

publishers, and latterly the colportage system, it is now pervading every corner of the land. There is scarcely a parish in which the press may not be said to be preaching weekly, as well as the pulpit. This is surely an advance in the right direction. And books, also, of a strictly moral, and religious description—books for all classes, for the young as well as for the old, for the unlettered as well as the educated and refined, have had a corresponding increase. I remember being struck some years ago by the statement of a person who had come, somewhere about the beginning of the present century, to be an apprentice to a bookseller in this city; he told me that there was then only one bookseller of the higher class in Edinburgh who kept any stock of religious books. And now I fancy the difficulty would rather be on the other side—to find one who does not keep them. Much is due in this line of Christian agency to the London Tract Society, which published many excellent books in a handy form, and at an extremely cheap rate, sent them over the country, giving grants also at reduced prices to Sabbath schools and parochial libraries."

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.

Less than half a century ago, the reasonableness and duty of Christian missions had to be defended from the pulpit, and was among the earlier topics that engaged the zeal and impetuous eloquence of Chalmers. No one would dream of such a thing now. The only question is, what particular fields to occupy; or how best to enlist Christian sympathy in their behalf, and ply them with an appropriate agency? Even yet the work can scarcely be said to have got beyond its feeble beginnings—if we think of the vast resources of our country, and the magnitude and importance of the missionary cause. But thanks be to God, it has begun, and is gradually making progress. It is no longer treated by the Churches as a mere appendage, or side work, to be left to the care of a miscellaneous society; there is scarcely a section of the Evangelical Church which does not directly interest itself in a mission agency, and give this a place in its prayers and contributions. Who can fail to see in this an evidence of the rising tide, and a happy omen for the future! Especially when we consider that the mission of the Church embraces the home, as well as the foreign field; and that a new era may be said also to have dawned in respect to evangelistic operations for the good of the neglected portions of our population.

LIBERALITY AND UNION.

The willingness to give for moral and religious objects—to give in money, and to

labour, give also in personal acts of kindness and has very perceptibly increased of late, and in the Churches generally. Not that they have anything to boast of—yea, much rather to be ashamed of—when we think of what is expended on vice and luxury compared with what is done in the cause of religion and philanthropy. There is not a church in this country which would not blush to table its returns in respect to the cause of God and humanity beside those of the revenue officers in its neighbourhood for intoxicating liquors alone. But a small proportion among us have known yet what it really is to make sacrifices for the Gospel's sake. There have, however, been many noble examples of a generous and liberal spirit—far exceeding what was known in the generation that has passed away; and we may justly hope that the influence of them will extend and appear in ever increasing fruitfulness. The people of Christ, we trust, are coming more distinctly to realize the thought that the Lord's work is their work, and that the more they do for it the better they do for themselves. It would be unpardonable if I did not, on such an occasion and in such a meeting as this, refer to another cheering and hopeful symptom in the Church—the craving for more of brotherly intercourse and corporate union. This meeting is itself a sign of the times. It is a new thing for two Supreme Courts to suspend their proper business in order that their members may have the opportunity of coming "to look each other in the face"—not, as of old done by the armies of Judah and Israel, to fall upon each other with weapons of violence, but mutually to stretch out the olive branch of peace, and to ask—Shall there be jealousy and strife for ever? Shall not those who are so nearly agreed in the common faith endeavor to find the way to agreement in common counsel and action? We cannot doubt that the exalted Redeemer looks down with satisfaction on such a meeting; and let us with one heart desire and pray that the movement which has given rise to it may, in due time, proceed to its proper termination.

BAD SYMPTOMS.

To say nothing of what can only be surmised, because done in secret, official returns, which speak of what cannot be hidden, are constantly proclaiming what should cover us with shame, and tell how far we are yet from having reached a properly sound and wholesome condition. Much, indeed, of the corruption referred to lies outside of our particular Churches—but by no means the whole, as the records of our several courts too amply testify. And even as to