

ence of their appeals there is the temptation to make grants out of funds already collected, in order to avoid any extra collection. We have known instances in which Church societies have in this way been led to vote away every dollar they had in their treasury, to objects which are outside the Church altogether. Such a course is obviously disloyal to the Church, and if persisted in, will speedily demoralize our missions and destroy our missionary organizations. There is no use or object in trying to prevent our people as individuals, from giving to outside objects. In many cases they are to be commended for doing so. But it is neither fair nor right that our Church societies should be exploited in the interest of such objects, however strong their claim to support.

Crime and Environment.

It has long been one of the commonplaces of a certain class of social reformers that vice is the consequence rather than the cause of poverty and other unfavorable conditions. They insist that the improvement of these physical circumstances must be the first real step towards the permanent moral elevation of the masses. A writer in the *Popular Science Monthly* disposes of this in the following fashion :

It has been conclusively proved that destitution, that spectre which frightens the hearts of men, which covers and obscures with its sodden wings every wrong doing in human life, is not in any way the real cause of crime ; it is true that often it is the excuse. But it is only the excuse, and even in that capacity it serves for the want of some thing better. However, relying upon this excuse, one would naturally think that men with the greatest burdens would be the most liable to law breaking, and that times of profound destitution would be those most deeply marked with crime. As a matter of fact, both of these suppositions are false, so that we find criminals, as a rule, to be those persons having almost no responsible burdens, and, strangest of all, the times of prosperity show the greatest flourishing of crime. Therefore, Morrison, a reliable writer, says : " It is a melancholy fact that the moment wages begin to rise, the statistics of crime almost immediately follows suit, and at no period are there more offences of all kinds against the person than when prosperity is at its height." Again : " It is found that the stress of economic conditions has very little to do with making these unhappy beings what they are ; on the contrary, it is in periods of prosperity that they sink to the lowest depths."

In like manner it can be fully and plainly proved that the other fortuitous and external conditions which are usually blamed for the wrong-doing in the world are either quite innocent or merely accidental. Thus, climate is said by some to be a guilty factor ; but we all know how easy it is to show that there is no part of the world untainted. Seasons are responsible, say others. Here, again, a strange fact confronts us : for it is in the pleasant seasons of the year, when people have least in Nature to contend with, when they are most abroad and mingling together, that crime is commonest. Some well-intentioned men say that certain foods, especially "strong" and animal foods, so inflame the tendency to viciousness that evil instincts flare up, and as a result we have the criminal. It is quite unnecessary to spend time in exposing this fallacy in physiology, we need only refer to the Italians, whose food is very largely vegetable, and whose percentage of crime is among the greatest. The criminal may be high or low, he still is the criminal ; and, reasoned about

broadly, there are as many offenses among the socially exalted as the socially debased.

The Scotch Heresy Case.

The Presbytery of Dunoon held a special meeting at Rothesay recently, says the *Belfast Witness*, to receive the report of the committee appointed to examine the recently published book by the Rev. Alex. Robinson, Kilmun, entitled " The Saviour in the Newer Light." Rev. J. Saunders, convener, presented the Committee's report, which described the book as opposed to and subversive of the teaching of the Confession of Faith on (1) the authenticity, integrity, and credibility of the four Gospels, (2) on one God the Holy Trinity, (3) on Christ the Mediator, (4) on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He quoted extracts bearing on the different points referred to in the Committee's report, comparing the teaching of the book with that of the Confession, and showing that they were entirely at variance. According to Mr. Robinson, certain parts of the Gospels had poetical and not historical value, and were in violent contradiction to each other. Mr. Robinson excised from the Gospels the miraculous birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem—holding that He was born at Nazareth—the incarnation, the annunciation, and the transfiguration, the miracles—which he accounted for in a natural way—and the resurrection of the body. Although the book was very difficult to understand on this point, it also appeared to question the Divinity of the Saviour. Dr. Cameron, Dunoon, and Mr. Hay, Kirn, followed with a severe denunciation of the book. After some further discussion, Mr. Robinson was heard in his own defence. He claimed that the book, whether successful or unsuccessful, was an earnest attempt to help towards restoring clearness amidst a most embarrassing confusion, which had been induced largely through studies to which the Church itself subjected its ministers to. He claimed that the book, in relation to the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, was at least in the direction of legitimate developments, and that with the doctrine of the Confession of Faith regarding the divine and human natures of the Saviour in particular it was in the most strict harmony. He claimed that the charges against him of denying certain central Christian doctrines proceeded from identifying these doctrines with particular current conceptions of them ; that the book was written from the point of view of idealism, or of recognition of the Divine presence everywhere ; and that the idealistic conceptions were as permissible as the other conceptions. He respectfully claimed that the book, in virtue of its idealistic views, might for many minds have a power such as no arguments from external evidence could possess, in resisting the real enemies of religion—materialism, agnosticism, and atheism. He wished it to be openly recognised that he accepted the Confession of Faith on the understanding that he was binding himself to the general ideas in it, and not to the details of its expression.

The Presbytery unanimously adopted the report of the committee, but agreed to delay taking further action till the first Tuesday of March, when another meeting will be held at Rothesay.

In the January number of the *Critical Review* Professor Blaikie, of the New College, Edinburgh, writes a long and careful article on Mr. Alex. Robinson's book, " The Saviour in a Newer Light." The article is generously appreciative of Mr. Robinson's ability and earnestness, but scathingly exposes the weaknesses of his critical and theological positions. At the close of his article Dr. Blaikie says : " We cannot but regard this book as wholly denying Christ and wholly subverting the Christian faith. Mr. Robinson may apply the word 'divinity' to Christ, and the word 'supernatural' to His life, but he would be the first to own that he does not so apply these words in their current accepted sense.

We part from him, deeply regretting that one possessing such talents and enthusiasm, should not have devoted them to a worthier cause."