

IS THAT THE BEST WORK YOU CAN DO?

By Knoxonian.

The other week a straight-laced denominational journal across the lines advised its readers not to support non-denominational religious papers. One of the non-denominational papers immediately arose and solemnly asked its denominational neighbor this important question:

Is that the best work you can do for the Lord?

This question is a searcher. It might do most of us a great deal of good if we could hear a voice saying to us at times: Is that the best work YOU can do for the Lord?

BROTHER LEGALITY has a weakness for raising legal points in ecclesiastical procedure. It pleases him more to find a legal flaw in something than it pleases him to have a good prayer meeting, or a fine missionary meeting, or even a profitable communion season. When he goes to Presbytery he rises and asks if this meeting has been legally called; then he makes verbal criticism on something in the minutes; then he objects to something as "incompetent," to another thing as unconstitutional, and crowns his pettifoggery performance by declaring something ultra vires. Brother, is that the best work you can do for the Lord in a spiritual court? If it is, your first duty is to go home, and get yourself reconstructed.

BROTHER FECKLESS, M.A., stands up in his pulpit, and reads from his manuscript, or from his memory, a dainty little essay, which, by an extraordinary flight of the imagination, he dignifies with the name of sermon. It is written from beginning to end in the third person. It is impersonal all the way through. There is no direct address. He never looks the people squarely in the face, and says "we" or "you." Hard-headed business men look on with mingled feelings of pity and contempt, as they think of the rousing political address they heard last evening, and remember the way they saw some lawyer work up a jury a few days ago. Brother Feckless, is that the best pulpit work you can do for the Lord?

ELDER OPPOSER does exactly what his name indicates, and does nothing more except serve the communion table. It would be better if he didn't even do that. He never calls on anybody, never visits the sick, never helps in any way. When any new mode of working is proposed then he always comes out strong. His forte is to oppose everything—to stand in the way. He is a chronic obstructionist. He neither works himself, nor allows anybody else to work in peace. His motto is, "I object." His work is to prevent other people from working. Oh, Mr. Opposer, is that the best work you can do for the Lord? If that is the best you can do, how can you expect the welcome, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

MR. SNARLING comes to church occasionally. Presumably, he comes to worship. How much he does worship may be learned from the fact that when he leaves he sneers at the sermon, makes

small remarks about the singing, speaks like a genuine "puppy" about the class of people who worship there, and talks disparagingly about the whole service. Mr. Snarling, if that is the best you can do in the way of worship, it will go hard with you some day.

Here is a citizen who constantly growls about the government of his municipality. The taxes are high, the streets are in a bad condition, the sidewalks are in need of repair, the gas is dim and the water bad. Everything is mismanaged. The aldermen are a bad lot. The officials are dishonest. If the aldermen levy taxes for improvements, this citizen talks about rebellion. He thinks he ought to have good light, good water, good streets, good sidewalks, good everything without paying for them. Mr. Growler, is that the best you can do for your town? If it is, you had better go north somewhere, and live among the Indians. You are not sufficiently educated for civilized citizenship. A good citizen helps to advance the interest of his community, and if he cannot put his shoulder directly to the wheel himself, he encourages those who have their shoulders there.

Here is a man who calls himself a Presbyterian, but can never see any good in the Presbyterian Church. He sees good things in Episcopalianism; admires much in Methodism; approves strongly of some of the methods of the Plymouth Brethren; and has a decided liking for the Salvation Army. Dear Mr. Softy, is that the best you can do for your Church? If it is, then, perhaps, you had better join the Salvation Army, and run for drummer. If you get elected, you can command more attention by beating the drum head than you are ever likely to do by using your own head.

Before closing, let us take a look at this good man who gives his attention to the public schools. Everything is wrong. The teacher is too lax or too severe. The text books are not proper. The schoolroom is too hot or too cold. The hours are too short or too long. The real trouble with that school is that the teacher cannot put brains into this good man's brainless children. Considering their parentage, the children are about what any sensible man would expect them to be. They came into the world under some terrible hereditary disadvantages. Nature was too kind to make them so clever as to hurt their father's feelings, by contrast. Stand up, Mr. Grumbler, and honestly tell us if worrying that teacher is the best work you can do for education in this country. If it is, you had better join the first form of some good school for intellectual culture, and read the Scripture selections to tone you up morally.

If an editor writes an abusive editorial, or states facts that are not facts, it would be a good thing to say to him: Is that the best editorial work you can do?

If a politician makes a low, abusive speech full of distorted facts and untrue statements, somebody ought to go quietly up to him at the close and say: Mr. — is that the best work you can do?

When a man worries or bores a public meeting somebody should whisper gently to him: "Is that the best work you can do?"

Good question this for us all.

OUR SONG SERVICE.

Attention to singing as a very helpful part of the worship of the sanctuary is inexcusably neglected. It is suffering, we are persuaded, a steady decline. In many of our churches the leader in the song service is an elderly man. He learned to sing perhaps, nearly a half century ago. It is not easy to see active church workers plunged into despair at the suggestion of losing by death, or otherwise, their beloved chorister. There are none to succeed these old worthies, the product of the schools of other days. It has come to pass, it appears to us, that our preachers and sessions must take hold of the matter and see to it that the young are taught to sing. There is need for a revival of the singing schools that produced so many fine singers in the days of our fathers. The fruits of these schools were of incalculable worth to the cause of Christ. However cold and dry and prolix the sermon, the services were brightened much by the good singing. The stories of the happiness of the students in those old singing schools of a half a century ago, always thrill and please when well told. They were gratifying to the young, who will have the enjoyment of meeting for some purpose or other. We know no other gatherings more helpful in many ways. The worship in the churches in the town and country alike, could be improved greatly, it goes without saying, by wise attention to this department of service. In the town the song service is often pleasingly musical to a few, we presume, but really devotional to none. In the country it is often edifying to a small extent and almost without musical attractiveness to any. In sharp contrast with both is good singing in which all hear the words of the hymn sung in pleasing time and warm hearted tones. The uplifting and instructive and enjoyable effect of a whole congregation or a large percentage of it, joining under good leadership in singing the songs of Zion with freedom, heartiness, and a full voice, is as rare as it is desirable.

Let preachers and sessions go to work and employ teachers of singing to open schools for the instruction of the young in their flock. There should be haste in the matter. Our church services are suffering for the lack of it. Every saint, but especially the preacher, knows the great value of a good song service. The value of the late sweet singer Ira D. Sankey to Mr. Moody in the conduct of his great meetings could not easily be overestimated. And the worth of the preaching of Jesus Christ in attractively sung hymns at the stated preaching services in our churches no one would undertake to tell.—Presbyterian Standard.

"Current Literature" for November features an essay by Francis Thompson on Shelley which has been hailed by the critics of two continents as a masterpiece of English prose. This is the first opportunity that readers on this side the Atlantic have had to see the text of a tribute by one poet to another that already seems assured of immortality. "Current Literature" is eclectic in method, and covers the whole field of life. The Austro-Bulgarian alliance and the revolt in Crete are handled in brilliant editorial paragraphs. The Scientific Department opens with an account of the late Henri Becquerel, "the hero of uranium." The Religious Department devotes much space to "Mr. Chesterton's Discovery of Christianity." All classes of readers will find something to interest them in this number.