

"STRANGE YOKE FELLOWS."

Can the Church afford to extend a friendly hand to the theatre? The Presbyterian Standard (Charlotte, N. C.) asks this question after reading in The Congregationalist and Christian World (Boston) that "the Free Churches of Great Britain, by making use of the drama to set forth the progress of foreign missions, have committed the Church to a friendlier attitude toward the theatre." The "Pageant of Darkness and Light" connected with the exposition held last spring in the English capital called the "Orient in London" was the occasion for this observation by The Congregationalist, upon which its Southern contemporary retorts:

"Granting that this writer is correct when he further says that 'hundreds of thousands were taught the meaning and glory of missions by the theatre as they never would have been taught by the pulpit, the Sunday-school, and the missionary concert,' it is a question whether the good has not been neutralized or overbalanced by the evil, if the churches, in giving this spectacular performance and in calling in the help of theatrical managers and professional actors, have set the seal of the Church's approval on the theatre as an institution.

Going on to ventilate its own view of the theatre as an institution toward which the Church can maintain no other attitude than the traditional one of hostility, it says:

"As an institution it is not neutral in the matter of religion and morals. It is the business of the theatre to portray phases of life, and in doing so it is handling in its own way all the deep and delicate questions of life. It professes to hold up a mirror in which society can see itself in spots. The theatre may be true to life, it may exhibit nothing but the truth. But there is a vast amount of truth that ought not to be exhibited, great patches of life that ought to be kept covered. The trouble with the theatre has ever been that it has been disposed to lift the cover where the cover ought to be kept down. The theatre is shamefully immoral, glaringly indecent. It often dispenses with clothes to the verge of nakedness, and is equally free in lifting the veil from moral deformity. It often holds up the mirror to society to show just those spots which decency demands should be kept concealed.

"Should the Church treat the theatre as an ally, or a foe? From the days of John Chrysostom to the present the Church has thundered its loudest anathemas against the theatre. Always the theatre has had its apologists and devotees among church people. But from its purest pulpits and its representative assemblies the Church has kept up an incessant warfare. Is there any reason why its attitude should change? Is the theatre improving in its moral tone? We can not speak from personal observation; but we have recently read from high authority that its trend is from bad to worse; that plays are witnessed now without protest that would not have been countenanced a quarter of a century ago.

"Is the Church surrendering its testimony? Unquestionably in some places. We have known a Young Men's Christian Association to go into partnership with a theatrical management, by which the Association obtained the privilege of giving a 'yecum course in the opera-house, interspersing the numbers between plays that were put on the stage by the manager. We read only this morning of a ladies' guild in a church, not a hundred miles away, that has done

the same thing for the coming season. The management will use the theatre one night for negro minstrels or high-class vaudeville. It will be fumigated and disinfected, and used by the good ladies the next night for raising money to help on the work of the church. Strange yoke-fellows!"

THE MIRROR OF OUR FAULTS.

No man can be trusted to discover his own worst faults by examining himself. But he can pretty safely find them if he notes what it is in others that most arouses his indignation and intolerance. The faults in others that we most condemn are usually our own greatest weaknesses. Thus the man with whom no one can co-operate with any degree of comfort or profit, because he is so set in the conviction that his opinion is the only opinion, talks blusteringly and contemptuously about the "cocksureness" of his neighbor. The woman who is never happy unless she is the centre of attraction bitterly condemns other women for always trying to monopolize things. We literally reveal our worst selves in our denunciation of others. Wise is the man who, recognizing this truth, not only refrains from such denunciation, but takes every such prompting within himself as a direct warning that the fault he dislikes is his own personal danger. This is a surer and easier method of self-improvement than any other method of self-examination.

BREAKING THE SPELL.

Travellers by sea and shore know well what it is to have the witchery of place and hours rudely dispelled by too outspoken admiration. There is a time to keep silence. The chatterers are rarely appreciators. Where tender, holy thoughts half fear to tread, speech rushes in. At a morning service one Sunday, a young woman gave a fresh illustration of this power of "breaking the spell" of hushed emotion by commonplace, though admiring, comment. The pastor was "new," and doubtless the audience was augmented by many modern Athenians. But the sermon was simple, reverent, impressive—it was "Communion Sunday"—and many a hearer went away under the spell of an earnest, persuasive personality. One hearer did not. As the last word was uttered, two women immediately in front of the speaker turned impulsively toward each other. Said one, "Isn't he smart!" It was the shattering touch. Such thoughtless, shallow comment is not confined to girls. One hears it everywhere, and from those who should know better. Fathers and mothers in the privacy of the home circle are great offenders. Boys and girls are often deeply impressed by the way in which truths have been spoken from pulpit or platform, or the latch of the heart has been lifted by some more personal appeal. Let such a child go home, as is too often the case, to hear thoughtless comment, even though not disparaging, and the spell is broken. Some soul processes must go on in silence and the dark. Loud talking and the garish day are fatal. Let us tread lightly, speak softly, and leave some things unsaid.—Selected.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Several railroads have recently issued orders against rice-throwing on trains boarded by wedding parties. Some roads have undertaken a campaign of education, showing the trouble it causes and the foolishness of the proceeding.

Methodist Protestant: We have a notion that when the laymen awake to their real privilege and their full duty to the kingdom of Christ, that the millennium will not then be very far off. Oh, for a great and general awakening.

Presbyterian Witness: The Gospel miracles are infinitely reasonable and beautiful. We can thank God for them as long as the world stands. But those other stories—such as Lourdes and Loreto, are of an utterly different character, and ought to pass into forgetfulness.

Christian Advocate: The man who sells opium in China, where the law now condemns it, is calling out, "You are invading my personal liberty." The cry of personal liberty was raised and is raised when saloon keepers are required to close their shops on Sunday, as other forms of business are compelled to do.

Christian Intelligencer: Respect for and obedience to law are essential to the well-being of a community and the perpetuation of government by the people. For if the laws be continually despised and disregarded, the very foundations of good order and the security of persons and property are undermined, and sooner or later the government itself will be overthrown.

United Presbyterian: Character is the unfailing finger-board that points to destiny. It is what we are that determines the path to the end. The fool who said in his heart, "There is no God," evidently died a fool. The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Find out what path a man is on, and which way his face is turned, and you won't need a prophet's vision to see the end.

Lutheran Observer: Repentance and forgiveness may bring back friendship and trust, but they cannot change the past, or always, or at once, win back the confidence of the world. They can not undo all the evil that has been done. The wasted fortune, the shattered health, the ruined reputation, the wrong to others, all stand unchanged. These consequences must be borne. Not even God's forgiveness alters that.

New York Observer: Every church should cultivate its young people, who ought to be made to feel that they have a distinct place in the church's work, although it is not appropriate that they should yet rule its affairs. As the older people are gradually removed the younger people must come forward, prepared to take their places. Recruits can be made into veterans by a proper course of training. That training should be serious and systematic, and, in all its parts, consistent with the main purpose in view.

Herald and Presbyter: No church can have real prosperity unless its people are ready to sustain it financially to the limit of its need and their possibilities. A shabby, neglected church building unattractive and dingy, will drive the outside world away and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. Let the house of God be loved, made beautiful, and cheery, and attractive, and let the people show that they have a delight in it as they do in their homes. Let the pastor be promptly paid, that he may be encouraged and may feel that his work is appreciated.