

he is a shrewd man he will always be careful to select a place where the social currents converge in his favor. He will call it securing a strategic position. He will never know what it is to fail. He knows how to avail himself of a general tendency. But it is as if a workman should use the strongest tools where there was the easiest work to do, or a general were to train his heaviest guns upon the weakest point in the enemy's line, or a physician were to inject his most potent medicaments into the least diseased portions of his patient's body. In pursuance of this policy our evangelical churches have been steadily retreating up Manhattan Island, until it begins to look as if we were to be whipped off the field. We are like a man who in his sleep pulls the bedclothes up around his neck, leaving his legs stark and bare. This is not a plea for down-town churches. I am coming to feel that our hardest field is the great middle belt of our city. If I am not mistaken, all of our churches had better reef themselves up for a long, steady blow. We have made the mistake of huddling our best preachers and our most amply equipped churches in that part of the city where they are least needed; and, on the other hand, just where the population is densest and materialism most strongly entrenched we bring to bear our cheapest and poorest gospel appliances. But the churches cannot escape the great masses which they have left behind. We catch their diseases; they have a saloon on every corner; they outvote us and control our municipal politics; while we, in our Chickering Hall conferences, like righteous Lot of old, vex our righteous souls day by day with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

As ancient Rome assumed such an attitude toward the rest of humanity that she had either to conquer the world or be herself annihilated, so the Christian Church, in her relation to the huge masses of alien and unevangelical life with which the lower parts of our great cities are being solidly packed, must either penetrate them with her spirit and subdue them into receptiveness, or confess herself a conspicuous failure. From these ever-widening social swamps there steals upward a dense miasma, which poisons not only our municipal life, but, through that, the State and country at large. Alien forces are gradually engulfing us, as in a case of dropsy the water creeps on and up until the vitals are flooded. The conflict for Christ in the evil neighborhoods of our large cities is simply a Waterloo issue. As Goethe has it:

"Thou must rise or fall,
Thou must rule and win,
Or else serve and lose,
Suffer or triumph;
Be anvil or hammer."

A church that pulls out of the slums in order to secure a more favorable and congenial environment is like the hard-pressed ostrich, that hides its head in the sand from its pursuers. Such a policy is a violation of the fundamental principles of the Gospel. Such churches cease to be essen-