

SOCIABILITY IN GOD'S HOUSE.

In the loud, long, and persistent demand for social and personal recognition on the part of those who ally themselves with the parish, there has been something very pathetic. Such recognition, in a fair measure and in a legitimate way, ought to be accorded. But is there not a serious danger menacing us in the custom which is evidently growing and that, too, with scarcely a word of protest against it? A kindly greeting may with propriety be given in the church aisle. But when, so many cases right here in our own diocese, the members of a congregation rise from their knees to engage in conversation upon all sorts of topics, is not the loss greater than the gain? The justification or the custom is the necessity for the cultivation of good-fellowship. But is good follow-ship, of the sort secured under these conditions, worth the loss of reverence for God's house which inevitably follows such a course? One can understand how this questionable custom has grown up. The church building has, in most cases, been the only available meeting place for Sunday schools, missionary societies and guilds. In gatherings of this sort it has been difficult to restrain allusions and references to secular matters, and almost unconsciously we have grown to tolerate this misfortune as a necessity. Now, alas! the sense of impropriety, not to say sacrilege, has been so largely lost that both priest and people will stop in an aisle, or even in the chancel and before the altar, and chatter about all sorts and kinds of matters.

In the smaller parishes the great desire to give the cordial welcome to the newcomers has led to serious abuses. If a congregation is at liberty

after the close of a service to chaff and banter with each other, if at that time men and women may converse upon any subject, has not the practical bearing of that text, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple" been lost? The church ought not to be made a place for visits of a social nature. The home is the place for that and, if we want to make people welcome, if we want to make them feel that they have found Christian friends, let us go back to their houses and assure them of the fact. The attention which we show each other in a church aisle is a very cheap one for ourselves, and right-minded people will see that it has cost us nothing. The only trouble we have taken is to rise from our knees and turn about to the man or woman we care to greet. Suppose that in the place of this economical sociability, for the sake of reverence we restrain our speech until we have reached, or passed from, the church porch. Then cordially speak the kind word, and follow this up, from time to time, with a friendly call. Would we not attain our end and at the same time respect an important principle?

General conversation is certainly out of place in God's house. That place should be sacred. Where the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments administered, no word should be spoken that could divert the mind from those great subjects.—*Michigan Church Life.*

THE *English Churchman*, London, England, says that a Unitarian minister has been advocating the adoption by the Free Churches of some form of the Confessional! The ground of this proposal is said to be the prevalent immorality among the young.