

Society and Religion.

A young man came to his minister, a few days since, and asked for a copy of the Presbyterian form of government, urging as his excuse that he had been asked to join a euchre club, but, before deciding, he desired to know if there was any rule forbidding it. Of course, he was told that there was nothing in the rules of the Church regarding this, but, at the same time, his pastor added that it would be well for him to be guided by the wishes of his widowed mother, who counselled him against cards. The young man referred to is an active member of the Church. The ground of his pastor's advice was, not that there was necessarily any sin in such an action, but that it might prove hurtful to his spiritual life and usefulness.

This brings up the question, vital to young Christians, as well as to older, of their relation to the general society around them. What should it be? In answering this important question, we do not lose sight of the fact that there is a social instinct in us, and that this should be cultivated. It is most natural, for young Christians especially, to desire social intercourse. At the same time, it must be admitted that this should be exercised within certain limits. Moreover, social intercourse must, in the case of Christians, be always secondary, in its importance to the growth of their spiritual life. And hence it may be laid down as a general principle, that any and all social intercourse that tends to divert the course of the spiritual life, or to weaken it, should be given up for Christ's sake, as well as for one's own sake. It may not be too much to say that the spiritual growth of the young Christians of to-day is generally retarded if not wholly checked, because the character of the social life is unfavorable to it. Hence the necessity of flying the danger signal to warn them. Among the things to be avoided, as unfavorable to their spiritual development and usefulness, are, first, an indiscriminate mingling of Christians with those who are not Christians. Young Christians should choose Christian friends and companions, such as have like tastes and aspirations with themselves, and who will help, instead of hinder, them. To associate frequently with, or make a bosom friend of one who is entirely devoted to pleasure, and to the world, will sound the death-knell of almost any Christian life. And while it may be next to impossible to find a circle of young people who are all Christian, yet one should be guarded in the presence of such as are not the declared disciples of Christ.

In the second place, the social customs of our time are inimical to the spiritual life. Social circles assemble late, and return home at all hours, leaving little time to rest, none for prayer and meditation. Lassitude of body and spirit follow, which is in every way injurious to the culture of piety. Then the dissipation of spiritual thoughts, and disinclination to spiritual things ensure a rapid declension in zeal and Christian work.

In the third place, there is a tendency to luxury in eating and drinking, as well as in dress, which operates against the spiritual life. This is more especially true in the commercial and populous centres, where facilities for frequent intercourse are multiplied.

Whilst we recognize the fact that young Christians must run the gauntlet of temptation, and be tried and hardened, like recruits in training, yet it is well to warn them, that there may be fewer falls. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." This is matter for serious thought upon the part of Christian parents and guardians. Where are the pillars of our churches, the elders and office-bearers and workers of the future to come from? They must be made out of the young Christians of to-day—and the outlook is not too favorable, it must be candidly confessed. The number of Christian young men, for example, who are untouched by the blighting power of a worldly society, and the numerous temptations to turn aside, is painfully small. It becomes all who desire the welfare of the Church of Christ, to think and pray over this matter, and do what they are able, to direct young Christians to the formation of Christian companionships, that their spiritual growth be not impeded.

The Sabbath in Scotland.

In the course of an article on "The Sabbath" in the *Queen*, Mrs. Alec Tweedie gives a pleasant description of "The Highland Free Kirk, with its square pews as big as rooms, containing a table in the middle, and the walls so high that no one outside the pew can be seen except the precentor, tuning fork in hand, in his box, or the 'meenister' in the box above. In the finer churches of Edinburgh and Glasgow," she says, "there are organs; but in many parts there are not even harmoniums.

SHEPHERDS AND THEIR DOGS AT THE KIRK.

"At the Highland kirk the collie dogs attend the service, going under the seat and sleeping peacefully until the benediction, when they rise, shake themselves, and calmly make for the door. Their masters, after service is over, enjoy their chat at the porch, for half the pleasure of coming to church is to discuss the sermon with friends, and have a bit of gossip before wending their way over the hills—perhaps ten miles—to their humble crofts. It is very amusing sometimes to see these shepherds dressed in top hats, and they, as well as their women folk, invariably wear black if they can afford it, and carry a small library of Bibles and Psalm-books under their arms. The books are very rarely left in the church, this carrying to and fro appearing to be part of the ceremony.

THE GAELIC SERVICE.

"At the kirk door it is the fashion to place a small table covered with a white cloth, on which stands a plate, into which everyone coming to the service puts a penny or a half-penny. Silver is almost unknown. This contribution is strictly guarded by two elders of the kirk, whose duties are manifold, for they really hold the positions of minor curates. The Gaelic service is generally from eleven to one, and the English from one to three. Many of the good people stay for both, and on their way home discuss whether the minister was 'better in the Gaelic or the English the dee.' The minister has a bad time on the Sabbath; not only has he these two services right on end, but he has to preach extemporally, great indignation being evinced at 'the paper.' He has to read the chapters from the Bible and the prayers by himself, as well as giving his sermon, a little singing being the only interlude. In the remoter parts of Scotland the congregations still stand up to pray and sit down to sing.

NO MANNER OF WORK.

"In some places they do not draw up the blinds, and there is no sign of life in the streets until just before kirk time. For instance a certain house in Sutherlandshire is let every year, and in the agreement is a clause 'that the piano shall not be opened for any reason whatever, on the Sabbath,' and there are hundreds of houses where no cooking is done, and the fires are raked out on Saturday night and laid ready for Sunday, and the doorstep washed overnight."

Take Time for the Bible.

As we drift along the swift, relentless current of time toward the end of life, as days and weeks and months and years follow each other in breathless haste, and we reflect now and then for a moment that at any rate for us much of this earthly career has passed irrevocably, what are the interests, thoughts—aye, the books—which really command our attention? What do we read and leave unread? What time do we give to the Bible? No other book, let us be sure of it, can equally avail to prepare us for that which lies before us; for the unknown anxieties and sorrows which are sooner or later the portion of most men and women; for the gradual approach of death; for the period, be it long or short, of waiting and preparation for the throne and face of the eternal Judge. Looking back from the world, how shall we desire to have made the most of our best guide to it! How shall we grudge the hours we have wasted on any—be they thoughts or books or teachers—which only became the things of time!—*Canon Liddon*.