artificial makeshift of the fancy for the divine facts of nature. Is not the same true of religion? The philosophy of the incarnation, is it not the inability of the mind to grasp the thought of God, save through an incarnate working model? He became a faithful high priest by the things which he suffered. I will not press the suggestions that arise further than to say that I know that I will be a better preacher, a better pastor, a kinder man, by the things that we have suffered. It has been no child's play. There is no string tied to our boat. No one is back of us to run to in distress.

## A STRANGE SENSATION.

It is a strange sensation for one accustomed to the confidences of children and the courtesies of men and women of culture to be cursed and blackguarded by a drunken boss. It is a shock to never hear the name of Christ save in profanity. To find the little children pastmasters in profanity and vulgarity is worst of all. Our fourteen-year-old boy has been learning a trade in a factory. I do not complain of the unnatural hours that call him up at two o'clock in the morning. We can adjust his living to that. But the infernal moral environment of such a factory, how can we—parents, teachers, society—tolerate that? A factory boy can never again be innocent. Our boy looks ahead to college days. His chum, a frail little German boy of twelve, the one clean boy in the neighborhood, "wist he could go to school." He is the eldest of seven. He lives in a house of three rooms and thirteen people in them. He goes every Saturday when he draws his pay and gives it all to the doctor who cured him and Jake when they had typhoid fever. I "wist" there was some way to educate that boy.

## THE CHURCH AND THE SALOON.

The contrast between the enterprise of churches and saloons is suggestive. Apparently our family is very poor, and we are. It wasn't exactly true when our baby said, with dramatic injured innocence: "I hain't had nuzzen to eat for fo' days." We would be of no value socially and financially to any institution. I do not complain. I merely cite the fact that in ten months, as one family of the "other half," no one has mentioned Christ or the church to my wife or myself. No Christian families have worshipped with us. The priest and the Levite pass by on the other side. We hear the church bells ring on Sunday and in the middle of the week. We see the pastors among their flocks, but we are merely nobodies from nowhere. Whither bound, no one seems to care.

My boy and I are beset with opportunities and importunities to drink. Chilled to the bone when digging in the streets, the warm saloon stands near with the latching always out. No one knows, till he is cold and hungry, how alluring are the words: "Nice hot lunch, all day free." In Chicago, the other day, I counted twenty-one articles of clean, wholesome food on the free-lunch counter of a Milwaukee Avenue saloon. The saloons, with music, games, pictures, chairs and places of convenience and necessity, are open all the time; the churches are closed most of the time. And still people wonder why workingmen drink.

The gospel is the power of God. There is no magic, no efficiency in unharnessed power. For ages Niagara was a spectacle of awful mighty power, but it was only a spectacle. Within a decade man has begun to harness that vast power. To-day Niagara is the power of God unto light and heat and products of commerce. The gospel is a Niagara of limitless power. There are no

bounds to the love of the Father. There is an extravagance of power, enough and to spare, enough to save—to save poor nobodies like my family, and to save the whole world spiritually, socially and industrially. Is the world's redemption waiting for a mightier evangelist than Moody, for a new John the Baptist, or is it waiting for an Edison to harness the energies of divine love? God is not defeated. He is only waiting.

## UNUSED SOCIAL FORCES.

There is just one piano in the factory addition to a city of 10,000 where we live. Not being able to play, whenever there is company my wife is sent for. How it is that my wife can play a piano so well is a mystery to the community. "For sure," she must have seen better days. Why shouldn't a workingman's wife play a piano? Is music a monopoly of caste? On a recent Sunday afternoon there was a social gathering at the house with a piano. My wife was sent for, and I was invited, too. It was a rare picture—a fruitful, sociological grouping that we found. The house was filled to overflowing with men, women, and children. On the porch was a keg of beer; inside a pitcher of wine. My wife was at the piano all the afternoon with a glass of beer for her to take whenever she could get a chance. I hasten to say that she didn't take it. The picture was a contrast to missionary societies and social gatherings of pastorate days. My mind was busy asking, "What would you do if you were a preacher in this community, and not a day-laborer? It is easy to criticize. Is it possible to construct a satisfactory social system out of such material? Our neighborhood is made up of Germans, with a sprinkling of French, Belgians, and Italians, and here and there 'native-born foreigners' like ourselves."

The men and the boys, ten years old and over, work in factories usually eleven hours a day one week, and eleven hours a night the next week. And an hour for the day or the midnight dinner, an hour to come and go, eight hours for sleep—how much time is left for home-love, neighborhood fellowship, and civic duties? Sunday is their one free day—a merciful godsend. Ought I to denounce their getting together as neighbors on Sunday, as in itself a Sabbath desecration? They are too tired, mentally too stupefied, to listen to a sermon. To open a library would be love's labor lost, and then some people would want it closed on Sunday. The redemption of such an overworked, beer-soaked community seemed a hopeless task along the usual lines of church activity. Finally certain possible social forces began to be dimly seen.

## THE POWER OF MUSIC.

1. Music.—Music has not only power to sooth the savage breast and quiet the spirit of a Saul, and it has also magic charms to lift the heavy clouds that gather round the horizon of the toiler and open up possible visions of the life that ought to be. Music as an every-day social force is an untried experiment, with just one exception. The saloons know and prove its power. For nine months and over the influence I have felt as a workingman has been that of the saloon, the beer-garden and the funeral procession. Of all the untold wealth of the world's harmony and melody, with all the wealth that is expended in learning music, the world, as a world, hears little music outside of the saloon. For a few moments—two times one day in seven—the organ sphinx becomes vocal and eloquent, and then lapses into silence, while the world toils, and sorrows, and sins.

