

There is power in such a congregation, but it is dormant and consequently ineffective. One or two energetic Christian men may by their counsel and example inspire others, but the indifference of the many greatly hampers their efforts.

There is at present a most healthful tendency manifesting itself in the Church. There is an evident desire to call forth the personal service of all connected with the congregations. Systematic endeavour is beginning to tell; a healthful activity is the result. The very best possible methods for enlisting in practical Christian service the membership of the churches may not yet have been found, but all tentative efforts in this direction are deserving of the fullest encouragement. Mistakes will occasionally be made; such in the circumstances are inevitable, yet in the effort to elicit the latent Christian activity of the membership of a Church there is hope that a healthy and beneficent spirit will pervade the entire congregation. There are dangers no doubt, but there is no life, not even spiritual, without danger. If we would get to a condition of things in which there would be no jealousies, no undue striving after distinctions, no ambition to excel, it can only be in the graveyard. The Church is promised wisdom to direct it and guide its movements. There is in most congregations a spirit of abnegation and forbearance sufficient to make due allowance for zeal and inexperience. The fervour and activity with which imperfections are usually accompanied, in most cases more than compensate for qualities that do not always present the most attractive aspect. It has to be remembered that all Christians, not merely responsible office-bearers, are called to be witnesses for Christ, and if this living testimony is to be manifested by the entire membership of a congregation, each must realize the individual responsibility. Those methods, therefore, that best help to bring forward the diffident and encourage them in the forms of Christian work for which they are best fitted to engage, and to place a gentle check on those who are disposed to monopolize and undertake more in the way of work than they can well accomplish.

While there is much reason for profound gratitude to the great King and Head of the Church disclosed in the encouraging and satisfactory reports which have generally been presented at the annual congregational meetings, there ought to be, along with the thankfulness an earnest resolve for further consecration, more devoted and energetic efforts for advancement in spiritual health and life. It should be the aim of every Christian worker, every Christian believer, to make the new year of church life fuller, richer, more generous and Christ-like than ever before.

THE BEST DAY OF THE WEEK.

FROM extreme and whimsical, not to say superstitious notions of Sabbath keeping which were prevalent generations ago there was a great recoil. It may be that in several quarters there was a disposition to carry out the Mosaic rather than the Christian spirit of Sabbath observance, but the swing from that has gone in a much more dangerous direction. There have been steady and systematic efforts to make the secular spirit submerge the sacred day of rest. The eager desire for gain at all hazards has done much to make Sabbath desecration a sad reality, adding its bitterness to the heavy burdens that now press on toiling humanity. In addition to what, with some show of reason, finds shelter under the plea of works of necessity and mercy, much that can find no such justification hypocritically urges the plea. Thus it comes that on the continent of Europe, workmen are to be found plying their ordinary handicrafts, and are thus reduced to a condition of virtual slavery. What the Creator of man, and the Lord of the Sabbath designed for the highest benefit of mankind is snatched by merciless greed from overburdened toilers. Human law in its weakness and incapacity may fail to harmonize with the divine law that enacts the permanent and universal obligation of the sacred day of rest, but no divine law can be violated with impunity, and those who so transgress will find that a day of reckoning comes.

In the United States, the same disregard of the Sabbath is only too painfully seen. In certain quarters of all the large cities, numerous shops, where all kinds of wares are sold, are to be found open, and buying and selling proceed just the same as on other days of the week. Here in Canada the evil has not yet obtained such flagrant dimensions, but there are indications that, with a little encouragement, people are to be found who would willingly enough indulge in trading on the Sabbath day. The encroachments that have to be steadily resisted are the opening of post offices, and the transit of vessels through the canals

during the season of navigation and Sunday railway traffic. Hitherto, happily, the friends of the Sabbath have been alert and energetic in their protests against all attempts to infringe on the hours that ought to be devoted to better things. The attempts last season to introduce Sunday labour on the Welland canal led to vigorous and emphatic measures on the part of the Christian people in its immediate vicinity—the Presbyterian ministers, as in duty bound, among the rest. The Presbytery of Hamilton put themselves fully and firmly on record as being entirely opposed to this specific violation of the divine command. Other Presbyteries and associations took the matter up, and their remonstrances have, if not entirely successful as yet, placed the parties responsible for the recent changes on the Welland canal in an apologetic attitude. It is to be hoped that all works under the government control will be so conducted that people will not have it in their power to plead the example of our law makers as a justification for their disobedience of the law of God.

Another foe of the Christian Sabbath is the Sunday newspaper. The only ostensible plea for its existence is that there is a public demand for it. The real reason for it is simply that it pays. The Sunday newspaper, like all newspapers, differs widely in quality, but take it at its very best it is only a *resume* of the day's news, neither better nor worse than is served up all the week. There is in the best papers more matter of a distinctly literary quality, but would rising from a perusal of any of the Sunday morning journals be the best possible preparation for the calm and elevating worship of the sanctuary? The most charitable friend and defender of the Sunday newspaper could scarcely venture to claim that it is a means of grace. Even in London the leading newspapers have hitherto respected the Sabbath and have refrained from issuing Sunday editions except on rare and exciting occasions. Now the owner of the New York *Herald*, in addition to a Paris issue of his enterprising sheet, has entered London with a Sunday edition. It speaks well for the public sentiment of the British metropolis, that vigorous protests have been entered against this uncalled for innovation. Little will J. Gordon Bennett care for opposition of this kind. If he finds that it will pay it will continue to appear; if it fails to receive remunerative support it will be withdrawn. Should it meet with a measure of success it is not improbable that other journalists will enter the field and thus another will be added to the too numerous influences that make for the desecration of one of God's best boons to man. It is encouraging to observe that the better elements in the United States and elsewhere are speaking out in clear and emphatic tones against an evil that cannot fail, in time, if it continues to have a disintegrating effect on social well-being. A community without a Sabbath cannot possibly continue prosperous and happy. If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Without anything approaching a self-righteous feeling, it can truthfully be asserted that Canada as yet respects the Sabbath. The day is well observed in the cities, towns and villages of Ontario. This, however, is no reason why we should rest in fancied security that this precious heritage will be preserved inviolable unless there is constant watchfulness. During the summer season it is the pleasure-seeking spirit that comes out in most obvious antagonism to the special purpose and holy duties of the day. Just as it is one of heaven's best blessings to the children of men should it be the more highly prized and its privileges most sacredly guarded. A well-kept Sabbath is a joy in itself, and the best possible preparation for the joys, the sorrows and the toils of the week. To the Christian heart it is the earnest and the foretaste of the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Books and Magazines.

THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT. With New Testament Supplement. Edited by William R. Harper, Ph. D., professor in Yale University. (New Haven, Conn.)—The February number of this monthly, so highly prized by Biblical scholars, has a variety of interesting papers.

CHLOE LANKTON; or, Light Beyond the Clouds. By Harriet G. Atwell. A Story of Real Life. New and Revised Edition. (Philadelphia: The American Sunday-school Union). Suffering patiently borne with cheerful resignation is a touching and impressive sight. This little book, which in its original form was published about thirty years ago, has been revised and enlarged and sent forth on its mission to instruct and charm a new generation of readers.

SUGGESTIVE TEACHING OUTLINES for Workers' Training Classes. By John H. Elliott. (Chicago: W. W. Vanarsdale). This book contains a course

of thirty-nine lessons, to cover a period of nine months' study. Each lesson is divided into three sections, as follows: "General theme. The Word of God, (a) Facts about it: (b) Truths taught in it: (c) Methods of Using it. The book is not intended to be exhaustive but rather suggestive, and while it covers a large range of subjects, all of them are of a practical character, and are such as every Christian worker should be familiar with. The latest and best book published for Bible and Workers' Training Classes.

THE POPULAR SONG COLLECTION. (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co.)—A very choice collection of vocal music for the public has just been issued, under the title of the "Popular Song Collection." It is a large book, sheet music size, beautifully printed and bound, and contains 144 pages of carefully selected songs by Tosti, Marzials, Cellier, Moir, Jacobowski, Mattei, Booth, Osgood, Adams, Temple, Watson, and many others. Those who desire a good book of songs that are above the ordinary, or "trashy" sort, and yet not difficult, will be pleased with this book. All of the songs have piano accompaniment.

POPULAR PIANO COLLECTION. (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co.)—A splendid collection of good piano music, in one large book, sheet music size, finely printed and bound, and entitled the "Popular Piano Collection," has just been published, and will, without doubt, find a ready welcome among all who admire music that is above the ordinary, and yet not too difficult for the young player. The choice piano pieces in this new book are by the well-known composers, Bohm, Behr, Arditi, Wilon, Mack, Sudds, King, Hoffman, Eilenberg, Lange, Popp, Goerdeler, Smith and others, and have been carefully selected, with the view of satisfying the tastes and meeting the requirements of ordinary performers on the piano. The "Popular Piano Collection" is very reasonable in price.

VITAL QUESTIONS. The Discussions of the General Christian Conference, held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, October 22-25, 1888, under the auspices and direction of the Montreal Branch of the Evangelical Alliance. (Montreal, William Drysdale & Co.)—This is a volume of very great value. It affords all who desire it the opportunity of reading the principal addresses delivered and the papers read at the recent Evangelical Conference, held at Montreal last fall. The subjects are all of them well described in the title of the volume, Vital Questions, and their study, as here presented, will be found helpful to all who are interested in the moral and spiritual progress of the time. If those who have placed this work within the reach of the people meet with the encouragement they deserve, the book will have a very large circulation.

BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES. A Hand Book for use in Seminaries, Sabbath-schools, Families and by all students of the Bible. By Cone Bissell, D.D., Professor in Hartford Theological Seminary. With numerous illustrations and tables. (Philadelphia: The American Sunday-school Union). The purpose and design of this valuable and handy volume may best be learned from the following sentences occurring in the author's preface: The advantages of a knowledge of their antiquities to a student of the Scriptures cannot be over-rated. It seems to place him in the position of one who lived in the times when they first appeared and in the lands where they were actually written. My aim has been to present the principal facts of Biblical antiquities in the strict sense, together with some of their religious bearings, and to show their time, place and significance in the plan and history of redemption. The book has been prepared for popular use.

THE TREASURY FOR PASTOR AND PEOPLE. (New York: E. B. Treat & Co.)—The February number has sermons and articles by first-class men, which do credit to their authors. They are all characterized by strong thinking, fervid spirituality and an intense desire to do good. How uplifting and stimulating this magazine must be to all its readers! An excellent portrait of Dr. Herrick Johnson, of McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, is the frontispiece, and his bold, trenchant, powerful discourse on "The Perfect Book," is a fitting introductory sermon. Views of the Seminary are also given, with a brief historical sketch, and a biographical outline of Professor Johnson. President Darling's sermon on "Credulity in Science Compared with Credulity in Religion" is a clear exhibition of sceptical inconsistencies. Professor Scrimger's sermon on "The Song of the Sword" is noted for its original and beautiful and evangelical treatment. "The Prize essay" on "Jesus Christ, Our Nation's Ruler," for which \$100 was awarded, will be read with profit. Leading Thoughts of Sermons and other useful and varied contents make up an excellent number.