2. Fellowship—an every-day place for all classes of men to meet to smoke and joke, to read and write, to nod and rest, is a social necessity and a social force ignored by the church. This the saloon supplies. Over against the factory where these men work there is the inevitable saloon. The saloon-keeper is also an inn-keeper, and makes his hotel and saloon the centre of the social life of the community. Over against that saloon, and every other saloon that abuts upon a factory, I would like to open a club-house for common people, to be run with a reasonable regard for common-sense.

## PICTURES AS A SOCIAL POWER.

3. Pictures.—People may be too tired to listen to a sermon—too dull to read a book, but they are never too tired nor too stupid to know and feel the power of a picture. Just as I write two neighbors' boys have come in. They said "Oh! look at the books!" I overheard them whispering to each other, "Ask him if we can look at the pictures!" "No! you ask—go on quick." I gave them some magazines. The language of their comments is not exactly elegant, but their interest is intense. I recall one summer, when, by simply transferring our services from the hot stuffy church to the cool temples of the groves, and using a stereopticon, our attendance arose from about fifty of the faithful to over 2,000 people of all classes—especially workingmen and their families. The stereopticon as a social force with which to bring the world of beauty within the every-day reach of the common people is an untried experiment, whose success is assured. Of its evangelistic power, Mr. Moody told me that if he were a younger man he would learn how to use a stereopticon.

4. Men's Play.—That the child is father to the man—that men are only overgrown children, is most clearly shown in the universal love of men for social games and

exhibitions of athletic skill. My own observations have confirmed my belief in what a newspaper man once told me—that the people who frequent the vaudeville shows grow enthusiastic over the pathetic, the patriotic and the spectacular, often passing over the purely vulgar in silence. Is the provision for normal healthful men's play beyond the scope or beneath the dignity of those who seek by all means to save men?

## CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS.

5. The Child's Play.—The neglected playground becomes a clearing-house for all forms of vulgarity and profanity. Down in Indianapolis, last summer, I found nearly 300 children in Military Park at play, gathered around a kindergarten play-teacher like a queen bee. They were organized around just two rules: "Be clean, be kind." In Cincinnati I saw the river-rat children finding a theatre for their play on the tan-bark-covered cobble-stones in the middle of the street, with sand-piles, swings and an open-air gymnasium provided by the ladies of the civic federation.

At Dayton, Ohio, I found, under the auspices of the National Cash Register works and the Mothers' Guild of South Park, three bright young kindergarten women, paid to devote all their time to organizing and directing the children's play in the beautiful private grounds of the Vice-President of the Cash Register Works.

Nothing I have seen is more hopeful than the possibilities there are in providing for and organizing childhood's play. It is no idle fancy that the way to the altar may be by the playground. Is it less sacred for a child to play than to pray? This is what I saw that Sunday afternoon through the midst of tobacco smoke, the fumes of beer, and the songs of ribaldry and coarse jest. Music, fellowship, pictures, games, and play—these are the five points of a social campaign, with which it seemed to be possible to outflank and invest this barren, sin-cursed section of a latter-day industrial community. After this preliminary social skirmishing would come the appeal to the conscience, the frontal attack. After the battle, fought on the lines of intelligent social strategy, I thought I could see, as the spoils of victory, a regenerated community, a new Jerusalem, come down from God out of heaven.—The Northwestern Christian Advocate.

## The Isle of Summer.

"It is a far, far call from Lexington to the isles of the Western Sea," and it is a far, far call from St. Martins to Santa Catalina. I am glad that on the way I got a glimpse of North Carolina, and tarried long on the great mile-high plateau of the west. I understand by so much the better this Pacific Isle.

We are 27 miles from San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles. Our crescent harbor opens toward the east, and it is an exceptional day when we cannot see, across the channel, those great guardians of a continent, the coast range mountains, sometimes gray, sometimes violet, sometimes cloud-touched, sometimes snow-capped. The island hills flank our town and, rising behind, stretch away far enough to convert into balmy breezes the air from the open sea. The day sky has unalloyed brightness, while the near hills, so dark and high, by very contrast give to the night sky a rare splendor of stars. There are singing birds and wild flowers, and holly all our own. We have from two to six rainy days during each of the five winter months, otherwise the atmosphere is the most perfect imaginable. After sojourns in North Carolina and New Mexico, I should be in a measure accustomed to the inadequacy of the calendar, but so like a Nova Scotia mid-summer has this winter been that I have found it hard to remember the time of year. Roses and lilies from the gardens, or ferns from the canous have brought their beauty into our church every Sunday. Like those of North Carolina, the Catalina hills invite climbing, but they are not wooded, though trees nestle in the canous. In the real summer they become brown, but in the winter they are green with the freshness of the eastern spring; and greener even than the hills are the miniature plateaus, where the Golf Links stretch away in their four miles of rambling system—they are called the finest Links in America. Among the other attractions for tourists the two most unique are the stage ride across the Island, in which there is as much of danger as is consistent with safety, and the row in one of the "glass-bottomed boats," through which you may look down from twenty to fifty feet upon the marvellous sea-gardens. Over delicate mosses of varied hues wave the great fronds of sea-weed, which form a veritable forest, with foliage varying from light green to glimmering bronze, from purple to rich crimson. And in this fairy-land of the sea the fish dart to and fro, many of them in flashing splendor of red and gold.

The tourist fisherman will charter a gasoline launch and speed out to the deeper waters. There he will find the yellowtail, the barracuda, the rock-cod, the gruper and the mackerel. Or if he is competent for the task, he may bring in a 200 pound tuna as the trophy of the rod and line, but this will be as the result of half a day's hard work after this gamey fish has been hooked.

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